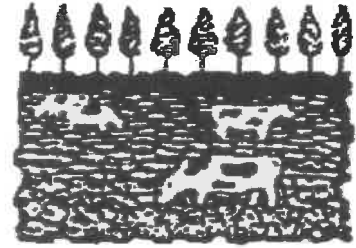




SUDBURY COMMON LANDS CHARITY

Registered Charity No. 212222
Established 1897



8th November 2011

Mrs Susan Brotherwood, Town Clerk
Sudbury Town Council
Town Hall
Sudbury
CO10 1TL

Dear Sue

VALLEY TRAIL:

The councillors' request for a 'basic' management fee quotation was discussed at the Estate Management meeting of 21st September and at the full trustee meeting of 2nd November.

There was considerable discussion about the role of the charity and its commitment in trying to maintain a certain management standard for the benefit of wildlife and the public. The trustees were keen to avoid being associated with a minimalist management approach which would inevitably attract criticism which would be valid in terms of a reactive management approach.

The trustees realise that there are difficulties for both sides in terms of funding but they considered the £3,000 fee to be an appropriate amount for proposed proactive management contract.

With Kind Regards

Yours sincerely

Adrian

Adrian Walters, Clerk to the Trustees,
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THE VALLEY TRAIL
(Ballington Bridge to Rodbridge)

MANAGEMENT PLAN

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- 1: Introduction
- 2: Background
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4. Management Aim
5. Management Objectives

1. Introduction:

The Valley Trail forms part of the old railway line route from Sudbury to Long Melford. This section of the railway opened in 1865 and was closed in 1967. The rails and sleepers were removed.

2. Background:

The line was developed by Suffolk County council as an amenity providing informal access on foot, by cycle and on horseback.

3. Recent History and Current Status:

The route was hard-surfaced during the 1990s to provide a good base for users.

The route was designated a Local Nature Reserve in 2003. In the early 1990s Deptford Pink (*Dianthus armeria*) was recorded at one point along the route. This is a very rare species in England and this record was featured on a postage stamp during the first decade of the 21st century. In 2011 the species was only just surviving at this site.

In 2011, Suffolk County Council decided to divest itself of management responsibilities for its countryside sites and Sudbury Town Council agreed to take on responsibility for the Valley Trail, between Ballington Street and Rodbridge from 1st April 2012 on a ninety nine year lease, ownership of the trail remaining with Suffolk County Council. The Sudbury Common Lands Charity was taken on to manage the site on behalf of Sudbury Town Council.

4. Management Aim:

To manage the Valley Trail for quiet enjoyment by people (walkers, cyclists and horse riders) and as a habitat for wildlife.

5. Management Objectives:

Amenity Use:

1. To maintain an open trail. This includes the mowing of trail-side vegetation to prevent it falling onto the trail surface.
2. To cut back woody vegetation away from the trail margin in order to maintain it in an open condition.
3. To remove trees or branches of trees that lean significantly over the trail and pose a potential hazard to trail users.
4. To remove any fallen timber from the trail in order to maintain open access at all times.
5. To ensure that all trail 'furniture' such as steps and stiles are maintained in good order. (In early 2012 much needed improvements to ramps and steps were carried out by Suffolk County Council following a survey report by the Sudbury Common Lands Charity on behalf of Sudbury Town Council).
6. To maintain the trail in a litter free state for public enjoyment.
7. To carry out any other works to maintain the amenity in good order (within the constraints of the contract between SCLC and STC)).

Specific management tasks to achieve amenity objectives include:

1. Rotational coppice bank adjacent to Pumping Station (Ballingdon).
2. Removal sycamore trees growing through bridge railings – King's Marsh.
3. Removal of severely leaning branches and rotten oak tree limbs along trail section through King's Marsh.
4. Clearance of elder below bridge carrying Brundon Lane over trail.
5. Removal of leaning branches and trees along trail section between the two brick bridges.
6. Cutting back encroaching blackthorn scrub from trail margins.
7. Carrying out regular checks to ensure trail is in good condition.

Conservation:

1. To restore fragments of grassland by removing encroaching scrub.
2. To improve the existing fragments of grassland in order to encourage grassland flora.
3. To create scalloped areas from the trail side scrub to provide opportunities for flora and a sheltered micro-climate to encourage butterflies.
4. To create areas of open woodland floor through removal of ivy in order to reverse the decline of the Twayblade (*Listera ovata*) orchid colony.

Specific management tasks to achieve conservation objectives include:

1. Removing encroaching scrub to ground level and introduce annual mow or strim and remove arisings.
2. Mowing open grassland or strim banks and remove arisings.
3. Strimming Deptford Pink pound annually and remove arisings. Create some open ground conditions. Ensure pound is rabbit-proof.
4. Planting hedgerow to provide shelter for invertebrates to rear of grassland bank between Brundon & Borley Mills.
5. Removing ivy from the ground in areas where Twayblade is recorded.
6. Carrying out suitable projects likely to improve the conservation value of the trail and which are identified during the course of management.

Copy of Trail route attached to plan.

Adrian Walters
April 2014

DEPTFORD PINK – DIANTHUS ARMERIA
MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Location:	Valley Trail, Brundon, Sudbury
Grid reference:	586182,242275
Record Area:	Vice-County 19 - North Essex (Site location is just in Suffolk)
Plantlife Site Reference:	Sudbury (DA 37)
Plantlife Volunteer Recorder:	Mr Graham Jenner
Land Owner:	Suffolk County Council
Lease Holder:	Sudbury Town Council
Site Manager:	Sudbury Common Lands Charity
UK Status:	‘Endangered’ (Very high risk of extinction in the wild) (Currently occupying 7% of its historic range at 35 sites)
UK Classification:	‘Nationally Scarce’, UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species, Red Data Listed, Protected under Schedule 8 Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (it is an offence to pick, uproot or destroy the plant).

Background:

The Valley Trail is a former railway line now utilised and managed for amenity and conservation purposes. It is designated as a Local Nature Reserve.

Deptford Pink was recorded at this site by members of the local Suffolk Wildlife Trust group (including these guidelines author) in 1990s (1998 is the date given in the ‘Flora of Suffolk’). At that time the habitat was relatively open with much less scrub on the embankments than in 2012.

During the first part of the 2000, 100 plant plugs were put in by a conservation organisation (not known which one but Natural England denies any involvement (was this part of Plantlife ‘Back from the Brink’ scheme?). There was, however, very little follow up management and none that would appear to fulfil the requirements for this species. Whilst it is not clear which organisation carried out this work the previous manager stated that he collected seed on site for this project. At this time rabbit fencing was put round the site. Subsequently holes at various points in the fencing allowed rabbits access to the site.

In 2005 Martin Sanford recorded 21 plants for his ‘Flora of Suffolk’ but plant numbers continued to decline as a result of the dense growth of competitive perennials and scrub. In 2011 Plantlife volunteer, Mr Graham Jenner, recorded 10 plants.

In April 2012 the Sudbury Common Lands Charity took on management of the site and the area was immediately strimmed, raked and cleared. Rabbit holes in the fencing were closed. By mid July 2012 there were 17 plants in flower but the competition from other herb species and scrub was severe.

Plantlife records this as the last of 17 sites for Deptford Pink in Vice-County 19 and the last natural (i.e. not garden escape) population in East Anglia. On this basis alone the site deserves considerable conservation effort in an attempt to encourage a thriving Deptford Pink community.

Deptford Pink characteristics (from Plantlife report):

1. It is a biennial or short lived perennial. For management purposes it may be treated as a biennial.
2. The species requires open disturbed soils for seed germination.
3. Seeds require cold temperatures and dormancy is broken by increasing spring temperatures.
4. Seeds require light to germinate.
5. The seed bank is persistent and buried seeds can remain dormant for at least ten years.
6. Plants form small rosettes in the first year from which flower stalks grow in the second year.
7. The flowering period is mainly during July and August.
8. Ripe seeds are released from the pods gradually.
9. The plant is highly palatable to rabbits.
10. Damaged plants can recover and produce flowers later in the year.

Management Aim: To significantly increase the number of flowering Deptford Pink at this site.

Management Objectives:

1. To remove all scrub (woody shrub vegetation) by digging out during July and August so long as there are no flowering plants or non flowering rosettes present at the point of digging.
2. To remove, by digging out, dominant and aggressive herb species including agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), tussocks of wood false-brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*) and common nettle (*Urtica dioica*).
3. To create bare earth conditions by removing plant cover and the moss layer in the vicinity of flowering Deptford Pink plants to provide open ground for ripened seeds to fall on. It is essential to do this with care to ensure that non-flowering rosettes are not disturbed or removed.
4. To trim and clear vegetation to the rear of the site throughout the year with the exception of hound's-tongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*) which carries 'Near Threatened' status.
5. To trim and rake off arisings in early spring when all *Dianthus* seeds have been released.
6. To cut back the tall shrub species along the rear fence line.
7. To strip off the vegetation layer where no Deptford pinks plants have been recorded and distribute seeds from existing plants over the bare ground.
8. To live cage-trap and remove rabbits that gain access the pound and stop-up all holes in and under the perimeter fence.

Management in the vicinity of the pound:

1. To remove encroaching scrub opposite the pound on the other side of the trail and maintain as open grassland by annual cutting and raking.
2. To cut back scrub from each end of the pound to reduce seeding of scrub species into the pound.

Adrian Walters, Sudbury Common Lands Charity, September 2012.