

What can you do?

- **Come to working parties** – a free sociable outdoor work-out!
- **Tell friends and neighbours** about the Action Plan and encourage them to comment, come to working parties and get involved
- **Express your view** to us: mail@southamptoncommon.org and/or the Council Leader & local councillors (see SCC website)

Background to Common Sense and the Little Common Action Plan

The Little Common, east of The Avenue, of about 30 hectares, for centuries was mainly open heathland, with some woodland. Grazing maintained the openness. When that ceased at WWII, parts became increasingly overgrown, but others were maintained for many years by regular grass-cutting. New managers in the 1990s encouraged more areas to become covered with brambles, holly and other trees - contrary to the 1992 Common Management Plan (CMP). Once open areas became impenetrable and paths, well-used for centuries, impassable. In addition, the Common Ecologist planted a dense hawthorn hedge along most of Highfield Road. That contravened law which forbids impeding access to a common. The hedge grew to an oppressive 3-4m high, blocking sight of and access to the Little Common from most of the Road. With other overgrowth behind, it made the locality feel unwelcoming, less safe and less useable. It also looked unkempt, harming the area's character and the Avenue Campus setting.

Local residents petitioned the Leader of the City Council (SCC) and the group Common Sense formed under the auspices of the Highfield Residents' Association (HRA). SCC's newly instructed senior management endorsed the 2008 and later Little Common Action Plans, which proposed removing the hedge and other recent vegetation – in line with the CMP – on about 3 hectares most used by the public. In the last 9 years, over 60 volunteer working parties, several days of professional tree work, (funded by the HRA, SCC and Southampton University) and help from Council ground-staff/machinery have largely restored the 3ha. However a new manager's decision in 2016 to let parts again grow over and keep the Carriage Drive (CD) covered in recent gorse, rather than as an historic grass ride, could have negated much of the community work. SCC's top management intervened and restored areas are again now being maintained in accord with the CMP. The CD is now cleared for grass to re-establish – thanks to HRG Tree Services generously doing the work for the community free of charge.

Finishing restoration and keeping openness needs continuing volunteer work by hand, together with regular Council and occasional contractor work. Working parties are mainly in winter months to avoid undue disturbance to wildlife.

Common Sense

Little Common Action Plan

Caring for Southampton Little Common...

...by keeping the area along Highfield Road as a mainly open landscape that feels safer, more welcoming and attractive for the many people who use the area for walking, cycling, playing and relaxing

Key tasks at 2017 include

- Clear vegetation in and on sides of the Carriage Drive ditches
- Complete clearance around underpass approach, including stump grinding, to allow grass cutting under selected hawthorns/birches
- Clear holly and brambles around oaks near Highfield Avenue
- Widen grass sides of circular path through woodland
- Cut ivy potentially threatening canopies of hawthorns and oaks
- Thin woodland west of Carriage Drive to promote heath species
- Remove obstructions for flailer/grass-cutting machines
- Remove saplings/encroachments opposite nos. 1-5 Highfield Road and along Oakmount Avenue – The Avenue path

Working parties 2017-18

Tasks for all ages, strengths and abilities - diagram overleaf shows in detail what remains to be done

Saturdays 10.00-13.00

2017 30 Sep, 21 Oct, 25 Nov, 09 Dec
2018 13 & 27 Jan, 24 Feb, 10 & 24 Mar

Wednesdays 13.00-16.00

2017 04 Oct, 18 Oct, 22 Nov, 13 Dec
2018 10 & 24 Jan, 21 Feb, 07 & 21 Mar

Meet opposite end of Omdurman Road – bring your own gloves, eye protectors and tools if possible - some will be available

BIG LUNCH 12.30 18 June 2017 opposite Khartoum Road

All welcome - bring your own food, drinks, chairs and quilts - or equivalent!

2017 Southampton Little Common Action Plan South (Part bounded by The Avenue, Oakmount & Highfield Avenues and Highfield Road)

1a & b Maintain open corridors of mown grass 1-2m min. to sides of path, & around lights & old wall

4a Semi-ancient woodland; maintain biodiversity & forest landscape

1f Clear understory/most saplings /grind roots on slopes/sides of underpass & bus-stop approach, restore separation of cycles/walkers in underpass. Maintain grass under selected hawthorns/birches

3b Thin trees & understory – remove/treat all laurel - to promote heathland species, incl. heather, gorse; widen openness of path

3a Remove saplings in & on banks of Carriage Drive; prepare ground for grass to grow; install/repair continuous gravel path (as 2d). Maintain grass between ditches & low 0.5m max.) E. of eastern ditch

4b Maintain maturing woodland

2e Clear understory, save hawthorns & widen path ride. Maintain as amenity/park grassland

Tasks: red
Maintenance: black



Zones

- 1 Security Landscape Townscape**
'Feel-safe' open corridors
- 2 Security Recreation Landscape Townscape**
Amenity/park grassland
- 3 Biodiversity Enhancement**
Juvenile woodland/restored heathland habitat
- 4 Biodiversity Conservation**
Maturing woodland

1c Remove saplings/holly, widen grass edge to path/cycleway. Maintain open grass verges

1d Remove encroaching saplings from woodland edge/restore grassland 'mini-green'. Maintain as short grass meadow

2a Clear overgrowth east of log pile ready for machine flailing/grass-cutting, remove stump of fallen oak with grinder, clear fallen branches etc. obstructing machines. Reposition suitable logs as seats in 2a, 2b & 2c. Maintain as park grassland under mature oaks, beech, hawthorn & (coppiced) hazel

2b Clear understory near paths to improve openness & visibility; restore gravel path; repair seat; restore cycle deterrents on diagonal path. Maintain as park & amenity grassland

2a, 2b & 2c: road-side bank
Cut back/remove hedge stumps ready for machine strimming/flailing. Maintain 2a & 2c as long grass/wild flower bank; 2b closer-trimmed, as now

2c Promote heath islands of gorse, bracken & birch/remove post WWII oaks/sycamores near road; relocate sapling birch from 3b as successors to mature birch & replacement of roadside oaks/ sycamores. Install effective traffic calming. Maintain as grass under hawthorns, birch & veteran oaks, with heath islands (birch, gorse, bracken, coppiced willow, etc.)

2d Create welcoming Common entrance, aligned with recently installed road crossing, and gravel path, funded by the SCC 2016 Small Projects Bid award. Maintain all-weather gravel path & attractive entrance/ interpretation board

Routes

- Existing - to be proved
- Footpaths
- Cycleways/footpaths
- On-road cycleway
- Bus stops

