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Caring for The Common

Southampton Common is a nationally recognised wildlife site. This page explains how we care for and protect one of the city's most cherished assets.

Contact Details:

Telephone: 023 8067 1921

Details of service:

The Common is one of the UK's most important wildlife sites, and internationally listed as a site of excellence... So caring for it is one of Southampton City Council's most important jobs.

Managing the 326 acres of woodland, flowery meadows, heath, park, rough grasslands and ponds is a careful balancing act.

It is an all-year round job that involves, not just the council, but the public, the Southampton Common and Parks Protection Society, the Hawthorns Wildlife Association and other agencies such as Natural England, the Environment Agency and the police.

As well as providing an enjoyable environment for outdoor recreation, The Common management must also think of protecting species such as the population of rare Great Crested newts that live there and make it a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

They must protect special features such as the heathland and meadows, and also liaise with other council staff whose expertise is in cycling, rubbish collection, archaeology and events.

Above all, they have to ensure that The Common remains Southampton's largest, best loved and most visited open space.

As well as working to a management plan carrying out routine tasks across The Common, the dedicated five-person maintenance team also undertakes pro-active work to try and make the site better such as enhancing access by managing the size of woodland areas and re-establishing habitats which have been lost over the years.

Since its adoption in 1993, the plan has helped encourage new species to the area, including the Bog Pimpernel, Ringlet, Green Hairstreak and Marbled white butterflies, a number of dragonflies and damselflies, Palmate newt, Willow warbler, kestrel, Common buzzard, badger and breeding Roe deer.

Primary jobs undertaken this winter include:

- Clearing areas of spindly trees and bramble to recover the meadow, scrubland and heath
- Thinning trees near paths to dry out the ground, improve sightlines and create rides to benefit wildlife, particularly butterflies
- Allowing meadow edges to develop between lawns and trees to benefit wildlife

Other seasonal tasks are clearing paths of the millions of leaves, cutting back hedges after the summer flowering and carrying out the once-a-year mowing cycle for parts of The Common – while daily jobs such as bin emptying, litter picking, and graffiti removal continue.

To find out more about the management of Southampton Common, visit the Hawthorns Urban Wildlife Centre, open weekdays from 10am until 5pm and weekends from midday until 4pm.

The Hawthorns

The Hawthorns Urban Wildlife Centre on Southampton Common, is Southampton City Council's natural environment information and management centre. This page gives you more information about what we do.