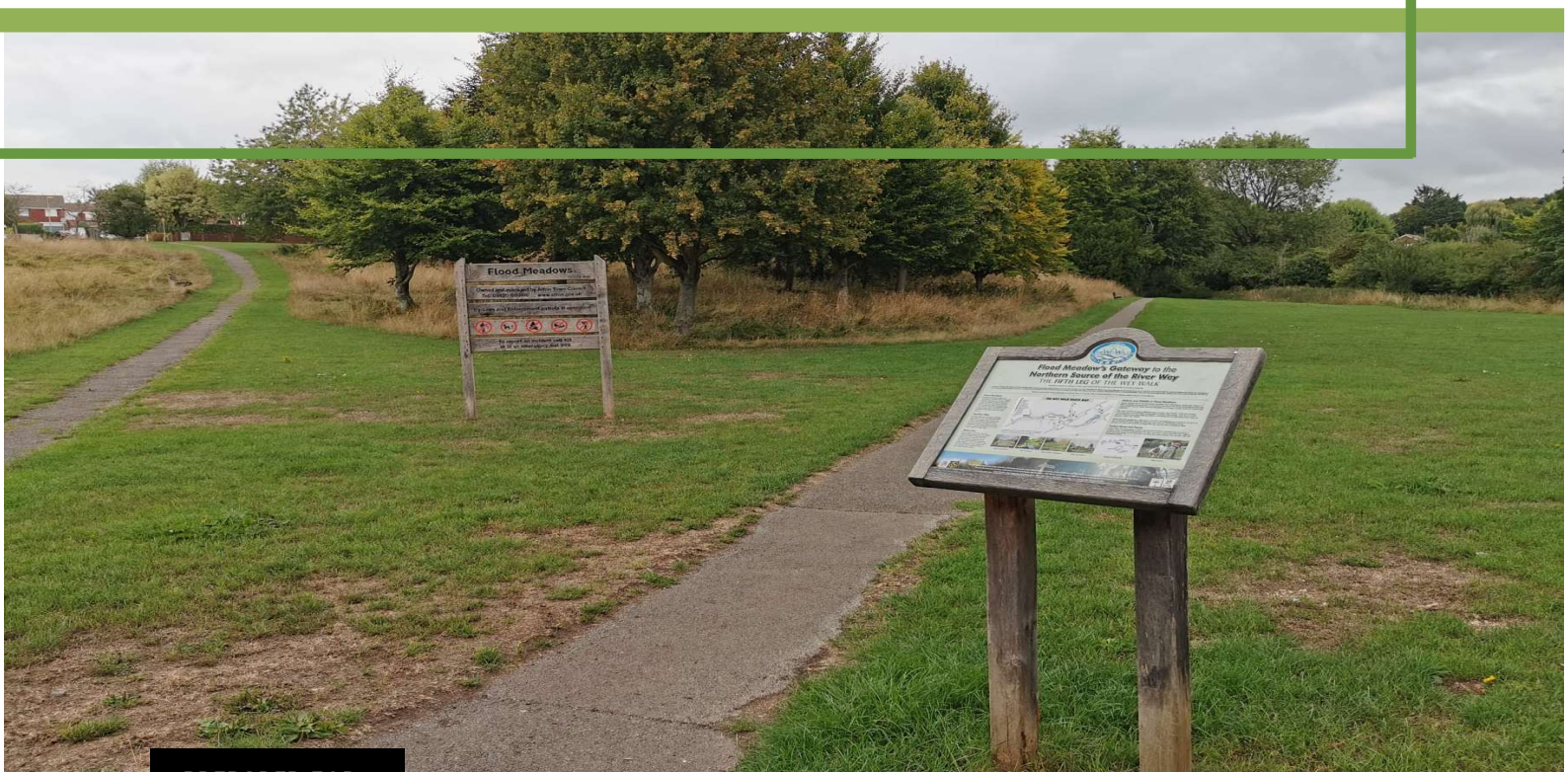




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ALTON FLOOD MEADOWS

MANAGEMENT PLAN



PREPARED FOR:

ALTON TOWN COUNCIL

SITE ADDRESS:

Market Street
Alton
Hampshire
GU34 1HD

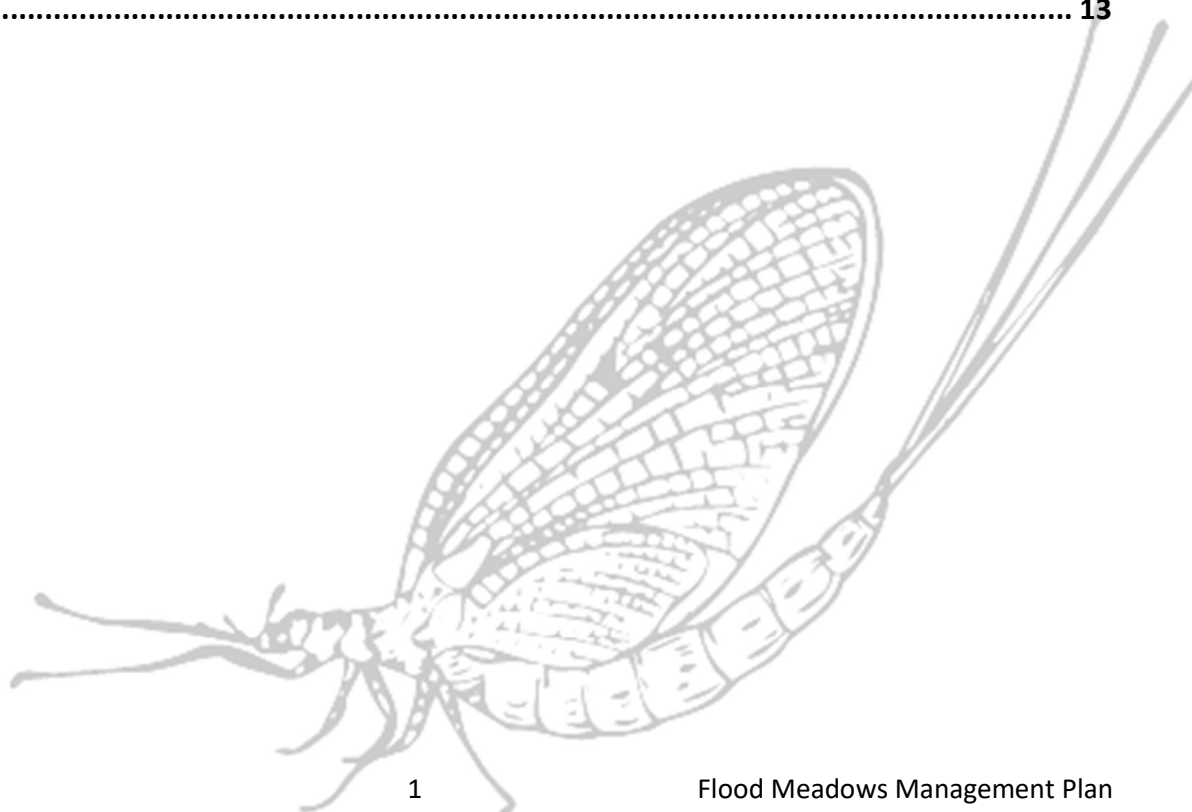
Response issued:

September 2022

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1.0 Site Description and Physical Features

1.1 Location

Alton Flood Meadows is situated a few hundred yards from the town centre (Grid Ref: SU71183948) and is located a short distance from the source of the River Wey. The River Wey forms the southern boundary of the site and the remaining edges of the open space are bounded by residential properties. The area of the site is approximately 6.4 ha.

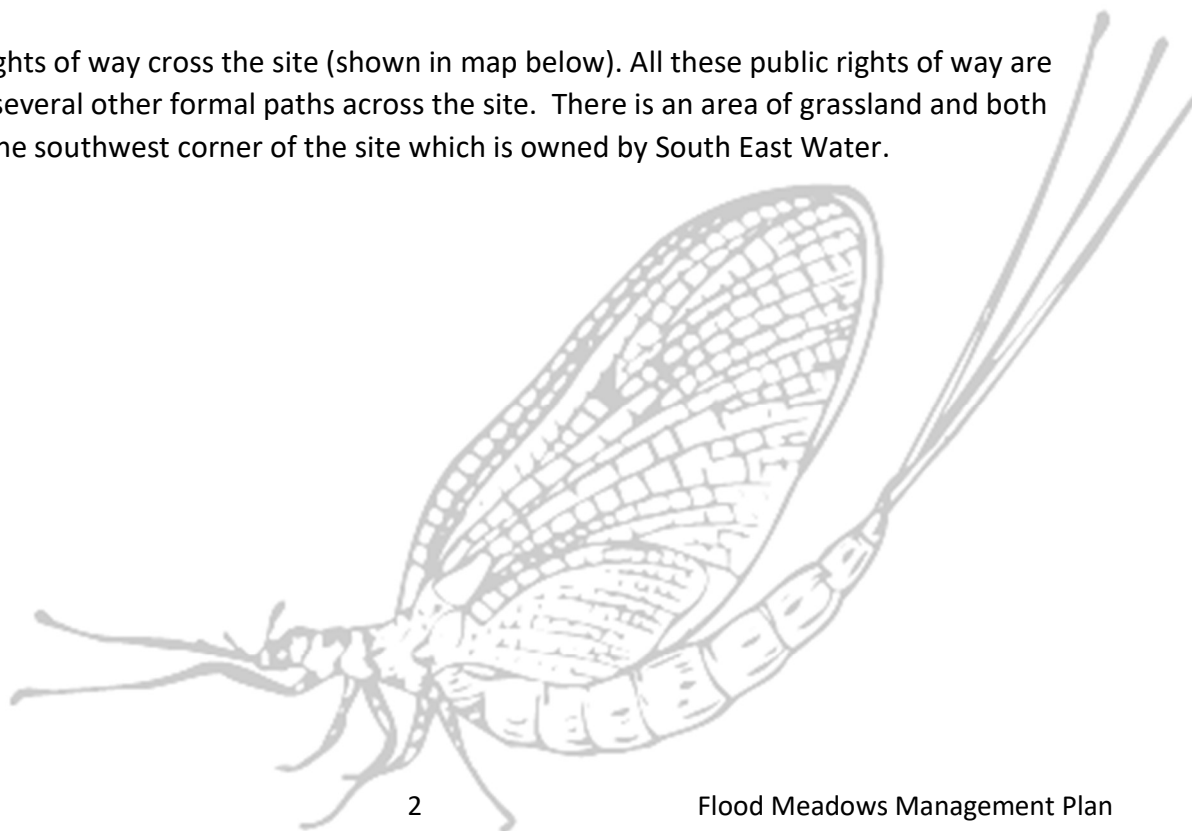


1.2 Ownership

The site is owned by Alton Town Council, following a conveyance from EHDC in 2004. The site was originally included within the parcel of land which formed the Greenfields Development from 1960s onward.

1.3 Other Rights

A number of public rights of way cross the site (shown in map below). All these public rights of way are footpaths. There are several other formal paths across the site. There is an area of grassland and both banks of the river in the southwest corner of the site which is owned by South East Water.





1.4 Designations

The land is not identified as falling within any international or national ecologically designated sites but does partially lie within Alton Town Centre Conservation Area. The Flood Meadows are classified in the Alton Neighbourhood Plan as a local green space where development will not be permitted, other than in exceptional circumstances.

1.5 Geology and Topography

Bedrock at the site comprises of Zigzag Formation grey chalk and Holywell Formation white chalk through which the river rises as short distance away and then continues its journey downstream. The chalk is overlaid by superficial Quaternary deposits of river terrace comprising of clay and gravels mostly in the north-east corner. Holocene or Recent deposits of river alluvium are along the valley floor. The high ground along the north and west boundary with housing is of disturbed material from development of Greenfields Avenue and so is not natural. The site is located on a gentle south facing slope, with the highest points along the northern edge and sloping down into the valley of the River Wey.

1.6 Hydrology

The site is situated in close proximity to the source of the River Wey which rises in Will Hall Meadow to the south west owned by Alton Town Council as a result of development of the field above and flows south east where it exits the Flood Meadows.

Water flow is not a permanent feature with the stream usually drying up in the summer and autumn months. The stream is considered a winterbourne. Arising from the chalk aquifer it is a chalk stream.

A series of redundant watercress beds provide valuable wetland and marshland habitat supported by their own spring ground water.

1.7 Soils and Vegetation

The soils which overlay the chalk are mostly river alluvium on the valley floor with some clays from terrace deposits.

There are numerous aquatic and damp tolerant plant species that can be found in the watercress beds/wetland areas and river channel. These species are typical of habitats of this type and include watercress, fools watercress, starwort, water crowfoot, yellow flag iris, sedges, willow herb, water mint

and willow herb. Stream Water Crowfoot (*Ranunculus penicillatus* var. *pseudofluitans*) in the cress beds is an indicator plant of chalk streams of European significance

Grassland areas on site are of little botanical interest due to regular mowing which is to be expected of amenity grassland. Recently areas of grass land have been mown more infrequently in order to increase habitat diversity.

Groups of shrubs and trees are present. Species identified include oak, ash, alder, willow, yew, sycamore, lime, beech, field maple, silver birch and horse chestnut. Some, in particular, the avenue of cherries and field maples were planted by EHDC when the site was first acquired, while others were retained from the original farmland or self-seeded since.

There are two 'Trees for Life' plots memorial plantings of native species on the site. "Trees for Life" was launched during Environment Week in the Spring of 1989 as a means of providing nature trees for the benefit of people and wildlife and to compensate for the loss of trees to development. These are all native trees.

Instigated by the Alton Society, it gave volunteers an opportunity to contribute to their environment and enabled people to commemorate an event or life in a positive manner.

What began as an interesting idea, escalated into a scheme which generated much enthusiasm and support and obviously tapped into a deep-seated need (that can be seen from the inscriptions noted at that time).

The trees were planted by a volunteer work force in two phases:

Phase 1 – Flood Meadows

Phase 2 – Flood Meadows & Quakers Burial Ground

1.8 Fauna

A number of common bird species were noted including wren, finches, tits and wetland species such as mallard, Canada geese moorhen and kingfisher, heron, little egret and grey wagtail. In winter snipe and water rail occasionally frequent the cress beds and in the last 20 years raptors like buzzard, red kite and peregrine overfly the site.

Bats, palmate newt, smooth newt, water shrew and common frog have also been identified on site with the frogs and newts coming to the cress beds to lay eggs.

The Flood Meadows indicate rich invertebrate fauna with mollusc fauna being particularly rich within the watercress beds. The local Ashford's Hairy Snail (*Ashfordia granulata*) is around the cress beds and river bank. Britain holds a high percentage of the world's population of this European snail so it is of European significance.

The Environment Agency measure water quality of the river systems in England. Each is given an overall ecological status, which may be one of five levels: high, good, moderate, poor and bad. There are several components that are used to determine this, including biological status, which looks at the quantity and varieties of invertebrates, angiosperms (flowering plants) and fish. Chemical status, which compares the concentrations of various chemicals against known safe concentrations, is rated good or fail. Road run-off drains from Basingstoke Road and Greenfields are directed to the Wey at the Basingstoke Road bridge and at times give problematic discharge.

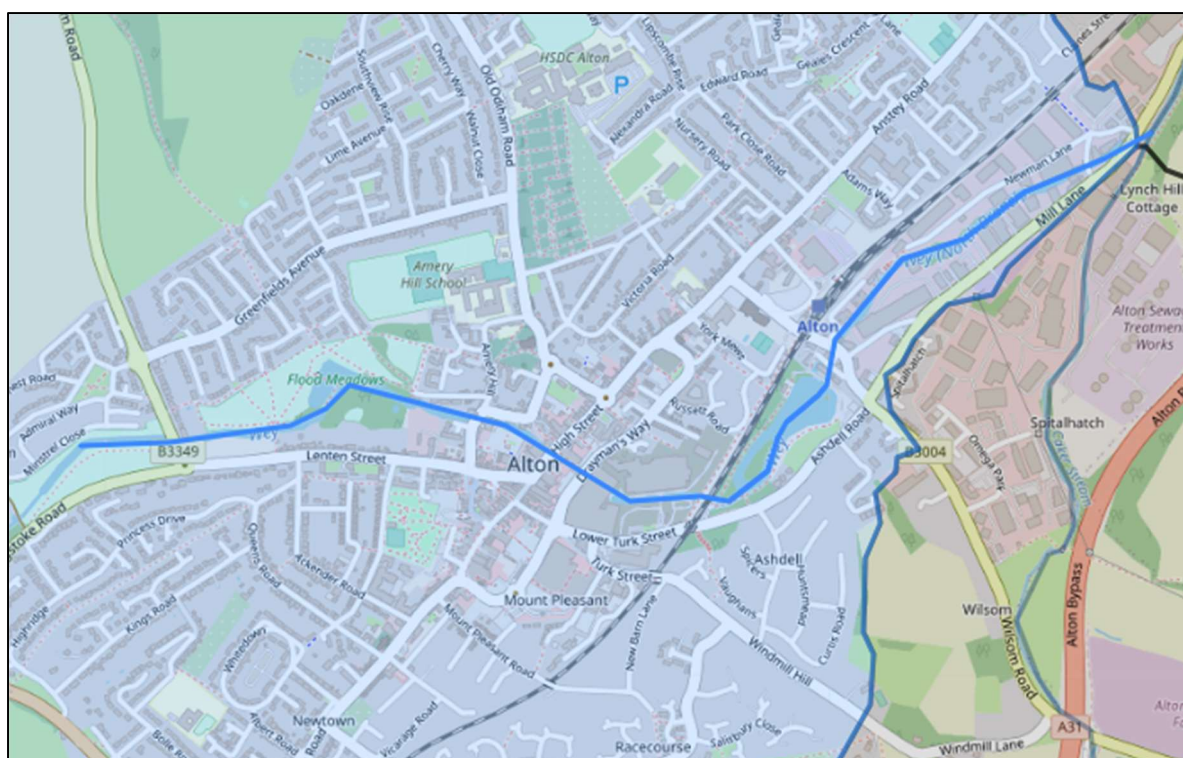
Water quality of the River Wey in 2019:

Section	Ecological Status	Chemical Status	Overall Status
North Wey at Alton	Moderate	Fail	Moderate

North Wey at Alton Attributes:

Water Body ID GB106039017800	Water Body Type River	Hydromorphological designation heavily modified	NGR SU7204739286
Surveillance Water Body No	Length 2.802 km	Catchment area 54.231 km ²	Catchment area 5423.05 ha

North Wey at Alton Waterbody Map:



1.9 History

Evidence of Roman occupation has been found near the site and nearby Will Hall Meadow is referenced in Anglo Saxon and Medieval Records. The site could be of archaeological interest as Alton is of Saxon origin.

While the site clearly has a historic interest, there are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments or known archaeological features on site.

The site is known to have been utilised for agricultural use as part of Amery Farm with the watercress beds forming part of the farm. The watercress was sold by Mr Mills from his house in Tanhouse Lane and at Alton market as “Weycress”

In the 1960s the farm land was sold and the area now known as the Flood Meadows was given to East Hampshire District Council to provide public greenspace. Alton Town Council acquired the site in 2004. Amery Farmhouse across the flint wall at the north-east corner of the site, was sold separately and is not part of the Town Council holding.

1.10 Public Access and Use

There are approximately 10 access points onto the site from the various residential roads surrounding the Flood Meadows. Currently there are six public rights of way which cross the site, some of ancient origin connecting with Shalden village.

There is a small formal parking area with space for 4-5 cars that is located at the end of Tanhouse Lane. Other (pay and display) parking is available in the Bank Car Park by the Community Centre, a short walk away.

A hardstanding path is present along the river and watercress beds. A section of the riverside/watercress bed path has been raised and repaired including the installation of new recycled plastic footbridges, further improvements to the remainder of this path are planned by Alton Town Council. The tarmac hard surfaced paths that cross the park have deteriorated in places and are in need of repair.

The Flood Meadows form part of the 'Wey Walk' and contains the Flood Meadows Gateway that was installed by Alton Town Council and Amery Hill Residents Association in 2020, here you will find the Wey Walk archway, wooden footbridge and carved animal sculptures.

Various signage and information boards have been installed providing members of the public with a description of the area.

1.11 Past Management

An agricultural area comprising of rough grassland, previously used for grazing and watercress production. As previously mentioned the area has been used recreationally for a number of years. Even before being a public open space, old postcards from the early twentieth centuries show family groups picnicking along the river and footpath from the Basingstoke Road bridge.

General maintenance including grass cutting and litter bin emptying is carried out by Alton Town Council staff.

The volunteer group, the Friends of Flood Meadows (The Alton Society), meet on one Sunday every month to carry out maintenance tasks such as litter picking and management of undergrowth

The previous version of this plan was approved by Alton Town Council in 2017, together with a five-year action plan. Following review this version of the plan and its associated actions update the previous document.

2.0 Objectives and Actions

2.1 Maintain Existing Tree and Shrub Cover

The existing trees and shrubs provide cover and habitat for wildlife.

Planting of new trees should take into account the improvement of the floodplain meadow promoting a species rich grassland. Tree canopy cover will cause shading leading to reduced flowering meadow plant species.

Maintenance recommendations:

- A detailed tree survey report was carried out in November 2021 by Gristwood & Toms. It is advised that the tree schedule in this report is followed as close as practicably possible. Continue to follow tree survey and strategy for; maintenance, new planting and long term replacement (Works Prog Ref TS04).

- Following the programme already in place any trees that have suffered physical damage or have died should be removed for site and a suitable replacements will be planted in due course. (Works Prog Ref TS01).
- All stakes, ties and guards should be inspected for looseness and constriction and adjusted as required (Works Prog Ref TS02).
- Any newly planted trees should be watered as necessary to aid establishment (Works Prog Ref TS03).
- Newly planted trees to be native species which only occur in the neighbourhood.
- If any trees need to be felled, some of the large felled dead wood can remain on site to support invertebrates and other wildlife.
- All tree works to be carried out outside of the bird nesting season (March to August).
- Woodland area at northern end of site is to be left untouched unless urgent management is needed e.g for H&S reasons.

2.2 Manage Amenity Grassland and Meadow Habitat

Without sensitive management, grasslands soon become invaded by vigorous plants and grasses that can overwhelm what is vital habitat for birds, invertebrates and animals.

Cutting is an effective method of managing grassland because the timing, area and height of the cut can be easily adapted to suit the site.

In most situations, July is the best time for cutting, with a further cut in September/October often being beneficial. However, cutting times can be varied to suit local conditions. A spring cut knocks back thistles and vigorous grasses that can sometimes take hold during the winter. While an autumn cut allows the grassland plants more opportunity to flower and set seed (Works Prog Ref AG01).

Cutting of the amenity grassland areas on site should continue as per the regime currently in place, this allows for a well-balanced public space which provides amenity grassland, picnic areas and meadow habitat. Cutting of Amenity grassland areas should be carried out every 2 weeks during the growing season (Works Prog Ref AG03).

It is very important to rake off and remove the clippings after cutting. Cuttings can form a thatch, smother delicate plants and increase fertility which encourages rank growth at the expense of wildflowers. If clippings are left to dry for a few days after cutting, flowers can shed any ripe seed and insects are able to make their escape. Clippings should be removed from site.

Mowing the entire site in one go can remove a valuable food source for insects and birds. It is therefore good practice to leave some areas uncut to overwinter. The best way to do this is to either cut the grassland in sections at varying times or, if you have room, to cut the edges of the grassland on rotation. Please see appendix for cutting 'zones' proposed by Alton Town Council.

Undesirable species such as ragwort, Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam, will need to be controlled, ideally weeds will need to be removed by hand pulling (Works Prog Ref AG02).

The creation of a wildflower area/meadow was recently attempted in 2019 along the south western edge of the park but due to the management involved with establishing a wildflower area, the area has become overgrown with vigorous grassland species. Wildflower planting should be monitored to evaluate the suitability of the planting, with further sowing adjusted accordingly. Management of this area should be undertaken in-line with the actions listed above.

2.3 Maintain Existing Watercress Beds and River Edges

The historic cress beds and wetlands should be retained. Some sympathetic management of dominant plant species such as yellow flag iris should be undertaken on rotation (Works Prog Ref ML01). This will allow other wetland loving plant species to flourish. Arisings from maintenance activities should be stacked in order to provide hibernacula for amphibians and reptiles. Two species of newts and common frogs use the cress beds for breeding.

The river and cress beds should be monitored for invasive non-native species (INNS) of plant and immediate action should be taken to remove INNS (Works Prog Ref ML02).

Diversify habitat along river edge to prevent ecological succession in the waterbodies by removing dense stands of dominant vegetation (Work Prog Ref ML03).

Daylighting (clearance of trees shading the river) of the river channel would be beneficial, this will encourage aquatic macrophyte growth, increasing diversity and channel morphology. The addition of in channel habitat features such as large woody debris and vegetated berms should be strongly considered.

The berms installed upstream of Lenten Street Bridge are in need of repair and enhancement.

South East Water are currently investigating opportunities for habitat improvement works at the site as part of the Water Industry Environment Plan (WINEP) which is anticipated to be implemented in 2025. Initial consultation regarding the project took place in spring/summer 2022 but further consultation between South East Water and local community groups is required before improvement works are confirmed.

2.5 Maintenance and Improvement of Existing Footpaths and Bridges

Access points and paths across the site need to be maintained in a safe and useable condition.

In order to maintain the appearance of tidy, clean hard surfaces the following actions should continue to be undertaken:

- Removal of litter (Works Prog Ref FP01)
- Removal of grit, mud, leaf litter and plant debris (Works Prog Ref FP02)
- Removal of weeds (Works Prog Ref FP03)
- Inspection of any defects and potential dangers (Works Prog Ref FP04)
- Ensure all surfaces are safe to walk on during cold weather events (Works Prog Ref FP05)

The river/watercress bed path and bank should be repaired and raised in keeping with the newly repaired section of path/bank. This will ensure it is accessible all year round even during flood events.

Maintenance to the existing paths should be carried out as they are failing in places and are uneven. Particular attention should be paid to the path leading to the Tanhouse Lane entrance where severe deterioration is present.

Formalisation and connectivity between the river path and tarmac path on the south east side near Tanhouse Lane should be considered.

The path from Lenten Street to Wentworth Gardens is narrow and is in need of widening works in order to improve access for wheelchair and mobility vehicles.

2.6 Maintain Signage and Interpretation

Signage and information boards have already been installed providing valuable educational information about the site. It is important that:

- Signs and information boards are maintained (Works Prog Ref SI01).
- There is currently adequate provision for bins and benches across the site. Benches and street furniture should be replaced on a like-for-like basis when necessary.

2.7 Maintain Liaison with Organisations, Individuals and Community Groups

It is important to liaise with official bodies, organisations, individuals and community groups to ensure this important local amenity is managed as effectively as possible. It is important that the following guidelines continue to be adhered to:

- Town council officers and the Friends of Flood Meadows (Alton Society) should continue to liaise with Alton Town Council to plan, finance and carry out management and any urgent works that may be required (Works Prog Ref LO01).
- Regular liaison between local community groups and Alton Town Council to encourage local engagement (Works Prog Ref LO02).
- Liaise with the Environment Agency to improve the quality and quantity of water at the source of the river (Works Prog Ref LO03).
- Record incidents of anti-social behaviour and vandalism and contact/liaise with local emergency services as necessary (Works Prog Ref LO04).
- Maintain contact with local natural history groups and individual experts for management advice (Works Prog Ref LO05).

2.8 Carry Out Statutory Duties as Site Owner

Alton Town Council are obliged to meet their statutory obligations to:

- Carry out regular health and safety checks (Works Prog Ref SD01)
- Obtain all statutory consents and approvals necessary for carrying out management work (Works Prog Ref SD02).

2.9 Future Management

- Review of management plan in 5 years from date of adoption (Works Prog Ref FM01).

3.0 Works Programme

Maintain Existing Tree and Shrub Cover						
Task	Frequency	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
TS01	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
TS02	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
TS03	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
TS04	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
TS05	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
Manage Amenity Grassland and Meadow Habitat						
Task	Frequency	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
AG01	Autumn and Spring	X	X	X	X	X
AG02	Autumn and Spring	X	X	X	X	X
AG03	Every 2 weeks during growing season	X	X	X	X	X
Maintain Existing Marshland and River Edges						
Task	Frequency	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
ML01	Annual (Spring)	X	X	X	X	X
ML02	Quarterly	X	X	X	X	X
ML03	Annual (Autumn/Winter)	X	X	X	X	X
Maintenance and Improvement of Existing Footpaths and Bridges						
Task	Frequency	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
FP01	As appropriate	X	X	X	X	X
FP02	As appropriate	X	X	X	X	X

FP03	Monthly	X	X	X	X	X
FP04	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
FP05	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
Maintain Signage and Interpretation						
Task	Frequency	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
SI01	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
Maintain Liaison with Organisations, Individuals and Community Groups						
Task	Frequency	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
LO01	Annual/As necessary	X	X	X	X	X
LO02	Monthly	X	X	X	X	X
LO03	As appropriate	X	X	X	X	X
LO04	As appropriate	X	X	X	X	X
LO05	As appropriate	X	X	X	X	X
Carry Out Statutory Duties as Site Owner						
Task	Frequency	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
SD01	Annual	X	X	X	X	X
SD02	As appropriate	X	X	X	X	X
Future Management						
Task	Frequency	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
FM01	Every 5 years					X

4.0 Costing

4.1 Maintenance and Improvement of Existing Footpaths

Installation of 120m x 1.5m wide asphalt footpath from Lenten Street to Wentworth Gardens:

Removal of existing path = £7,200.00

Installation of new 1.5m wide footpath with 100mm sub-base, 50mm binding course, 50mm surface course and 50mm x 150mm pre cast concrete edging = £13,150.00

Total: £20,350.00

Repair of footpaths:

Sub-base (100mm) = £4.50 m2

Binding course & Surface course (100m) = £37.00 m2

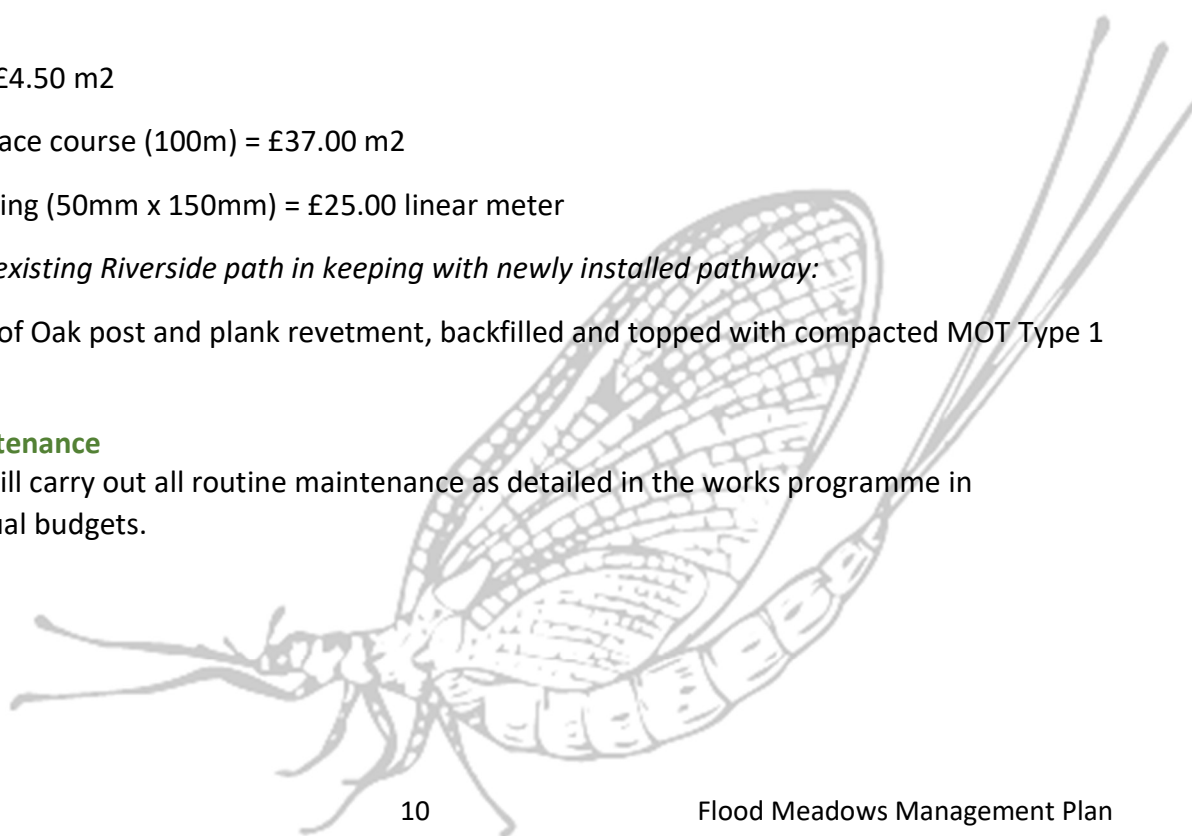
Pre-cast concrete edging (50mm x 150mm) = £25.00 linear meter

Repair and raising of existing Riverside path in keeping with newly installed pathway:

Approximately 100m of Oak post and plank revetment, backfilled and topped with compacted MOT Type 1 = £45,000.00

4.2 General Maintenance

Alton Town Council will carry out all routine maintenance as detailed in the works programme in accordance with annual budgets.



5.0 Plates



Plate 1 – Signage at Lenten Street Entrance



Plate 2 – Wildflower area



Plate 3 – Berm in need of repair upstream of Lenten Street Bridge



Plate 4 – Newly installed riverside raised path and recycled plastic footbridge

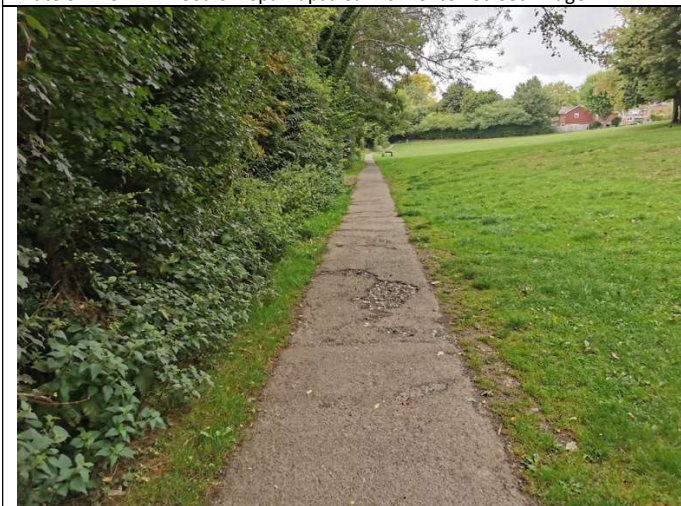


Plate 5 – Tanhouse Lane path repair



Plate 6 – South west corner meadow area



Plate 7 – Lenten Street to Wentworth Close Path

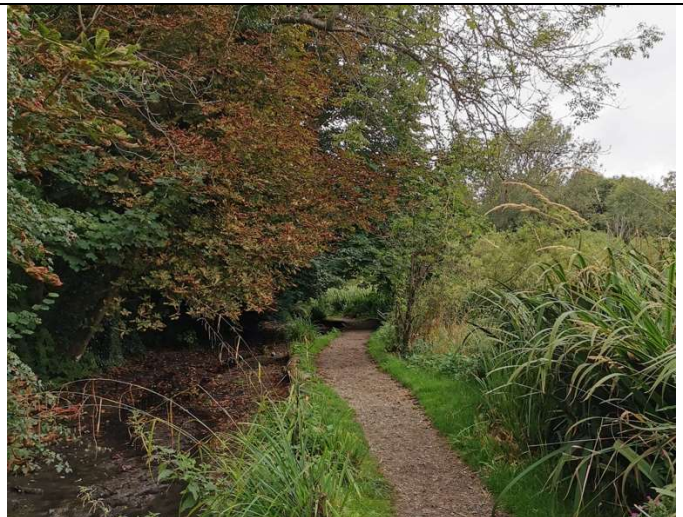


Plate 8 – Existing riverside path



Plate 9 – North east meadow area

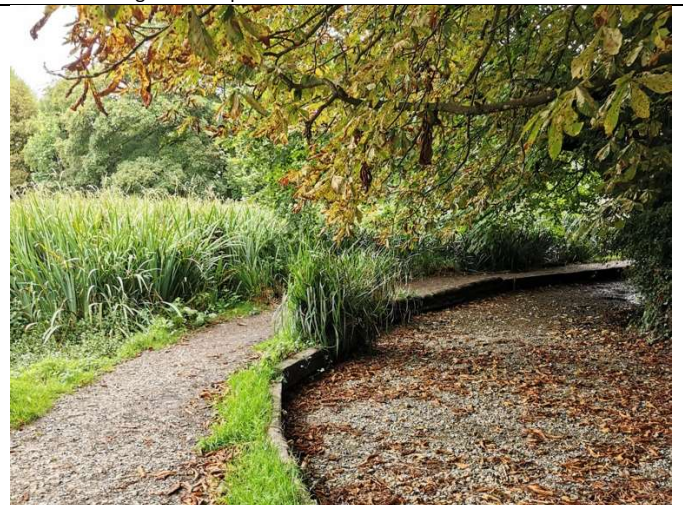


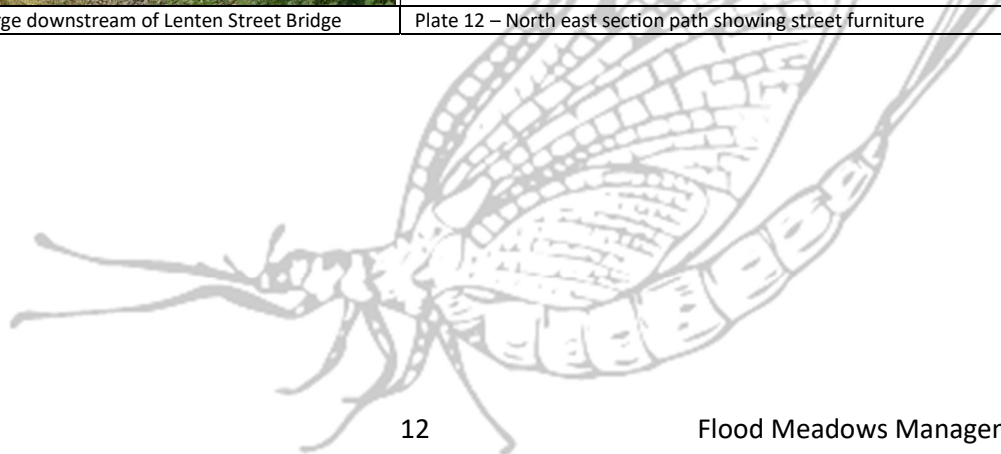
Plate 10 – Riverside path in need of raising and updating



Plate 11 – Recent gravel recharge downstream of Lenten Street Bridge



Plate 12 – North east section path showing street furniture



6.0 Appendix

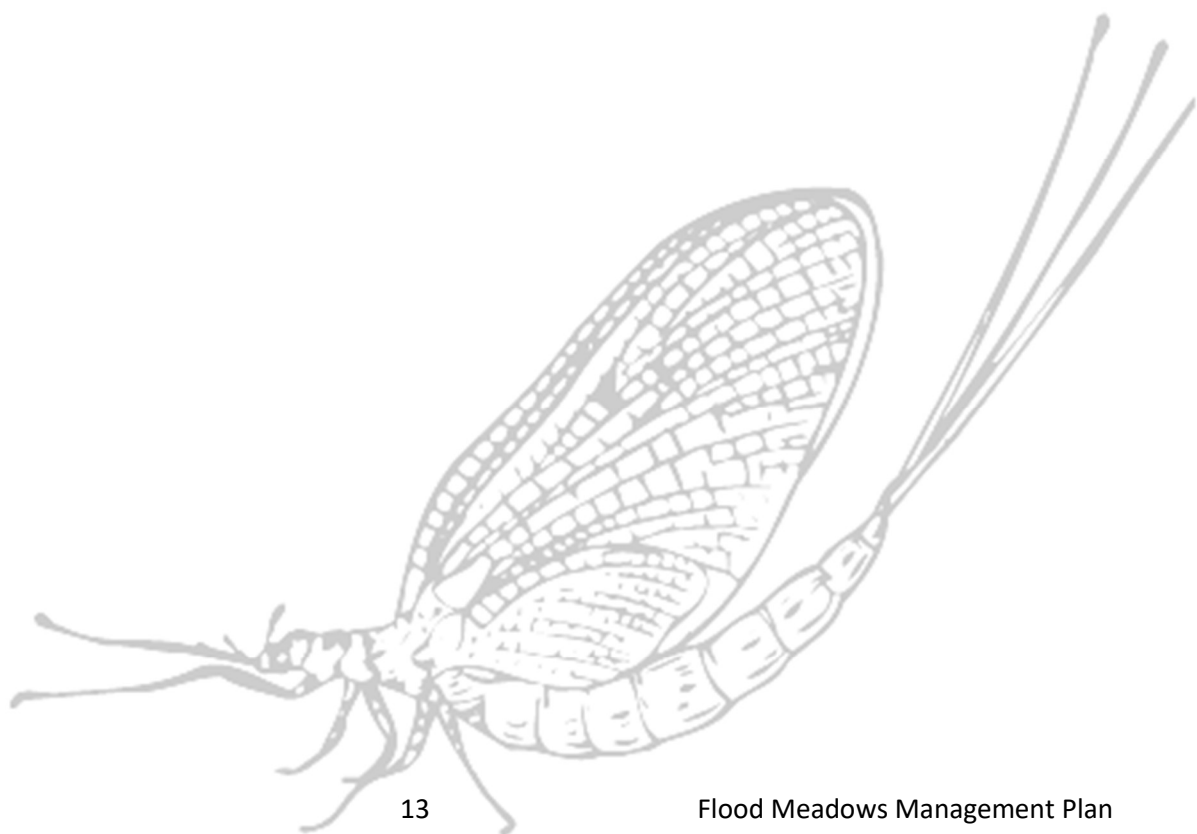
Document - 20220704121827349.pdf – Meadow cutting zones

Document - DocDec02 Planning Permission Flood Meadows

Document – DocDec02

Document - Flood Meadows – Tree Survey Report

Document - Upper Wey landowner information pack 2022-03-15 2 – SE Water



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