

# Yeovil Country Park

Management Plan  
2008 – 2012

Opportunities to Enjoy and Conserve  
Wildlife and Countryside



Executive Summary



Policy Context



Site Description



Biological Data



Community



Summary of important features



Management Recommendations



Aims & Objectives



Prescription Tables

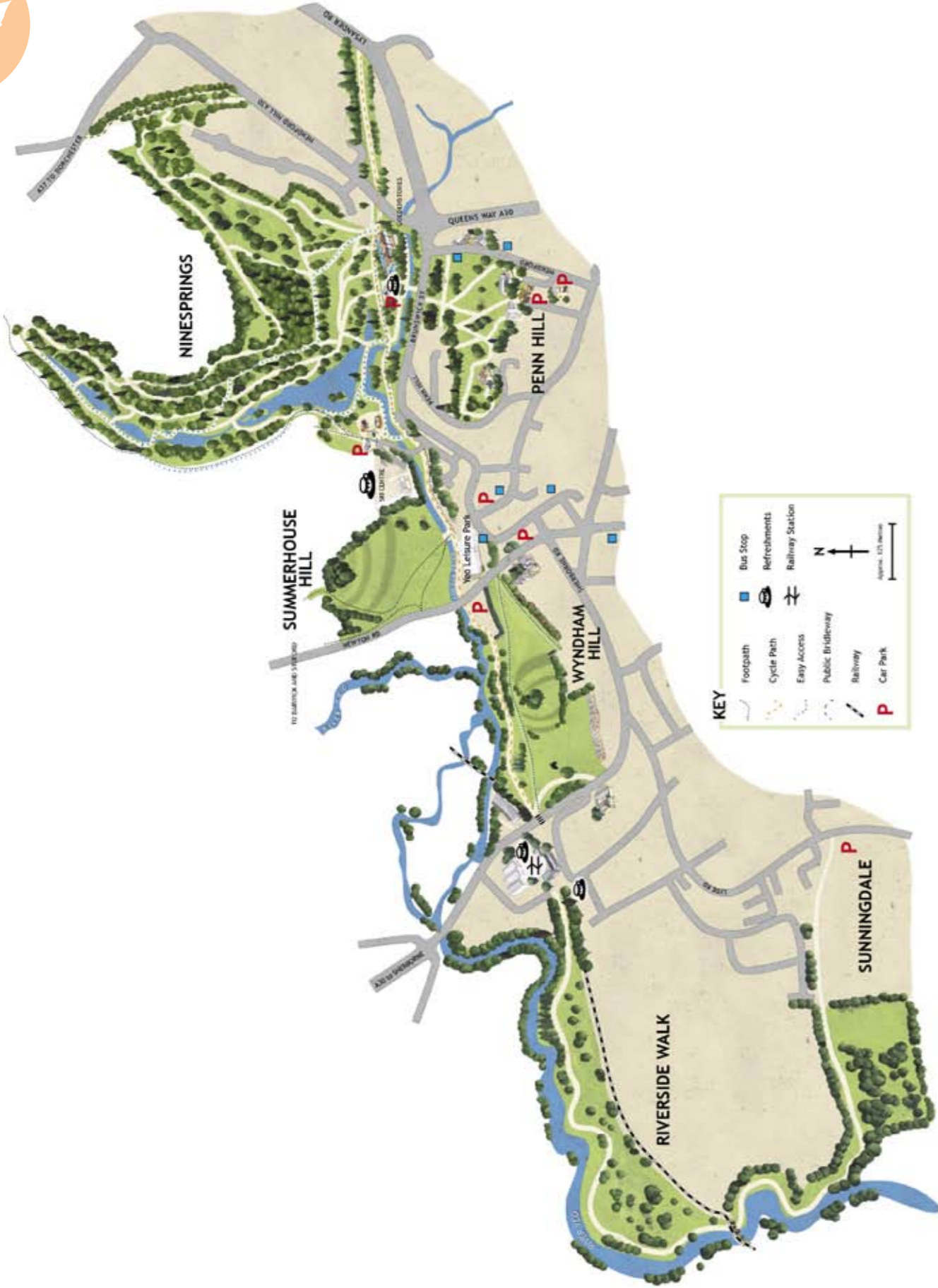


Appendices

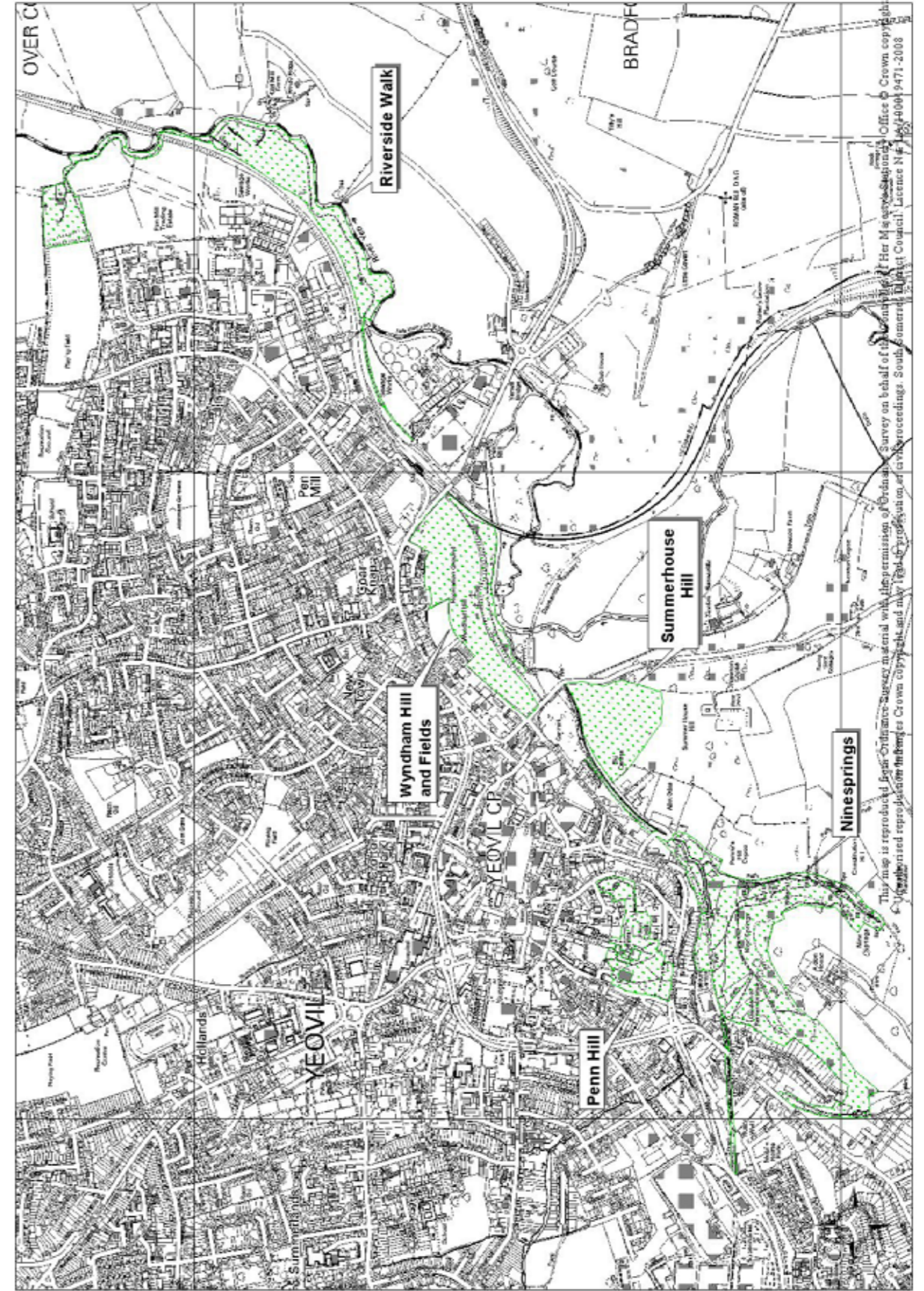




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# Executive Summary

This document sets out the operational context and policies of the countryside team who have management responsibility for Ham Hill Country Park. It then goes on to describe and discuss the management approach and projects that will be undertaken at the Country Park during the next 5 years.



## Introduction, Who We Are

South Somerset's District Council's Countryside Team is part of the Countryside, Heritage and Tourism Service of the Leisure and Culture directorate.

The team exists to manage the 627 acres of District Council owned

countryside sites and the 1000 mile South Somerset Rights of Way network. The countryside team is split into access and sites, with countryside rangers employed to work on one or the other team. Both teams work to improve public access and enjoyment of the superb South Somerset countryside. For the sake of this land management plan, information will be restricted to the countryside sites team.

## Meet the Team

Head of Service (Countryside, Heritage and Tourism)	<b>David Julian</b>
Countryside Manager, Sites	<b>Katy Menday</b>
Countryside Ranger Chard Reservoir Local Nature Reserve	<b>Tim Brown</b>
Countryside Ranger Ham Hill Country Park	<b>Jonathan Marshman</b>
Countryside Ranger Ham Hill Country Park	<b>Paul McNeill</b>
Countryside Ranger Yeovil Country Park	<b>Rachael Lappage</b>
Seasonal Assistant Countryside Ranger Yeovil Country Park	<b>Post holder changes</b>
Education and Access Officer Ham Hill Country Park	<b>Grace Hall</b>

**3 annual apprentices based at the Country Parks**

## The Sites we Manage

The total 627 acres of land managed by the team is incredibly diverse and the rangers of the sites team have diversified and developed their skill sets to include the specialist techniques and knowledge needed to effectively manage these areas.

## Ham Hill Country Park

390 acre Country Park located 5 mile outside Yeovil in the parishes of Stoke and Norton sub Hamdon and Montacute. 200 acres of the site is the largest Iron Age hill fort in Europe. This Scheduled Ancient Monument also includes a 19 roomed Roman villa and possible military camp. Later historical occupation is Medieval and then sees the site as an important community focus during the trade union movement. Off the SAM further Country Park land includes 100 acres of pasture with a further Deserted Medieval Village. Woodlands envelope the entire site on all sides and further increase the biological diversity on site. With calcareous grassland, woodlands, meadows and a tufa stream the wildlife supported on site is broad. The Yeovil and District Natural History Society monitor all species on site and provide the rangers with up to date records for each area of the site. The high point of Ham Hill so exists because of the raised limestone cap – Hamstone. Hamstone is a golden coloured sedimentary rock, used locally for building and carving. The site is still actively quarried for the stone. But other areas of site are designated as geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest to protect the Victorian quarry face exposures. The entire Country Park site is hugely popular and is a heavily used recreational site. The on site ranger team consists of 2 full time (equivalent) rangers who deliver the conservation management, a full time Education and Access Officer funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund until the end of 2009, and two annual apprentice rangers.



The Country Park team operates from the Ham Hill Centre opened in March 2006. From here the regular Wednesday conservation volunteers meet, the Friends of Ham Hill community group lead projects and the school and other groups can come on visits. Ham Hill Country Park is one of the oldest Country Parks, designated in 1975. Since this time the land holding has quadrupled, with SSDC purchasing adjacent land to the original Duchy of Cornwall and Shuldhams Estate land. As the site becomes more intensively used, management has altered to accommodate for this, and to ensure that the important features are protected and conserved.

## Yeovil Country Park

127 acre urban fringe Country Park wrapped around the southern and eastern side of Yeovil. Comprised of 5 main land units each with unique and defining characteristics. Includes the river Yeo with a population of otters, Wyndham and Summerhouse Hills with superb local views and Penn Hill Park, a more formal setting, and the Victorian Valley gardens of Ninesprings with secluded grottos and a family of kingfishers and water voles. The Country Park was established in 2002 and offers a great resource to the people of Yeovil. There is a suite of information available about the park including site leaflets and trails, a permanent orienteering course and fitness trail and many ranger led events. The events programme is varied from ranger led bat walks to the large May bank holiday fayre hosted to celebrate the town and countryside of Yeovil and South Somerset. The on site rangers provide a front line service to park users and have developed great community links including a regular weekly conservation volunteer team. Each year the team recruit and train an apprentice ranger in partnership with Kingston Maurward College at Dorchester.



In 2002 the strap line for Yeovil Country Park was "opportunities to enjoy and conserve wildlife and countryside", this statement remains both pertinent and true for today.

## Chard Reservoir Local Nature Reserve

An 88 acre open water, woodland and meadow site. A jewel on the eastern edge of the busy market town of Chard. The reservoir site is a haven for birdwatchers, anglers and local walkers. The outer wildflower meadows are excellent examples of unimproved grassland awash with orchids and alive with insects in the summer months. The



Chard Reservoir Local Nature Reserve

woodland that edges the reservoir itself is home to many species and is managed to maintain that diversity. Finally the water is the attraction for a broad spectrum of birds and wildfowl including a strengthening population of grebes. The reservoir is stocked with carp and

anglers pay to buy tickets to fish. The angling is under licence to the Chard and District Angling Club and provides the site with a small but regular income. A two year improvements programme funded (at the time) by English Natures "Wildspace!" programme bought a new surfaced trail through the woodlands and other new interpretation on site including a site leaflet. The site is managed by a part time ranger (3 days a week). Being close to the town the reserve is often used by local schools but still is relatively unknown to the wider community of Chard. Work programmes include widening its appeal whilst continuing to protect the fragile and declining habitats on site like reed beds.

## Moldrams Ground Local Nature Reserve

Moldrams is a 4 acre countryside site in the parish of Penselwood near Wincanton. The site offers valuable habitat including two ponds and wetlands, home to a population of great crested newts. There are excellent specimen trees on site, some scrubby areas, rough grasslands and wetlands. A low impact bird hide provides cover for bird watching and a boardwalk completes an un-surfaced walking loop of the site. There is no dedicated ranger for the area but the sites team regularly visit to undertake project works and maintain the site.





## Purpose of this Document

To explain the context in which SSDC's countryside sites sit. To describe what the team aims to achieve at its sites, and identify through management prescriptions how we will do this. This document will also be the basis for on going discussions about the sites' management and give the communities and general public explanations for management prescriptions and opportunities to comment upon them. In addition to longer term aspirations and conservation management, the plan will look at the regular tasks and responsibilities that are delivered and held by the ranger team.

## Where we are now in 2008

The eight person team that is countryside sites is small but effective across lots of land holdings. Each team member is involved and dedicated to the work they do, always striving to deliver better and more. The team is high profile, providing almost weekly positive press coverage about events, community involvement or volunteers on the sites. The team and sites have continued to attract significant external capital grant funding over the past 3-4 years to deliver access improvements, erect buildings, employ new officers and develop better education and interpretation initiatives. Both Country Parks received their Green Flags for the third year in 2007. All the sites continue to deliver positive community involvement on different levels. In short, the team is small but multi skilled and dynamic. Challenges are risen to; success is built upon. The pending threats for the team include the un statutory nature of the teams work in a climate of continual budget cuts and the ever changing priorities of our external funders. This coupled with high workloads, that only ever increase, does leave the team vulnerable. The team recognises all of the above and continues to search out ways to try and create better capacity; both with extra staffing, income generation and facility provision.

## What we do now

Rangers are a multi skilled breed; with job descriptions requiring enhanced practical skills, negotiating talents, teaching experience and a knowledge and love of the British countryside. The South Somerset team includes a wealth of experiences from British Leland mechanics to masters graduates in ecology, such wide reaching skill sets and cross site working continually promotes excellence in all areas of site management. The team has a diverse range of roles to fulfil:

- ▶ Emptying litter and dog waste bins.
- ▶ Litter picking and disposal of fly tips.
- ▶ Management and maintenance of old boundaries and implementing new e.g. dry stone walls, fences and hedgerows.

- ▶ Management and monitoring of tree stock and the woodlands.
- ▶ Protection of wildlife and heritage features.
- ▶ Control programme for invasive species.
- ▶ Running weekly volunteer task days.
- ▶ Training and assessing apprentices.
- ▶ Leading guided walks and other events.
- ▶ Leading school groups and delivering slide talks.
- ▶ Management of livestock on sites.
- ▶ Maintenance of all on site structures and infra structure e.g. benches and car parks.
- ▶ Run the children's look out club and junior ranger teams on a regular basis.
- ▶ Creation of diverse feedback opportunities including annual visitor surveys.
- ▶ Delivery of capital development programmes e.g. interpretation panels and all ability trails.
- ▶ Employing and managing contractors.
- ▶ Public liaison work.
- ▶ Active involvement with health and safety on site and completion of job specific risk assessments and tree safety surveys.
- ▶ Management of work experience placements and other practical placements like the Youth Offending Team.
- ▶ Liaison with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and project delivery.
- ▶ Provide responses to complaints and enquiries.
- ▶ Involvement in income generation schemes including sale of firewood.
- ▶ Development of annual site literature and events programme.
- ▶ Creation of regular (usually fortnightly) press releases to encourage positive media coverage.
- ▶ Practical management of the countryside sites within SSDC's portfolio.
- ▶ Delivery of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme prescriptions, both annual and capital projects.
- ▶ Active delivery of large site events.
- ▶ Maintenance of all tools and vehicles.
- ▶ Attendance at the Friends of meetings and South Somerset Countryside Steering Group.
- ▶ Assist in monitoring our performance with evaluation of all projects and recording of relevant information.



Victorian games at Yeovil May Fayre

## Where we want to be in 2013

By 2013 the countryside sites team aims to be in a position where;

- ▶ Their practical management is entirely sustainable.
- ▶ The communities are involved in all aspects of the parks life.
- ▶ The natural environments of South Somerset are protected and where appropriate the public have positive access to these areas.
- ▶ Regular income streams have been sourced and secured.
- ▶ The two largest sites hold the Green Flag Award and continue to achieve the award annually.
- ▶ The countryside sites are welcoming and safe for all regular local users and offer a unique countryside and heritage experience for visitors from further afield.
- ▶ There are a broad spectrum of opportunities offered to the public so they can be involved and engaged at the countryside sites.

## How do we get there?

All countryside sites will have an active management plan that has been developed with the ranger teams and dictates the journey that the site and its team will take to achieve its vision.

## Our Vision

To offer well managed, accessible and sustainable countryside sites, with extensive opportunities for involvement and enjoyment of the South Somerset Countryside.

## Policy Links

Due to the diverse nature of our work the countryside team has wide ranging links to other agendas and policies. Key strategic links include:

### South Somerset District Council Corporate Plan 2005 – 2012

Under corporate aim 5, critical activity " development and implementation of management plans for countryside, open spaces and associated assets, with clear intended outcomes".

### South Somerset District Council's Countryside, Heritage and Tourism Service Plan.

Produced annually.

### South Somerset District Council's Young Persons Strategy 2006 – 2011

### South Somerset Biodiversity and Nature Conservation strategy.

### South Somerset District Council's Health and Well being strategy.

### Input into current draft of Local Strategic Plan partnerships and new Sustainable Communities Action Plan.

The countryside team have always actively participated in Comprehensive Performance Assessments (Fair in 2004), the 2007 Environment Audit (good) and been key to the successful Beacon Council applications.

Other considerations for the team include:

- ▶ **Planning Policy Guidance note 17.**
- ▶ **The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005**
- ▶ **The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981**
- ▶ **The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.**
- ▶ **The Reservoirs Act 1949.**



Cycleway through Yeovil Country Park





# Our Countryside Policies

## Service Standards

We externally publish our Countryside Service Standards to ensure the public and visitors can be sure of what to expect from us as a team at our sites.

β All permanent front line staff will be fully qualified first aiders.  
β All countryside staff will work in line with adopted "countryside staff guidelines", which includes all relevant Health and Safety legislation, our protocols on safe working practices and required training programmes.

- ▶ We will respond to customer contact in a polite and respectful manner in accordance with the customer charter.
- ▶ All permanent members of staff working with volunteers and children will hold a current, enhanced Criminal Records Bureau clearance certificate.
- ▶ We will carry out annual tree safety surveys of tree stock within our land holdings.
- ▶ We will update and revise the countryside sites risk assessments annually.
- ▶ All countryside sites will have a current management plan.
- ▶ Country Parks will strive to maintain Green Flag status with annual applications.



Responsible recreation is encouraged

- ▶ All work on countryside sites will comply with land designations and relevant legislation e.g. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the National Parks Act 1949.

- ▶ At Country Park sites all litterbins will be emptied and areas litter picked twice a week and more frequently in high use summer months.
- ▶ Correspondence received by telephone, letter or email will be acknowledged with a holding reply within 5 working days and receive a full reply within 10 working days.
- ▶ Vandalism and graffiti on countryside sites will be removed within 1 working day.
- ▶ Site staff will wear logo-ed green uniform when working on sites so easily identifiable by the public.



The countryside should be safe and accessible for everyone

## Health and Safety

The Countryside Manager Sites is responsible for the implementation of the Health and Safety at Work Act (and other recent revisions) with professional advice from SSDC's Health and Safety Officer. The principle points we action to ensure our sites are safe for the rangers and visitors include:

- ▶ Annual revision of the site specific risk assessment, including action points.
- ▶ Annual site visit by SSDC's Health and Safety Officer and Insurance Officer to inspect the premises and discuss working practices.
- ▶ Job specific risk assessments completed for each task e.g. volunteer scrub clearance day, apprentice rangers putting in a flight of steps.
- ▶ Contractor risk assessments completed each time they work on site. Only rangers having undertaken the letting contracts training course can fulfil this function, and only SSDC vetted and approved contractors can be employed.
- ▶ Annual tree safety inspections carried out by rangers at each site and subsequent work programmes actioned.
- ▶ All staff have read and signed up to the countryside staff guidelines that detail safe working practices and the relevant training programmes.

## Litter

The Countryside Rangers are responsible for the emptying of all litterbins at the sites. Both Country Parks have litter bins in their car parks, or at busy picnic areas. Local Nature Reserve sites do not have litterbins, and they will not be installed, instead we encourage visitors to take their litter home. The ranger team are responsible for the location and maintenance of litter bins. They are often vandalised and on occasion particular bins have been entirely removed by the team, or relocated in more suitable areas. All litter bins are emptied on Mondays and

Fridays throughout the year. At this time a full site litter pick is also completed. During busy summer months litter picks are often carried out on a daily basis. The rangers carry black sacks and litter pickers within the site vehicles so they can always carry out a litter pick when visiting areas of site. Sharps boxes are carried in all site vehicles so that all hyperdermic needles can be disposed of safely. Any littering that causes concern amongst the rangers e.g. large needle drops or drugs paraphernalia is reported to the community safety team, local beat Police Officer and SSDC's Enforcement Officers for escalation and investigation. All rangers carry digital cameras to evidence incidences. All rangers are trained in the hazards of litter picking and issued with the relevant PPE.



Close police working is vital to keep anti-social behaviour and crime low

## Vandalism

All sites suffer vandalism being open 24 – 7. Any incidents of fly posting or graffiti are removed within 1 working day by the rangers. If the incident includes evidence that would be relevant to Enforcement Officers then it is reported for their attention e.g. fly tipping that includes contact details. All incidents are recorded on ranger time sheets and repeat offences or patterns are reported to the community safety team and local beat manager. In 2008 the countryside rangers will be trialling use of GPS handsets to quickly and accurately report all incidents of ASB. Once logged the information will be used by the Police and community safety team to map patterns of ASB.

## Dogs and Fouling

Access for dogs and their walkers is allowed across all SSDC's countryside sites. In only a few areas access for dogs is limited in an effort to protect wildlife. All sites have dog waste bins provided for dog owners' use. These are emptied a minimum of twice weekly by the site rangers. Free poop a scoop bags are available from the site rangers and these are handed out from the office or whilst out on patrol. Dog waste bins are replaced on a rolling programme to ensure they are in good repair. The location of bins is determined by the rangers who have the best site knowledge. They are sometimes moved to ensure they are on the most popular walking routes, or in areas where faeces on the ground is a problem. Both Country Park sites are heavily used by local dog walkers. Most are responsible and pick up after their pet, however there are problem areas on site which require focusing on by both the site Rangers and SSDC Enforcement

Officers. Yellow spray is used to highlight dog faeces left on the site; this ensures walkers don't step in it as it is more visible and more importantly the returning, irresponsible dog owner may be shamed into clearing up after their pet. Having a front line, on site, ranger team is positive in providing better links between site users and rangers. On many occasions irresponsible dog owners have been reported to the rangers – giving the enforcement officers a start point for investigating each case. Problem areas for fouling are also signed by the enforcement team to explain the fixed penalty notice fines and encourage dog owners to clear up after their pets. Sheep, and in limited circumstances, cattle worrying can be a problem on the sites. In 2007 the tenant grazier at Ham Hill Country Park lost a total of 8 ewes and lambs to dog attacks. The final attack of the year in October 2007 saw the entire lower jaw and muzzle ripped off a ewe lamb. The lamb eventually bled to death. Hard-hitting posters using images taken on the day were used across site and the local media were used to spread the word. The rangers modified pedestrian gates to ensure even small dogs could not squeeze underneath and escape their owners. To the huge majority of responsible dog owners these tactics may seem extreme, but sheep grazing has to continue at the Country Park to ensure the land is properly and effectively managed; to ensure this can happen it is imperative to get dog owners to listen and take responsibility – this includes reporting other dog owners. The grazing rights are let annually at each countryside site, this gives the ranger team the opportunity to re-assess the annual fee with advice from the District Valuer and also provides the farmer with a "get out" clause should the livestock worrying become too great to continue renting the land.

## Access

- ▶ Public access is available on 97% of the land owned or managed by SSDC's countryside service.
- ▶ All countryside sites have free access and parking (although the free parking is limited to 10 spaces at Yeovil Country Park).
- ▶ Only Ham Hill Country Park contains any land designated as available for open public access under the CROW Act 2000, although the entire site is managed with open access.
- ▶ No sites contain any stiles. Where pedestrians need to cross boundary features wooden 4' gates are used with a self-closing spring. Most gates use a simple loop of chain as the mechanism for securing the gate. More recently erected gates use the recommended double opening gate latch.
- ▶ Pedestrians have excellent access across all sites. Site leaflets and suggested trails exist and provide sufficient information to encourage visitors off the beaten track and deeper into the site. All sites have some distance of level surfaced trail, the team always try to develop circular routes and this





forward plan will include targets for improvements to the sites surfaced trails.

- Those site users in wheel chairs or with pushchairs should successfully be able to visit key areas of site. As mentioned earlier the length and quality of wheelchair friendly surface is a key area for development over the next 5 years. The ranger team work with, and are advised by the South Somerset Disability Forum. The Forum provides advice on all aspects of site management and development whilst fully appreciating the huge limitations posed by any natural landscape.



Valley Gardens of Ninesprings in Yeovil

In this plan all sites will investigate the relevance of Braille trails, audio tours and other interpretive media in addition to physical access improvements. The rangers still refer to the original BT Access for All document for guidance and the Field Fare Trust is the most useful national organisation. Much has also been learnt from visits to other countryside sites including those run by other organisations like the RSPB.

- In a climate where healthy living is paramount and encouraging physical activity is key the team at each site have carefully considered the impact of cycling on the site. Cycling is permitted in various forms across the sites; Yeovil has a very busy cycleway bisecting the site. Ham Hill holds a different attraction for off road mountain bikers and has a designated area and plenty of bridleways across the site. Chard only allows children on bicycles in its meadows.
- The only site with access for horse riders is Ham Hill Country Park. The entire site is open access for riders and this access links well into a wide reaching network of local bridleways and lanes.

### Sustainability

In addressing most schemes and projects the team consider the sustainability and environmental impact of the plan. Within daily work programmes:

- All felled or fallen trees are corded, stock piled and sold as firewood to local residents. Some wood is piled on site as habitat piles.
- Any stone needed for construction projects is sourced locally, and is most frequently Hamstone from Harvey's quarry on Ham Hill.
- The rangers have a chainsaw operated mobile saw mill to enable them to plank large fallen trees, the

wood is then seasoned and used for benches or sign posts.

- No peat or any other composts are used on sites.
- Only wild species of tree or flower are planted on sites, they must be sourced from local genetic stock and Wee Tree nurseries guarantees this for each plant or bulb purchased.
- At each ranger base a rudimentary recycling system is in operated for the usual paper, glass and plastic materials.
- The team operates a total of two road vehicles, one landrover and one pick up truck, both are diesel but under the SSDC's vehicle replacement policy and Green Transport Strategy other options will be investigated when they need replacing. Three Kawasaki mules service the daily needs of the sites and these are also diesel.
- The Ham Hill Centre was built in 2005 and incorporated as many green construction methods as was possible. Predominantly the use of sheeps wool insulation for the building. In Spring 2008 a new wind turbine will be erected on the building to provide power for the office and education room. Under the new climate change strategy for SSDC wood fuelled heating is being investigated for all departments and may be possible at Ham Hill.

### Pesticides

In general terms the team tries to avoid use of chemicals at all costs. However the extent of the ragwort infestation at Ham Hill has meant that a 3 year control programme was developed using "Round Up" (bio-degradable product). Once the population is at a level controllable by hand pulling then use of all chemicals will cease. At Yeovil Country Park the team have employed contractors to chemically treat the patches of Japanese knotweed over a two year period to eradicate it. Any ranger using chemicals are fully COSHH trained and carry the PA1 and PA6 qualification.

### Memorial Features:

Every month the ranger team receives many requests for memorial trees and benches in memory of loved ones. All sites are at saturation point with benches and require no more so all requests for new benches will be declined. The Memorial Arboretum in Yeovil is now full and all requests will be declined, single trees dotted around the park will also not be authorised to ensure the Country Parks are managed to the management plans and not on an ad hoc basis. Tree planting memorial schemes are occasionally organised on a larger scale by the ranger team to replace or replant woodland compartments, these schemes preclude the use of memorial plaques to ensure a natural woodland develops without man made materials and flowers throughout.

### Volunteers

The countryside team runs a very successful range of volunteering opportunities across its three main sites. Most established are the regular, weekly practical conservation volunteers. These teams are key to the successful management of the sites, in 2007 over 1000 volunteer days were donated and delivered projects ranging from scrub clearance on the Iron Age ramparts to tree and bulb planting in the valley gardens of Ninesprings. Each task day is led by a countryside ranger and is designed to give a sense of achievement upon completion. All rangers are experienced in leading task days, carrying out a risk assessment before hand and delivering a tools talk before starting. Some volunteers have been with us for a number of years and have a level of skill beyond the average team member. These individuals are offered the LANTRA brushcutter and strimmer qualification and to take the in house Kawasaki mule 4x4 driving test. This gives us a more skilled volunteer team and individuals that know we appreciate their time and effort.

All volunteers are required to register prior to starting work with a team. This provides the necessary emergency contact details and ensures they are covered by SSDC's insurance.

The practical volunteers are comprised predominantly of retired individuals seeking new interests and community involvement. Practical conservation work also provides a great way of staying fit and the 2007 volunteer survey also indicated the importance of the social side of volunteering. Over the past 18 months the practical team have attracted great attention from student placement organisations. More and more frequently those pupils at risk from exclusion, or those already attending a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) are approaching our teams for regular placements. Experience has proven that this can work very well – with the students gaining hugely with the responsibility and team working. However, conversely we have

experienced major issues with inappropriate language and behaviour.



Practical activities for young people

From 2008 we will be limiting placements to 2 under 18's per practical day. Ensuring the rangers can control the task day, and that regular volunteers do not feel ousted or under valued.

On other week days a positive working relationship has developed with other organisations providing volunteer labour on a regular basis; the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Team Apache from Westland's Helicopters, the Youth Offending Team and other local corporate groups.

The two Country Parks run very active regular teams with an average of 7 attendees each week. The volunteer team at Chard Reservoir Local Nature Reserve was established in December 2007 and has made a very positive start.

Practical volunteering is not the only opportunity for involvement at the countryside sites.



Beginning construction of a new boardwalk

Ham Hill Country Park has a very active Friends group who meet monthly to fundraise, organise events and act as a communication mechanism between rangers and Country Park users.

Since December 2005 the Friends of Ham Hill have raised nearly £20,000 which has been re-invested in the Country Park in various ways – including organising the large September heritage fayre. Most importantly through a suggestion by a Friend of Ham Hill and 80% financial support the Country Park now has a summer weekend ranger position. Following the success of the Ham Hill Group Yeovil Country Park will launch its Friends group in Summer 2008.

Volunteers are key to the success of the countryside sites. They help deliver work programmes, draw down funding in an increasingly difficult financial climate and probably most importantly help keep the park rangers in touch with the communities using the sites. Our local residents have great ownership of the sites and by maintaining communication with these people we hope to maintain our current successes. In recognition of the key role of volunteers we make sure we say thank you regularly with a summer BBQ, a winter Christmas party and plenty of biscuits!

### Young People

There are a number of ways for young people to get involved with the countryside team. These range from informal play events to formal countryside management training as an apprentice ranger. The team aims to offer opportunities for engagement at every age and is also aware of a need to provide





# Policy Context

professional training and work experience for those young people keen to enter the competitive countryside profession.

The ranger's run a children's "look out" club every other month on a Saturday morning. The club is designed to stimulate an interest in the environment and the great outdoors and is predominantly aimed at children aged 8 – 12 years. Activities include bird box creation, kayaking and shelter building.

For the next age bracket, 12-16 years the Country Park teams deliver a Junior Rangers event once per annum during the school holidays. Attending for 3 full days the young people work alongside the rangers on practical conservation tasks. Each event is limited to 8 children to ensure all participants get individual attention at some time and the mixing of young people from a range of local secondary schools has proved very valuable.

A longer term version of junior rangers is offered through the schools work experience schemes. Each site has an average of 6 placements per annum, and over the years we have taken placements from all the local secondary schools. Each site restricts placements to one student per school at any one time. In addition to school placements the local colleges also send HND placements e.g. Kingston Maurward and Yeovil Colleges.

Annually the Country Parks run 3 countryside apprenticeships. Recruitment begins in May and the students start at their site in

September. The programme is delivered in partnership with Kingston Maurward College, the students spending 1 day a week at college and 4 days at their placement. A successful apprentice will finish with an NVQ level 2 in Environmental Conservation, an NPTC brush cutter certificate and a 4 day First Aid at Work certificate. This coupled with a full years hands on industry experience has seen past apprentices go on to Assistant Ranger positions and to complete a degree. In 2007 the scheme was in its third year and the number and calibre of applicants rises each year. The scheme (because of government funding) is limited to non-graduates and those aged 16 – 21 years.

A further mechanism whereby the rangers become involved with young people is through the work of the Youth Offending Team. One or two, low risk, offenders delivering their reparation time will attend site to carry out practical conservation work. This is particularly valuable where their crime was committed on site e.g. joy riding



Bug hunting in the meadows



Camouflage masks



Den building playscheme

or vandalism, as they get to work with the rangers that have to manage and maintain the site – there have been some real success stories with this scheme. All of the rangers work is carried out in line with SSDC's child protection policy and all rangers are CRB cleared.

## Education and Interpretation

A large part of the ranger's workload is informal education and interpretation of the countryside sites.

Every year a busy and diverse events programme is delivered based around key messages and using evaluation gathered throughout the previous year. Each site has a major annual fayre event, hosts various guided walks and talks and also themed children's activities. Each year the number of each type of event varies depending on the level of external funding secured and current staffing specialisms e.g. bat walks.

Each site has its own leaflet, including a map, orientation information, self guided trails and contact information. In addition to these sites have developed their own specialist literature e.g. the fitness trail at Yeovil Country Park, heritage walks at Ham Hill Country Park and bird life trails at Chard Reservoir.

Also on site are map panels and additionally some areas have interpretation panels to describe the history or wildlife of an area. These panels are maintained by the team to ensure they are kept free of graffiti and panels are replaced before they begin to fade. Rangers are all competent to deliver educational sessions to schools. The only dedicated education ranger is based at Ham Hill Country Park and the posts funding (Heritage Lottery Fund) limits delivery to that site. The aim is for both Country Parks to have a modern education pack by 2009. Educational sessions delivered by the rangers include minibeast hunts, pond dipping and plants & habitats studies. With a wide range of history activities now available at Ham Hill Country Park, it is becoming an increasingly popular venue for school visits.

Various partnerships exist to ensure educational activities are properly delivered and meet the needs of the schools and other providers: the Yeovil and District Forest school cluster group meets at Ham Hill Country Park and takes advice from the rangers on the safe delivery of practical sessions. For 5 years now the Country Park has been the focus for the annual Gifted and Talented summer school in partnership with local schools and funded by the County Council. Three years of Heritage Lottery Funding at Ham Hill is, and will, greatly improve the educational resources available to teachers. The rangers at all sites follow current trends for education and events, and the fashion for bush craft sessions and close up wildlife watching experiences are both in their infancy at the Country Parks but proving to be very popular.

All sites have a good basic educational set up and have interpretation to suit the site. All sites do require new further development of this suite of materials and this will be considered within this plan.

## Marketing

We have over the years become better at positively marketing the work of the countryside team.

Certainly having a supportive and proactive in house communication team has given us plenty of media coverage every year. The diverse work of the team, on busy public open access sites, within local communities and often with grant funding make a great deal of our work of interest to the press. In 2007 we averaged 1 positive news story each week, in both the local papers and on local radio. We also of course incurred negative press when we felled trees; about 4 articles per year.

The development of the web pages is proving critical to attracting new visitors and audiences, and much time in 2008 is dedicated to ensuring our pages are cutting edge and really do reflect the beautiful countryside sites we manage.

Annually we do ask our site users what events they would like to see, and we also respond to feedback from people attending our events. This ensures our marketing is suitable and relevant for our existing audience and we try and gather new ideas and develop new schemes on top of this each year.

There is no designated marketing budget, so we are reliant on editorial in magazines. Despite this we have managed to feature in national publications like "BBC Wildlife" and "Trail" magazine.

We aim to develop a clear brand image for each separate site, using its own logo in conjunction with the SSDC logo. All leaflets, panels and other publications use this logo and it is used to unify the Friends groups and ranger teams.

## Infrastructure and Facilities Management

The ranger team have responsibility for the management of all structures that fall within their sites. However being part of a large organisation we are lucky enough to be able to call on the expertise of colleagues to help advise us on particular projects e.g. engineers for construction works. Across our sites we have a number of particular responsibilities.

The dam and sluices at Chard Reservoir – monitored and maintained by us with annual inspections by an approved engineer to comply with the 1949 Reservoirs Act.

**The railway sidings at Yeovil Country Park** - monitored and maintained by us with professional advice from in house engineers and clearance work and climbing carried out by our arboricultural team. The Play Area in Yeovil Country Park - managed and maintained by our play team from Leisure Services to comply with ROSPA regulations.

**All buildings and containers** – managed by us with assistance from our Property Services team for specialist works e.g. electrical.

**Public Toilets** – managed by our property services team including the cleaning contract. Rangers simply report faults or vandalism.

All pathways on sites are managed and maintained by

the rangers, but engineers will advise on construction of new ones. We do, quite often, use students based within our property services team to carry out surveys and drawings of new schemes. Having a pictorial representation is much easier for public consultation purposes.

## Decision Making Framework

The on site rangers are empowered to take weekly decisions on delivery and maintenance works. They best know the site, and as they are always working to annual and 5 year plans, know how best to resolve operational level decisions.

For longer term, or planning decisions, a brief report is taken to the South Somerset Countryside Steering Group. This group is comprised of District Council Officers, Councillors, Volunteers and



representatives of specialist groups e.g. Somerset Wildlife Trust. They meet quarterly to receive reports on all the countryside sites and guide policy and management decisions. It is an incredibly useful forum where officers

can take on board a great range of opinions and feedback. Ultimately this group needs to approve the 5 year management plans for the sites. In addition all planning documents will go to the relevant area committee for adoption e.g. Yeovil Country Park plan to administrative Area South.

## Consultation framework

The countryside team are good at consulting with their users and ensuring that all stakeholders are given the opportunity to feed into planning documents. A number of consultations are carried out each year, ranging from face to face visitor surveys on site to evaluation forms at events. Every three years the team visits the town centre in Yeovil to undertake a number of surveys in particular to harness non-user opinion. Open public meetings are hosted every other year for each site, where rangers give presentations about the site and its projects.

At the end of each calendar year the feedback forms from events are compiled and analysed (qualitative) that with the attendance levels (quantitative) help to guide the development of the next years plan. All past reports are held centrally in the SSDC consultation library.



# Policy Context





# Yeovil Country Park Management Plan 2008 - 2012

Site Description

## Introduction

Yeovil Country Park is 127 acre countryside site that wraps itself around the southern and eastern sides of the busy market town of Yeovil. The Country Park is comprised of 5 main land holdings all of which have very different characters and special features. The Country Park is only young and was designated in 2002 when South Somerset District Council established ownership of all the land units. Between 2002 – 2007 the Country Park team has been creating the infrastructure and wildlife management schemes needed to cope with the heavy public use on the site. In 2005 the Country Park won its first green flag award to the delight of the team and reflects the high standard of maintenance and community engagement on site. The Country Park is in a unique position, only 5 minutes walk from the bustling town centre and offers an incredible array of peaceful pass times and open access green space to residents and visitors. This plan is needed to direct the management on site for the next 5 years as the ranger team moves into a more developmental phase of the Country Parks life. Positive relations with the Yeovil Vision team and Town Centre Partnership see the Country Park being drawn into the new phase of the town's life, and within the Country Park, the ranger team have aspirations for a Country Park centre and ranger base with new accessibility projects providing better opportunities for people to experience and enjoy wildlife.

The Country Parks five land units include Riverside Walk a narrow corridor of woodland and rough meadow following the river corridor of the Yeo, with a population of otters and valuable habitat for many species of bird, butterfly and reptile. Moving westwards Wyndham Hill has the landmark 4 lime trees on its summit and supports a mix of pasture grassland and newly planted woodland. Travelling along the old railway line, now cycleway, that links the units of land you next reach Summerhouse Hill. A steep incline takes you southwards to the best views of Yeovil and a stand of 9 parkland oaks within the grazed land unit. Stands of gorse are dotted around the pasture and provide cover for birds and wildlife. Penn Hill Park is further north and more firmly within the town of Yeovil. In two parts, the park is predominantly amenity grassland, with shrub beds and ornamental trees, the old gardens of Penn House include an old rose garden and rope edged paths. The final unit of land is the Valley gardens of Ninesprings. The best known and most heavily used area of site, Ninesprings has a unique character all of its own. The Victorian

valley gardens, lake, ponds, meadows and woodlands are full of plant life. They are perfect for exploring on the network of windy paths and support a family of kingfishers and a population of water voles. The children's play area is popular and many events are organised from the lake and meadow area. With such a diverse range of sites and habitats the Country Park supports a huge range of species, can accommodate many types of public users and is ideally placed to deliver a countryside experience to the residents of Yeovil and further a field.

Yeovil Country Park is an emotive site and important to many people, the ranger team regularly consult the public on site projects and make efforts to engage many individuals in the planning and development of the Country Park. The practical and daily site management is carried out by a small dedicated on site ranger team:  
 Country Park Ranger: Rachael Lappage  
 Country Park Ranger: Paul McNeill (part time)  
 Apprentice Ranger: annually appointed  
 Seasonal assistant ranger: annually appointed  
 Countryside Manager: Katy Menday (off site)  
 The District Council's in house horticultural services team carry out the routine maintenance on site. Tasks include grass cutting, dog bin emptying and strimming. The extensive tree stock within the Country Park requires specialist help on a regular basis and the SSDC arboricultural team is often employed for climbing and large felling work on site.

Taking decisions on the direction and specific projects for site the South Somerset Countryside Steering Group was established in 2006 as a successor to the Yeovil Country Park Steering Group. The Group guides the management of Yeovil Country Park ensuring that the needs of the public and wildlife are met. Members of the Steering Group represent the



District, Town and Parish Councils, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Yeovil and District Natural History Society and Country Park volunteers and users.

During the late 1960's and 1970 funding was available to local authorities to establish and manage Country Parks. Such funding has not been available for a number of years. Over the past 5 years Yeovil Country Park has been funded by South Somerset District Council, Yeovil Town Council and specific project works have been completed after bids to various Lottery funds. In 2007 the ranger team secured £10,000 of funding in partnership with Yeovil Town Council from the Lottery's Breathing Places fund to carry out extensive works in the valley gardens of Ninesprings. Then in November 2007 the ranger team successfully won a public TV vote, in the Peoples Millions Big Lottery Fund, gaining £80,000 to carry out various works on site, all designed to improve physical public access and enhance the public's access to wildlife. With District and Town Council budgets ever decreasing, it is obvious that the future of capital works in the Country Park will be reliant on external grant funders and sponsorship of the Country Park by local businesses. This plan in part will address this issue of financing the Country Park and the marketing opportunities it can offer to businesses.

## Location

Yeovil Country Park is situated on the southern and south-eastern edge of Yeovil in Somerset. The location of Yeovil Country Park means that it is within easy

## Compartments

In order to describe areas of the Country Park and to discuss their future management Yeovil Country Park has been divided into management compartments.

Site	Compartment	Habitat Type
<b>Ninesprings</b>	The Valley Gardens	Woodland and Water
	Hillside Woods	Woodland
	Braggchurch	Woodland
	Southwoods	Woodland
	Memorial Arboretum	Ornamental trees and Grassland
	Lake and Pond	Water
	Meadows	Grassland, Scrub and Specimen Trees
<b>Penn Hill</b>	Ninesprings Railway Walk	Edge Grassland, Scrub and Strips of scrubby woodland
	Formal Park	Grassland and Specimen Trees
<b>Summerhouse Hill</b>	Old Penn House Garden	Grassland and Specimen Trees
	Grassland	Grassland, gorse scrub and parkland trees
<b>Wyndham Hill</b>	Open Field	Grassland and specimen trees
	Escarpment	Woodland
	Wyndham Railway Walk	Water, woodland and amenity grassland
<b>Riverside Walk</b>	Birchfield	Scrub and grassland
	Water Meadows	Grassland
	New Plantation	Woodland
	Railway Entrance	New woodland



A frosty morning at Wyndham Hill

driving distance of many towns and villages. The vast majority of the Country Park falls within South Somerset District, within the County of Somerset. There is one very small part of the Riverside Walk which falls within the County of Dorset, where the County boundary leaves the River Yeo south towards an old field pond and then heads east back to the River Yeo. Yeovil Country Park falls within the two parishes of Yeovil and Barwick & Stoford.

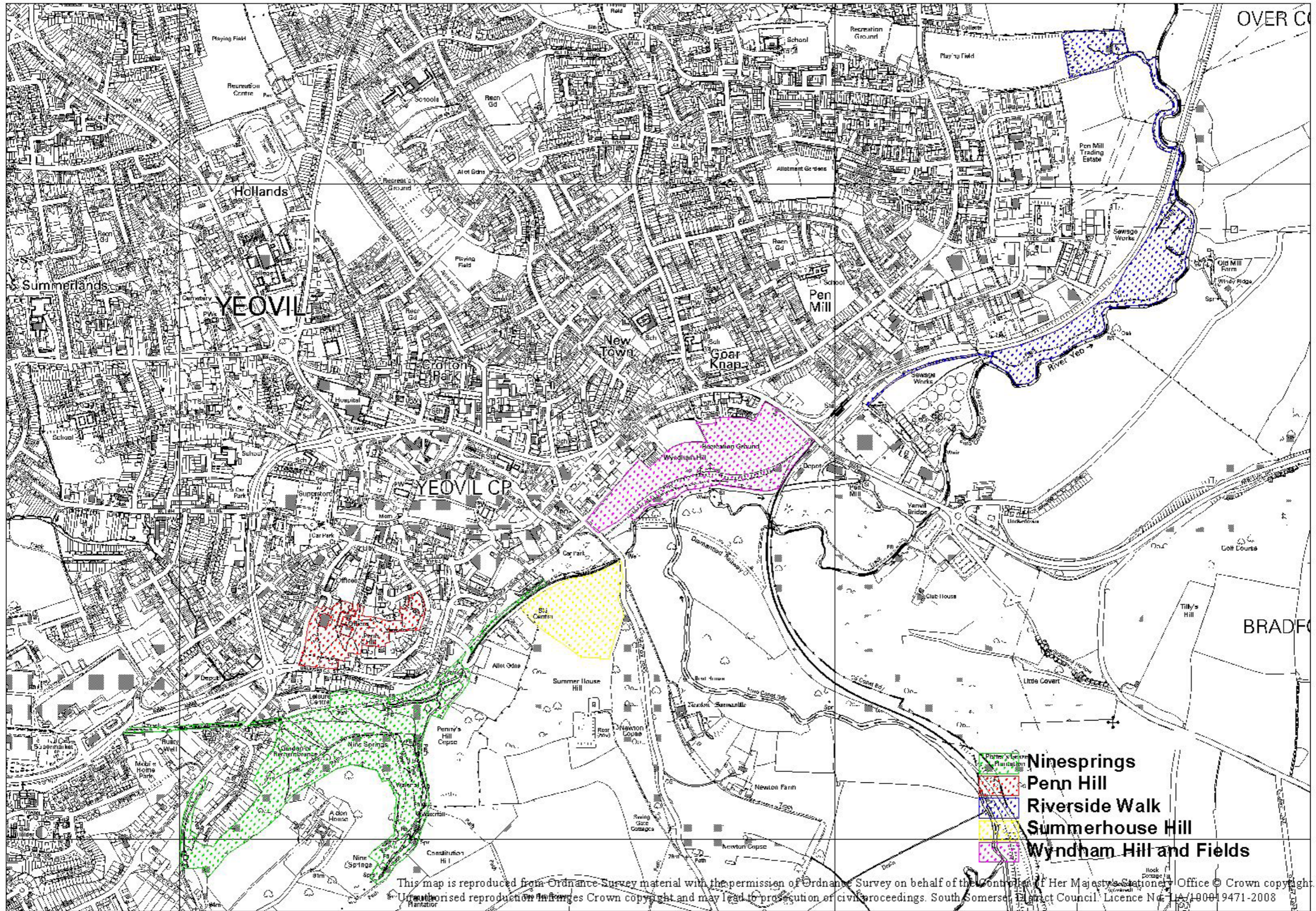


Site Description





Site Description



-  Ninesprings
-  Penn Hill
-  Riverside Walk
-  Summerhouse Hill
-  Wyndham Hill and Fields



Site Description





### Map Coverage

The best available maps for Yeovil Country Park are Ordnance Survey Maps Landranger 183 1:50,000 sheet, Explorer 129 1:25,000 sheet and Geological Survey Sheet 312 1:50,000 sheet. Aerial photographs of Yeovil Country Park are available to Council staff on the web map programme or from the Geographical Information Systems Unit at South Somerset District Council, Brympton Way offices.

#### SIZE

**Yeovil Country Park totals 127 acres (51ha) and comprises**

Ninesprings	49 acres (19.8ha)
Summerhouse Hill	14 acres (5.6ha)
Riverside Walk	27 acres (10.8ha)
Penn Hill	10 acres (4.1ha)
Wyndham Hill	27 acres (10.8ha)

### Ownership

Please note that this Management Plan is not a legal document. Reference should be made to original tenure documents before taking any decisions or any action which may have legal implications. South Somerset District Council own almost all of the land within Yeovil Country Park. The Council acquired Ninesprings in 1979 to restore the neglected Victorian pleasure garden. Wyndham Hill and Summerhouse Hill were acquired in 2000 and 2001 respectively to provide additional public open space. Riverside Walk and Penn Hill were acquired in 1888 to 1972 and 1953 to 1966.

### Statutory Designations

Parts of Yeovil Country Park are designated CWS. All CWS are included in the Local Plan protected in development policy EC5. CWS are designated by Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC), following survey and assessment using a criteria approved by the SERC Management Group to assess wildlife importance within Somerset. Unlike the nationally designated sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) CWS designation does not confer any legal or statutory protection. They signify the extent of the important wildlife habitats. The Somerset Wildlife Trust established the Wildlife Sites Project to provide wildlife management advice to owners and managers of CWS to help conserve their wildlife value for the future. The Country Wildlife Sites that intersect Yeovil Country Park are:

### Tree Preservation Orders

Tree Preservations Orders are made by planning authorities to protect trees from being felled, pruned,

willfully damaged or destroyed without the permission of the Local Authority. In 1996, 12 Oaks on the north-eastern edge of Wyndham Hill opposite the Penn Mill Hotel were covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO). Two of these trees were felled with the necessary permission, and two horse-chestnuts planted as replacements, which are now covered by the TPO. In 2007 one of the TPO'd Oaks fell after significant rainfall and in windy conditions, this tree has been replaced by a newly planted Oak.



Art activities in the Country Park

### Access

At present the most heavily used site in Yeovil Country Park is Ninesprings and 53% of visitors arrive by car. Ninesprings is shown on brown tourism signs at major junctions in the town, but signage does not cover all roads into Yeovil. The majority of visitors park at Goldenstones. There are a number of car parks that are within close walking distance of the sites within Yeovil Country Park. It is also possible to reach Yeovil Country Park from Penn Hill Station or Yeovil Junction Station.



Beech walk

SERC Reg	Name	Description
ST51/022	Newton Copse*	Broadleaved ancient woodland
ST51/070	Ninesprings Pond and Stream	Site with important aquatic species
ST51/109	Aldon Park*	Aldon Park is now grazed land with access for dog walking by purchase of an annual ticket.
ST51/127	Riverside Walk	Riverside area of woodland on steep banks
ST51/065	Wyndham Hill Wood	Semi-natural broadleaved woodland on steep slopes adjacent to disused railway line.
ST51/005	Summerhouse Hill	Unimproved and semi-improved acid grassland
ST51/026	Ninesprings Wood	Ancient woodland site predominately broad leaved and conifer plantation stands.

\*These sites are adjacent to Yeovil Country Park

There are a number of Public Footpaths, one bridleway but no restricted Byways within Yeovil Country Park. Footpaths and the bridleways are listed in the table below.

Path Ref	Route	Whole/Part within Yeovil Country Park
Y32/12	From Newton Road to Sherborne Road	Footpath whole
Y32/11	From Newton Road to Hillside Terrace	Footpath whole
Y31/20	From Dodham Bridge to Newton House Gates	Footpath whole
Y31/21	From Dodham Bridge to Junction of footpaths 22 and 23	Footpath whole
Y31/22	From gate opposite Newton House gates to top of Summerhouse Hill	Footpath part
Y32/13	From Stars Lane to Roadway to Park Street and Addlewell Lane	Footpath whole
Y32/14	From Victoria Bridge to Ninesprings	Footpath part
Y32/15	From Footpath 14 to Borough boundary (then continues as FP. Y2/9 in Barwick)	Footpath part
Y32/18	Lovers Lane from A30 to A37	Bridleway whole





The five sites within Yeovil Country Park contains numerous pedestrian entrances open to walks and cyclist. Entrances are listed in the table below:

Location of Entrance	Pedestrian	Cyclist	Status	Structures
Ninesprings				
Goldenstones Car Park	b	b	Cycleway, Public Footpath	-
Ninesprings Play Area	b		-	
Easy Access Trail	b		Public Footpath	Kissing Gate
Southwood Road	b			-
Lysander Road	b	b	Cycleway	-
Hendford Hill	b	b	-	-
A37 Dorchester Road	b	b	-	-
Penn Hill				
Brunswick Street	b		-	-
Penn Hill	b		-	-
Petters Way	b		-	-
Summerhouse Hill				
Dodham Brook Bridge	b		Public Footpath	Gate
Newton Road	b		Public Footpath	Kissing Gate
Newton Copse	b		Public Footpath	Kissing Gate
Crest of Hill	b		Public Footpath	Kissing Gate
Wyndham Hill				
Newton Road	b		Public Footpath	Gate
Yeovale Leisure Centre	b	b	Cycleway	
Hillview Terrace	b		Public Footpath	Gate
Entrance by Vets	b			Gate
A30 – Opposite Penn Mill Hotel	b	b	-	Kissing Gate
A30 – Adjacent to road bridge	b	b	Public Footpath, Cycleway	
Riverside Walk				
Flushing Meadow	b		-	Metal Barrier
Lower Birchfield	b		-	-

### Topography and Landscape

Yeovil lies on a distinctive landform feature known as a dip slope with the land gently sloping southwards. To the south of the town, from Yeovale Leisure Centre to Goldenstones the dip slope reaches a narrow river valley, with a low but attractive wooded escarpment. Viewed from the west edge of town, the broad perception is of the greater part of Yeovil being cradled by this wooded escarpment. The sites that make up Yeovil Country Park generally lie to the south and east of the town centre, covering areas of both the escarpment and the lower dip slope. These sites are linked by the river valley of Dodham Brook and River Yeo, which runs east and north between these landforms through the south-east edge of town.

#### Penn Hill

This outlying knoll on the southern escarpment is crowned by mature specimen trees which divide up grassed areas, proving an area of open space within a built surround. This urban surround of roads (Hendford and Brunswick Street to the west and south respectively) car parks and municipal buildings (Penn House and Maltravers House being the prominent) gives the location a strong civic character. From the head of the knoll, there are clear views south towards Yeovil's southern

escarpment, and west toward Odcombe and Ham Hill. Generally Penn Hill provides good vantage points over Yeovil, though in places tree lines and groups do obscure the view.

Adjacent to Penn Hill lie some relic pathways from what was the formal garden.



Pond in Ninesprings

Centrally, an underused allotment enables unimpeded views south whilst the ground linking the allotment with Penn House is derelict and unmanaged, with a surround of drawn-up hedging and fencing. Between Maltravers House and the roads there is a greater area and proportion of open space, primarily of grass, a characteristic associated with the former Hendford Manor House, which stood between the present day museum and theatre, and looked across grassland to its south. Small groups of trees together with individual specimens assist in screening buildings, demarcate former field boundaries and align pathways in addition to creating notable skyline features that break up the monotony of the town's roof scape. There is a particularly fine line of beech, lime and



View of Yeovil from Penn Hill

oak that runs parallel with Brunswick Street, though in 2007 the large beech on the corner of St Nicholas Park had to be removed after arboricultural investigations revealed significant failures.

#### Ninesprings

Ninesprings is arguably Yeovil's premier open-space, to the south of the town centre and major communications routes. Lying between Aldon Park and the town centre, Ninesprings is a north-facing wooded escarpment, and marks a rapid transition from town to open countryside. The general aspect is north to north-west, over land falling from the head of the southern escarpment to the Dodham Brook corridor, which forms the valley floor. From the highest points of Ninesprings, where there is a break in the tree cover, there are good views to the north, with particularly good vantage points enabling views over west Yeovil toward the countryside beyond. Within the valley floor, views out are constricted by the southern scarp, and rising ground towards Penn Hill and its intervening buildings. The character of Ninesprings is primarily that of wooded hillside, opening out in the valley base to grassed areas and water. Woodland is the long-established major characteristic of the park, comprised of stands of native and ornamental species clothing the scarp and Valley Gardens. There is a particularly fine line of beech tree adjacent to Aldon House grounds and mature specimens (including veteran trees) that are primarily broadleaved, which can be found throughout the site amongst the wooded areas, and within the 'meadows'. The meadows cover the lower slope of the escarpment, between woodland and brook, complete with 'gappy' (mainly hazel) hedgerows from the time of tithe map compilation.





Site Description

Water is a major component of Ninesprings, particularly the springs that cascade down the Valley Gardens. In addition there is Dodham Brook and two pools in the valley base which bring a welcome expanse of openness in conjunction with the meadows. Relics of the former 'pleasure garden' and many of the route-ways relate to the time when the Valley Gardens ( a spring fed wooded 'goyle' that cuts through the scarp in its swift decent to the valley floor) was in the ownership of Aldon House. Particularly evident is the expanse of cherry laurel within the woodland and Valley Garden, honeysuckle hedging and hazel/cherry groves. Designed landscapes are particularly important to the character of this side of Yeovil. Aldon Park and Ninesprings have provided a rich legacy of specimen trees and avenues.

In being routed along the former rail-line, the linear character of the foot/cycleway recalls another period in time, when the Great Western Railway Durston and Yeovil branchline linked the old town station with South Somerset's Levels and Moors. This cycle path provides the line between Ninesprings and Summerhouse Hill. Understandably linear, it is hemmed-in by employment sites to the north, some of which are unsightly, and rising ground to the south, giving a strong feel of constraint this is exacerbated by tall shrubs immediately alongside the path. These obscure views toward Summerhouse Hill though have some merit in disguising Dodham Brook's concrete encasement. Both the unsightly business premises and encasement of Dodham Brook are projects within the Yeovil Vision, forming part of the scheme to form a "waterfront" concept in the Foundry House area of Yeovil, with the town turning to face the green of the Country Park.

Summerhouse Hill

The open grass hillside of Summerhouse Hill forms part of the southern escarpment and immediate countryside edge to Yeovil, separated only by the Dodham Brook from the former town station site, thereby establishing a clear rural/urban interface. To the south lies open countryside. The hillside falls north from the scarp head towards the town. The outlook follows this aspect, the extent of views increasing the further up the slope one progresses. Immediately to view is the new development on the former town station adjacent to the old foundry buildings, whilst the greater spread of Yeovil recedes with distance to the north. Summerhouse Hill is viewed as part of the enfolding southern escarpment, but provides a contrast in being open grassland rather than sharing the wooded slopes that characterise Ninesprings. It is also a marked contrast to the busy urban edge at its toe, and the linear character of the cycleway approach from Ninesprings. Strip lynchets are noticeable over the lower hillside, being particularly pronounced immediately above the Dodham Brook, whilst the hill's height is exaggerated by the group of long-established mature oak trees towards its head. Some gorse scrub is developing over the upper slopes adjacent the southern boundary whilst mature trees align the eastern boundary, which are again long established.

Wyndham Hill

Formerly part of the Newton Surmaville estate, Wyndham Hill (like Penn Hill) is an outlying knoll from the southern escarpment, with its eye-catching group of lime trees at its grassy crown a renowned focal point and landmark. The hill is developed over its northern slopes, primarily by residential properties, which establishes an abrupt interface of urban rural character. It is separated from the southern escarpment by Dodham Brook and River Yeo corridor, along the former GWR branch-line. The town's road



Wyndham Hill

systems 'bookend' the site to east and west. The land falls to all sides from this knoll, the head of which provides an excellent vantage point with views to all quarters. It is arguably the best vantage point for views south and east within the boundary of Yeovil Country Park, and it also enables clear view towards Ninesprings and

Summerhouse Hill. The distinctive four-tree crown aside, Wynham Hill is characterised by its sweep of open grassland that falls both east and west from the head of the knoll. The A30 with its busy movement forms the eastern boundary and is an emphatic stop to the open grassland falling from the knoll to the road at its toe, just as Newton Road does to the west. Similarly the edge of housing to the north is crudely bounded by a mixture of fence types, many rising incongruously across the contour; there is some intervening planting, but this is not consistent, nor substantial.

On the hilltop, there is a partial hedgerow below the knoll's north face, which turns and heads down to the urban edge. This is an old established boundary, which the 1880 map indicates reinforced by avenue planting, as is the northern edge of the western portion of the field and a crossing of the eastern field. To the immediate south of the knoll is a wooded belt – an ancient woodland site designated as a CWS for its woodland interest – with the cycleway at its toe, its alignment and hillside cutting still clearly alluding to the former GWR Durston and Yeovil branchline which preceded it. Some woody presence between the cycleway and the River Yeo encloses the route from the open countryside to the south.

The roadside link to the Riverside Walk by Pittards is awkward and uninviting, thereafter it follows a narrow grass track aside the northern boundary of the towns sewage works. A conifer belt within this boundary pushes over the path in an overbearing manner.

Riverside Walk

This stretch of Yeovil Country Park lies broadly within the valley base associated with the Yeo floodplain. It covers a narrow strip of land contained between the railway line to the north-west, and the meandering course of the River Yeo to the south-east with the gentle rise of the escarpment beyond. Trading estates back onto the far side of the railway-line, though scrub forming on the rail embankment acts as a visual buffer. The park here is predominately tree-planted, and comprises an array of tree species, a number of which are incongruous in this seemingly 'rural' setting. It appears an enclosed area and feels removed from its wider surrounds, with vistas enclosed by trees and the rail embankment. The presence of rising ground beyond the park's confines exaggerates the sense of enclosure. There are few views out, other than where the canopy is broken, enabling sight of Yeovil's edge and the south-eastern escarpment. With regular tree cover and bank herbaceous growth, the river is rarely glimpsed in summer, though its presence is often audible, and its line denoted by mature willows and poplars. The younger trees will in time mature and give the walk a more fully wooded character, and assist in shading out the understorey. Access is restricted to informal paths and two mown paths that take a sinuous course through the tree lines, occasionally widening into glades. Prior to the age of the train, this land comprised open fields to the river's edge, part of a wider enclosure field pattern. Below the rail-crossing, an area of open space remains, incorporating a former drainage ditch system, bringing some diversity to the wooded character of the greater part of the site. Lying within the valley associated with the Yeo floodplain, the park emerges to the north of the rail-crossing to run



Otters live at Riverside Walk

immediately alongside the river until it turns west to rise gently away from the floodplain, over rising ground below Sunningdale Recreation Ground. The aspect is primarily channeled north and south along the river valley, contained by rising ground to west and east, the head of the former comprising the edge of Yeovil's built form, whilst the escarpment recedes to the north-east. Above the railway crossing, near-distance views toward the town upon up with the constraint of rail embankment and trees. As the path rises, view back through the eastern quadrant widens as path gains elevation, with particularly good views toward the north Dorset and east Somerset hills from the edge of Yeovil Country Park, immediately adjacent Sunningdale Recreation Ground. North of the railway crossing, there is a brief sense of entrance into the wider agricultural countryside, with the floodplain assuming greater prominence through a widening of the Yeo valley, and tree presence restricted to rivers edge. At the Park's north-west limit below the recreation ground, some of which is long established, some scrub regeneration, some specifically planted. This will act as a buffer between the park and the forthcoming houses of the new Lyde Road key site. In other areas compacted ground/conditions/poor soils have resulted in sparse growth, giving opportunity for natural definition of open ground as basis for glade establishment.

Water Regime

The Country Park contains a number of water features, from the springs in the valley gardens, Ninesprings Lake, Dodham brook and the river Yeo. All water heads eastwards into the river Yeo and these watercourses support a diverse range of wildlife. The Dodham brook first enters the park at Goldenstones, where it is a natural channel, it winds past the lake and play area and after descending a wier is encased in concrete as a flood relief channel. The brook was encased in the 1970's and investigations are now looking to re-instate the original course of the brook and cover the canalised route, leaving it to operate as a storm drain for the run off from the town. The Dodham brook supports a population of water voles which are nationally protected and their habitat is being carefully considered as part of this scheme. Dodham brook receives most of the run off from the town and to prevent pollution of the brook, and further down stream, the environment agency and Country Park rangers jointly operate a pollution boom that can that be deployed on the sighting of any pollution heading down stream. Erected outside Goldenstones, the boom stretches across the water, and floats on the surface preventing oil and chemical slicks form travelling downstream. Other sources feeding into the brook include the springheads in Ninesprings. Upwards of 12 spring heads have been counted in the valley gardens, so Ninesprings is not an accurate name for the site! The springs serve to drain the land of Aldon park that rises above it to the south. The springs all feed into a



Site Description





Site Description

central valley stream, which opens out into the lake at Ninesprings. The significant amount of leaf litter collected on its journey downstream coupled with the very sandy soils have left the lake very silted up and in need of dredging within the next 5 years. A subsidiary of the lake is the Ninesprings pond where the Yeovil and District Model Boat Club have an annual agreement to sail. The lake is left without disturbance for wildfowl.

The lake has two outlets into the Dodham brook and a sluice board is operated by the rangers in times of high or low waters. With the sandy soils of the area bank side erosion is a problem on the Dodham Brook and the river Yeo. On the brook this is mitigated by use of live woven willow panels to stabilise the bank, and on the river more robust rock filled gabions are due to be installed.

The Dodham brook is a tributary of the river Yeo at the base of Wyndham Hill, near to Yeovil Golf Club. The river meanders out of Yeovil on its eastern side, and despite the large Wessex Water works supports a great range of wildlife.

**Soils**

A handful of the Yeovil Sands will demonstrate that they are finer than most beach sands. They produce light slightly calcareous soils with a fine tilth and are easily cultivated. However, heavy rain fall results in a crust that caps the soil whilst a hardpan may develop in the subsoil which hinders root development and drainage. These soils are very susceptible to erosion by water and strong winds. Upper slopes often expose the subsoil or even bedrock whilst lower slopes are buried by eroded sands from upslope. Badgers and foxes frequently burrow in the sands.

**Geology**

**The Escarpment**

The Yeovil Country Park straddles the Yeovil Sands' escarpment which runs from Odcombe via Hendford Hill, Summerhouse Hill, Babylon Hill and on towards Corton Denham. The ground slopes more gently to the south east of the escarpment and is show as a 'dip slope'.

**Penn Hill & Wyndham Hill**

These are outliers of the escarpment. Erosion has removed the surrounding rock and is weakened by having many cracks.

**Ninesprings**

The sandy division of the Yeovil Sands is permeable where the silty-clay shales below the sands tend to throw out the water hence the emergence of ground water as springs. It is worth noting that Ninesprings tends to have a V-shaped valley form below the springs as a result of downward steam erosion widening the valley whereas the valley from above the stream tends to be more rounded and smooth. The latter form is a relic of hill slope recession by mass wasting during

former cold conditions of the Ice Age. The south-west and north-east alignment may be the result of erosion being influenced by weakness in the rocks. Incidentally, it is recorded that a bore-hole sunk near the foot of Summerhouse Hill rose and overflowed under artesian pressure: rainfall percolates into the Junction Bed and is trapped by the overlying silty-clays.

**Bradford Hollow**

Bradford Hollow, although outside Yeovil Country Park, is a notable feature and useful in understanding the geology of the Park. It is access by a footpath that continues beyond the Matalan building (ST 5761 1565). It is typical hollow way or sunken lane created over a long time by wear and rear on the sandy track and the propensity of the loose sand to be washed away down the steep slope during periods of intense rainfall. It is an excellent place to study the Yeovil Sands.

**The Yeo Sands**

Figure 2 showed that the line of the escarpment is broken where the River Yeo flows from south to north across the outcrop of the Yeovil Sands. The resistant Yeovil Sands not only form the escarpment but also cause the valley to narrow.

**The Flood Plain**

The geological maps show that the river channel is set on a flood plain floored by alluvium which can be studied near the weir on the south side of Wyndham Hill. It is a silty-sand possibly 2-3 m thick in places. Current views, are that whilst there may be a small input with over-bank flood, most of the alluvium was deposited following prehistoric clearance of woodland. Clearly, much of it is derived from eroded outcrops of Yeovil Sands: soil erosion in South Somerset is still a major problem.



Dodham brook feeds into the Yeo

**The Yeo Channel**

The river channel from Yeovil Junction to Mudford is remarkable for its depth: by comparison the River Axe in Devon has a greater bedload of gravel and is wider and shallower. When flooded at bankful stage the steep sides become saturated and this leads to an impressive sight of rotational slumps.

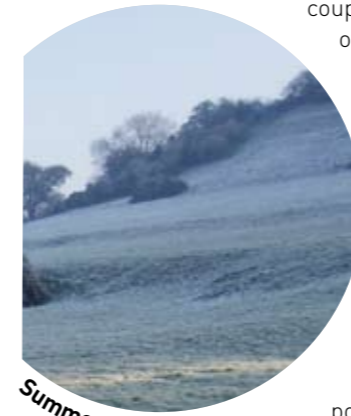
**Flood Water**

The Yeo has a high sediment load in suspension at bankful stage whereas the Dodham Brook tends to be

much clearer. The Yeo drains a catchment with a high percentage of arable fields whereas Dodham Brook has a greater urban and grassland catchment.

**Other Aspects**

The geology is the principal factor in restricting the grown of Yeovil on the southeast side of the town: the escarpment, river channel and flood plain, the railway lines, County boundary, land ownership and the high quality of the countryside. This is coupled with the attractions of building on the dip slope to the west, north and east.



Summerhouse Hill

Summerhouse Hill appears to have medieval lynchets on its north-facing slope: these probably date from the C12-13 at a time of over population and pressure on the land. The views from

Summerhouse Hill are full of interest and valuable for school visits. The whole of Yeovil is laid out with landmarks and roof patterns forming a graphic illustration of the growth of Yeovil, the pattern of the land use. There are also good views from Wyndham Hill of the escarpment and Yeo Gap.

In 2006 "A guide to the Geology of Yeovil" was written by Hugh Prudden, this free guide includes 2 self-guided trails, one of Yeovil town and the other around the Country Park. The Country Park trail takes in the Hills of Wyndham and Summerhouse and goes on to explain the formation of the river and the features it demonstrates. The guide is available from the Tourist Information Centre and the Country Park rangers.

**Current Land Management**

**Ninesprings**

The Valley Gardens of Ninesprings require particularly high management intervention work, with narrow surfaced pathways to be cleared & maintained and extensive tree stock to be managed. The loss of the Environmental Task Force team in 2004 has severely decreased the amount of work that can be delivered in this area, however the strengthening of the volunteer team has seen many projects move forward. The valley garden slopes are progressively being cleared of the choking cherry laurel and being re-planted with native and some ornamental species. Spring bulbs have been planted for colour and previously choked specimen shrubs have been freed. The waterfalls are cleared 3 or 4 times a year of leaves and silt to ensure water through flow and regular litter picks take place in the gardens. Southwoods and Bragg church have large tree stock and like the valley gardens are

annually inspected for the integrity of the tree stock. Some repair work has been necessary on the stone and woodwork within the valley gardens. In 2005 the pond in Ninesprings was dredged and a small central island created for use by the model boat club. The lake and island remain key features of the park, and the pair of nesting swans have been adopted by the public as the figurehead of the park. The rangers annually clear the central island by boat to keep it free of bramble and if necessary they remove old nesting materials to allow the pen to create a new nest for the spring. In the grassland areas Lufton's horticulture team carry out the amenity grass cuts sixteen time a year and strim bank sides. After 2 years of experimenting a machine to cut and remove the grass from the steeply sloping meadow has been sourced, and cuts occur annually in august. In 2006 a number of large conifers were canopy raised to improve sight lines around the park to decrease hiding places and prevent the accumulation of litter and detritus. The memorial arboretum is now full and grass cuts and tree maintenance continue. There are still a significant number of enquiries for memorial plantings; this has been motioned to the horticulture team for consideration elsewhere within Yeovil. The paths and furniture in Southwoods and Bragg church are maintained regularly, and bird and bat boxes are located throughout the compartment. In this heavily used area of site, issues of graffiti and vandalism occur on average once a week, the on site ranger team deal immediately with incidences. From January 2008 all anti social behaviour will be reported using GPS grid references to the SSDC recording system for escalation to DEFRA and the community safety team for statistical analysis.

**Wyndham Hill**

The pasture land within this unit has retained the same tenant grazier as from 2002, and the land is grazed with cattle for a limited of number of months in the year (Countryside Stewardship Agreement). The summit of the hill includes the famous 4 lime landmark, which was replanted in 2004, but sadly vandalised beyond repair in 2007. This new plan will seek to secure funding to again replant the limes at a big enough size that superficial vandalism is impossible. Hundreds of tree saplings have been planted on the hill throughout 2005 / 6 / 7 extending the area of woodland, and returning Wyndham Hill to its historic shape. The woodland on the steep bank side has had a number of specimens laid in an effort to decrease bank erosion. The river at the bottom of Wyndham Hill continues to be a popular spot for anglers and in 2008 the District Council will develop an access licence for the anglers use of the site. Sadly the newly planted woodland at the bottom of Wyndham Hill named Stanley copse, after the first Country Park Ranger Graham Stanley, is unlikely to survive a change in management due to persistent drug abusers hiding in amongst the trees. The fencing is to be removed and area opened up for grazing to ensure this cannot continue.



Site Description





### Summerhouse Hill

This compartment is also grazed by cattle under the same tenant farmer. The steep nature of the slope means the Hill is less frequently visited, but fallen oak trunks left near the summit do provide a great resting bench and great views of Yeovil. 9 parkland oaks provided a landmark feature at the top of the hill, 2 or 3 have naturally fallen in recent years and one of the stewardship targets for the site is to plant 9 more oaks for recruitment into the stand as the aged specimens are naturally lost. 6 Oaks were planted in 2007; the remainder will be in place in 2008. Gorse is encroaching onto the land but volunteer parties carry out clearance each year to ensure that a variety of aged thickets are maintained for their wildlife potential. Ragwort does grow on these slopes and is controlled by hand pulling by staff and volunteers. A new picnic area was created at the bottom of Summerhouse Hill in 2006/7, giving easy access to greenspace and seating for people using the bowlplex and cinema. The benches and trees have survived well and the site is used regularly.

### Penn Hill

The gardens at Penn Hill are far more formal than the rest of the Country Park lands. The routine maintenance agreement with Lufton has seen the grass cut and shrub beds managed, but the rest of the area has been sadly neglected due to a lack of time. In 2007 the beginnings of restoration plan were discussed between horticultural services and countryside, and a week of intensive work on site went some way to rediscovering the shrub beds and old pathways, although a significant amount of work is still needed. The tree stock of the park land was also subject to significant work in November 2007, when sadly a great deal of damage was done to the grasslands, this area will need time dedicated to it in 2008. The site is really only used by local residents as a through route, or dog walking area, and has the potential to be much more.

### Riverside Walk

Significant works have occurred at Riverside Walk over the last five years. In 2005 the electricity company removed around 12 of the very large poplar trees at the Pittards entrance to the site, as they were threatening the main over land power supply to Yeovil town. This left a significant void in the vegetation cover and the Country Park team carried out a sponsored tree planting event in 2006 to create new low level shrubby tree cover for the area. The older 5000 strong plantation was first thinned in 2007 and requires further attention in the winter of 2008; new glades have been created, and the routine maintenance cut, mows wandering paths through the trees. At the Riverside itself gabions and sleepers have been used at the worst points where the bank is slipping into the channel, and more work will be completed in 2009. At the Birchfield end of site a new pumping station was started in 2007 to process the leachate running off the old landfill site and entering the watercourse. The station should be complete in summer 2008 and the



Main cycle way through the Country Park

Yeovil and District Natural History Society will advise on the replanting or reinstatement of the scrubby lands around this area. Before the development of the station the engineers commissioned an ecological survey of the area and upwards of 300 slow worms were found on the site.

### History

Leslie Brooke, a local historian, has researched many of the fascinating stories and history of the sites and places within Yeovil Country Park. Some of these are featured below. His book "Yeovil History in Street Names" is available from selected shops, the Library and the Town Council Offices in Union Street.

### Yeovil

The Yeo, one of three main waterways in the country, gives its name to the town and is a form of the Old English word 'ea' meaning river. The earliest known written form of the town's name is GIFLE, from an Anglo-Saxon Will dated 950.

This is very similar to the spelling GIVELE from the Domesday survey of 1086. The 'G' in Saxon speech has a soft sound, the same as 'J' and is still found in words like 'gem' and 'general'. In Saxon days it probably sounded something like 'zh'. A sound that is difficult to render in spelling without recourse to special symbols and is why the Norman clerk gave the spelling he did in an attempt to render what sounded to his foreign ear, something like Yuvul – a pronunciation still occasionally, though infrequently heard in South Somerset.



View to Wyndham

### Ninesprings

Ninesprings was included with Yeovil Borough in 1928 and later secured from the Batten Family of Aldon House. Its name is from Old English and means a spring, a dun and a hill. The name Ninesprings perfectly fits the location, though there are definitely more than nine springs. Braggchurch, within Ninesprings, is now the name of a residence close to the line of a Roman Road, a little lower than 'Lovers Lane'. This area was originally thought to have been the site of an ancient church or chapel. There is no evidence at all of such an establishment and the belief seems to have arisen from the property having been previously owned by one of the pre-Reformation chantry chapel of St John's parish church. The 'Bragg' part of the name is possibly from the Old English braec, fro a copse of thicket, which 'Southwoods' echoes in a different form.

### Dodham

'Dod' is the name given to a plant known as Cat's Tail or Timothy Grass (phleum pratense) commonly found in meadows, and 'ham' is the Old English for an enclosure, most frequently found near streams, as it is here. It was at Dodham that the Milford and Rackel streams joined the Frogg Mill or Dodham Brook.

### Wyndham Hill

Wyndham was included in the 1845 boundary as well as the Town Railway Station, the railway line which ran along the foot of the hill now being Railway Walk. For a long time it was shown on Ordnance Survey maps at Windmill Hill. Wyndham Field, from which the hill rises, has been a recreation ground, for the Golden Jubilee celebration of Queen Victoria in 1987. For a short while, after 1890 around 24 acres were leased to Yeovil Borough Council by Prebendary E.N. Bates-Harbin. In the 1842 title map the field is named Victoria Hill, but was subsequently dropped, possibly to avoid confusion with Victoria Buildings then at the foot of Constitution Hill. The name by which the hill is now known, together with Wyndham Street, commemorates the Wyndham family of nearby Trent, who were connected by marriage with the Harbins of Newton Surmaville, on whose estate the hill remains.

Newton Surmaville, was the new town, or dwelling, of a family whose name is variously spelt Solomavill, Sirnaville etc in the thirteenth century. Cricketsham, a field to the north of Newton House, might have been thought to be derived from the insect gryllus, but, in fact, it perpetuates the name of the de Cricket family of Cricket St Thomas, owners of Newton Surmaville in the second half of the thirteenth century.

Penstille gate and tollhouse were erected by Yeovil Turnpike Trust in 1753 as a 'stop gate', on or near the entrance to the road leading from Pen Stile to Newton'. This toll-gate and house stood on the site of the present Western Gazette offices, to a stile which

afforded access from Newton Road across the former Pen Hill (Wyndham), and before any other buildings existed in Newton Road. The Penstille tollhouse and gate were replaced in the first half of the nineteenth century by the cottage (and gate) at the corner of the former Dodham Lane, now part of South Western Terrace and Newton Road. When turnpike gates were abolished in the town in 1875, the tollhouse was bought by George Harbin as a lodge for one of his estate employees.

### Penn Hill

Penn House was the residence of Peter Daniell in the first quarter of the nineteenth century and is surrounded by extensive grounds known as Penn Park. In 1852, new roads were laid out in those grounds and the South Street end of the lower road became Park Street and Hendford end Brunswick Street. With 'Belmont' – the beautiful hill – lying in between. The higher road, from South Street to Belmont, which in part had been a driveway to the house, became Penn Hill.

### Recent History

Due to the proximity of Yeovil and their landscape features many local people are very fond and proud of these areas of countryside. These sentiments are wonderfully shown in the writing of Ben Pike, a local resident. The rangers often meet people on site, and particularly in Ninesprings, who reminisce about their childhood playing in the valley gardens, they always point out the site of the cottage that was said to house the local witch. It is hoped to encourage more local people to share their memories, paintings and photographs of the area.





## Biological Data

At the request of SSDC in 1998 the Yeovil and District Natural History Society (Y&DNHS) and friends embarked on a full study of the wildlife of Ninesprings. That survey continues to be updated and now includes the whole of Yeovil Country Park. The survey shows what a wonderful haven for wildlife this area is and the following description derives largely from this survey.

### Habitats

The landscape itself is naturally encouraging to wildlife. The freshwater stream from the springs in Ninesprings flows into a calm lake. The mature woodland, with its all-important clearings, attracts diverse forms of animal and insect life. The hillsides of Summerhouse and Wyndham provide rough grazing with all the associated with flora and fauna, the exposed patches of sandy soil together with patches of scrub and gorse providing even greater variety. The Riverside Walk gives yet another environment and Penn Hill gives an incursion into the town itself providing habitat for many species.

### Invertebrates

Over 885 species of invertebrates – from small aquatic larvae to large moths and dragonflies have been recorded. As it is unlikely that an observer would see more than 25% of the species in any one year, the estimated number could be in excess of 3,000. The first recording of a wooden beetle with the resplendent name of *Melasis buprestoides*, found on hazel stumps is only previously known to have existed in Somerset from wing segments found in the peat sediments of the Iron Age. A total of thirty-six species are considered to be rare in the country. Others are so scarce they have a place in the National Red Data Book of notable species.

Butterflies such as Holly Blue, Green-Veined White, Peacock and Red Admiral abound in the areas cleared of cherry laurel and sown with wild flower seeds near the source pond. Occasionally, Hummingbird Hawk Moth's feed from Honeysuckle by day and Scarlet Tiger Moth's have been seen on Wyndham Hill. These same areas attract more moths at night, providing feeding areas for predators, either larger insects, birds or animals. Dragonflies such as the Large Hawker hunt the streams and pools together with the dainty damselflies. These are also found along the river walk. Beetles abound in the woodland and a variety of other species are found on the open grassland and the exposed patches of the Yeovil Sands on both Summerhouse and Wyndham Hill. Birds and animals especially rely on this food chain, as a considerable number exist in and around the park or pass through it at times.

### Flora

Some 367 different species of plants have been recorded from the huge and impressive Common Beech to the tin speedwells (9 species). Sweet and Horse Chestnut occur in the park as do Hazel, Hawthorn, Wych Elm, Rowan, three varieties of Oak, Walnut and several species of Willow trees. Four different rushes, five willowherbs and host of different grasses, now rare on agricultural land. Plants with names like Spindle Berry; Hedgehog Holly, Opposite-Leaved Golden Saxifrage and Corky Fruited Water Dropwort delight those who enjoy variety in plant hunting. The Nettle-Leaves Bell Flower can be found in the woods. A few plants of the prickly Butcher's Broom grow near the southern edge of Ninesprings.

Eighty five species of fungi have been recorded, from the bracket fungi that grow out from the trunks and bases of trees, mushrooms on the pasture land, to the many varieties that grow from the woodland floor. There are more to be found, including the picturesque Fly Agaric. Some nineteen mosses, including Kraus's Clubmoss and seven liverworts, all available to specialist eyes.

### Birds

Ninesprings and Riverside Walk are ideal sites for bird watching. Great Spotted Woodpeckers search the trees, as do Green Woodpeckers, which also probe the anthills for food. Nuthatches and Tree creepers search the mature trees, climbing mouse-like up the trunks. The wren is probably the most common breeding bird in Ninesprings competing with other songbirds such as Blackbird, Song Thrush, Dunnock and sometimes a Mistle Thrush. Rooks, Crows, Magpies, Jay and Jackdaws are common. Blue and Great Tits use the nest boxes sited around Ninesprings, Long-Tailed and Coal Tits are also present. The delightful Goldcrest, with its high-pitched squeak, searches the conifers for food. Willow Warblers and



Chiffchaffs enjoy the environment of woodland clearings and hedgerow to search for insects. Flycatchers dart from branches to catch insects in flight. Greenfinches, Bullfinches and Chaffinches are common and Goldfinches are plentiful when thistle seeds abound. Stock Dove and Wood Pigeon are common.

The lake is home to Mallard, Coot, Moorhen, Little Grebe (an occasional visitor) and Mute Swan. The bright blue flash of Kingfisher's wings is often seen over the water. Common Buzzard, Sparrow Hawk and Kestrels frequent the area. Tawny Owls hunt the mice and voles by night; a Nightjar has also been seen feeding with the bats. In all a total of 35 resident or breeding pairs of some 83 species of bird have been recorded in Ninesprings alone. Future observation throughout the Park will increase this total.

### Aquatic and Semi Aquatic Wildlife

Small Sticklebacks frequent the streams near the source pond in Ninesprings and large Carp can be seen basking near the surface of the lake. The River Yeo must be home to more varieties of fish, all of which need to be researched. Frogs and toads inhabit the marshy areas but seldom survive if they reach the lake at Ninesprings. Newts may return in time. Red Neck Terrapins have been seen in the small lake and Dodham Brook, but these are alien species and undesirable predators, one large specimen was captured in 2004 and since this time there have been no more sightings. Sadly the lakes are almost devoid of invertebrates, their presence would support a greater variety of other wildlife. The harmless legless lizard or Slow Worm can often be seen sunning itself on the warm soil. Grass snakes too are there but no Adders have been recorded.

### Mammals

Mammal life is considerable and varied. Hedgehogs are around but are by no means plentiful. Bank and Common Voles, together with Shrews are more often heard than seen, scuttling in the undergrowth. Wood Mice and Harvest Mice are fairly common and prevalent throughout, as are the smaller carnivores such as the Weasel and Stoats that live on them. The Water Shrews have been seen in the source stream at Ninesprings. Rabbits too are plentiful, providing not only the close-cropped grass so important for the survival of certain plants but also a food supply for carnivores. Moles are found in the woods and the grassland. Foxes and Badgers frequent the park, indeed foxes are often seen as far into the town as Penn Hill.

At dusk and dawn Daubenton's bats hunt the water just above the surface of the lake. Brown Long Eareds, Pipistrelles and Serotines can be seen in the clearings. Noctule Bats hunt along the boundary between Ninesprings and Aldon Park. Long Eared Bats also hunt across the lower area of Wyndham. Bat boxes have been erected in Ninesprings to encourage bats to live and breed there. Nearby roosts of Lesser Horseshoes feed in and around Yeovil Country Park.

Grey Squirrels are plentiful causing losses to bird life as indeed do Brown Rats. Mink too may be present, and if so no doubt cause considerable losses to wildlife. However mink avoid humans so they seem to keep clear of the Goldenstones area. This is a blessing because in the brook there is one of the two biggest colonies of the endangered water vole in Somerset: a revision to their protection in February 2008 has conferred extra protection under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act, making it illegal to disturb both the mammal itself and their habitat. Otter 'spraints' or droppings have been found near the Town Bridge on the A30. We are privileged to have such now rare creature near the town. Early morning visitors have seen the delightful Roe Deer as close into the town as the Memorial Gardens. Muntjac Deer are only just across the Dorset boundary and could well use Ninesprings on occasions. At the end of 2007 22 species of mammal were recorded.

The survey and recordings of all types of wildlife within the Country Park has been only partly completed. So far 1529 (up from 1276 in 2002 and 1473 in 2006) species have been recorded with the large



Daubenton's bat



The watery habitats attract Dragon flies



Urban fringe Foxes at the Country Park



Swan and cygnets





majority being invertebrates. As the enlarged area of the Country Park is investigated this number will rise considerably.

### Wildlife Value Site Description

The following description are derived from the SERC survey of winter 2000, commissioned by SSDC to provide baseline data covering approximately 70 open spaces within Yeovil.



Hawthorn in flower

Ninesprings includes a range of habitats; Broadleaved woodland, Scattered trees and tall-herb vegetation running along the banks of a stream and pond. An area of dense scrub with scattered trees, a lake and amenity grassland. The County Wildlife Site area of woodland appeared on the 1837 Tithe map of the parish and is possibly of ancient origin, but the woodland now extends further to the west on what was once open ground. The woodland is predominantly broad-leaved. Throughout the woodland there are large areas of Cherry Laurel (*Prunus Laurocerasus*) understorey, particularly in the existing CWS. A series of ponds and streams run down a steep sided valley adjacent to the eastern boundary. Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), English Oak (*Querus robur*), Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) are of more or less equal abundance and form a high canopy above the more or less continuous understorey of Laurel. Larch (*Larix deciduas*) form the canopy in an area at the northern end of the wood. Ground cover is very poor but for ferns, Male Fern (*Dryopteris felix-mas*) Broad Buckler Fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*) Soft Shield Fern (*Polystichum setiferum*) and Ivy (*Hedera helix*). Polypody (*Polypodium vulgare*) and Wood Sorrell (*Oxalis acetosella*) accompanies these ferns along the northern bank. Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*) is frequent at the top and bottom of the slope but is not recorded in the main body of the wood. Along the stream is abundant Opposite-Leaved Golden Saxifrage (*Chrysoplenium oppositifolium*), fern and occasional pendulous sedge (*Carex pendula*). Butcher's Broom (*Ruscus aculeatus*) is present on the bank above the stream. At the western end of the side the wood continues for another  $\frac{1}{2}$  km an Elder (*Sambuca nigra*) understorey, replacing the laurel.

Much of the land surrounding Ninesprings is of greater than average value for wildlife in a county context. Therefore Ninesprings is an integral part of a fairly

large semi-natural area, which include some County Wildlife Sites and is an urban context is very important for wildlife. Adjacent landuse is predominantly residential to the north and west, and to the south and east lie open areas of grassland/pasture land on steep slopes.

### Penn Hill

Penn Hill is an area of intensively managed parkland bordered by Brunswick Street to the south and Hendford to the west. The site adjoins Penn Mill allotments which is the only connecting greenspace. Government offices and a multi-storey car park are located to the north. The current interest of this site is mainly for informal recreational purposes and most of site is managed to maintain short amenity grassland with Perennial Rye-Grass (*Lolium perenne*). Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) and Common Mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*). The site also supports many mature scattered trees, the most notable being a row of mature Beech which run east west along the top of an embankment to the south of the site. The steep grassy slopes running down to the roadside on the southern and western boundaries support a more diverse grassland with species including Common Cat's Ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*), Cut-Leaved Crane's Bill (*Geranium dissectum*), Bird's Foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and possibly Black Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*).



Hazel nuts

### Summerhouse Hill

The major habitat of Summerhouse Hill is lowland acid unimproved pasture, which is one of the habitats included in South Somerset's Local Biodiversity Action Plan. There are also areas of gorse scrub on the higher slopes, ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland,

and native hedgerows along the roadside. Visits made by Terry Franklin in 1998 showed the site to be important for Waxcups (*Hygrocybe* spp) a genus of fungi associated with unimproved grasslands. These often brightly coloured fungi are thought, like the habitat they depend on, to have declined greatly in recent years

### Wyndham Hill

Wyndham Hill is made up of the grazed field and its associated trees and hedges, the woodland on the banks of the disused railway line and the Riverside area. Major habitats include; Semi-improved grassland, native hedgerows, scrub and woodland on old railway cutting, native woodland along the

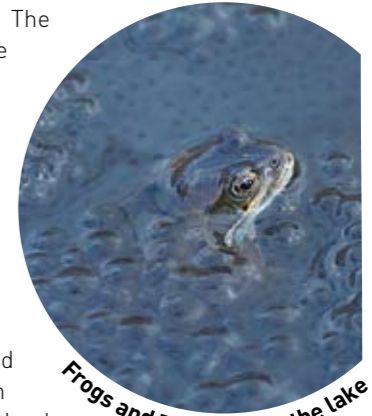
river bank. The semi-improved grassland is relatively species poor. Vegetation includes Perennial Rye Grass (*Lolium perenne*). Cocks Foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), Bulbous Buttercup (*Ranuncula vullodud*) and Meadow Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*). A Badger sett exists within a Blackthorn copse. The native hedgerows along the boundaries of the grassland area are an important wildlife habitat and are a breeding area and refuge for birds, mammals and invertebrates. The areas of scrub and woodland along the old railway cuttings are of high value to wildlife as they form a breeding site and refuge for wildlife especially birds and mammals.

The woodland on the slopes has a dense canopy of English Oak (*Quercus robur*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Aspen (*Populus tremula*), Field Maple (*Acer campestre*) with an understorey of Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*). The understorey varies in density throughout, though is mostly dense on the edges and extends to scrub where large trees are absent. The groundflora within the darker parts of the wood is sparse though fairly diverse. Within the lighter parts and the edges the ground is moderately dense and consists of similar species, include abundant Sweet Violet (*Viola odorata*) and frequent Lords and Ladies (*Arum maculatum*), Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*) Lesser Celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*) Red Campion (*Silene dioica*) and Hart's Tongue Fern (*Phyllitis scolopendrium*) with Ivy (*Hedera helix*) covering the floor in parts. The more open woodland on the level ground has similar species though the ground flora is more dense and includes tall herbs such as Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and patches of Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scriptua*), Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*) and Ramsons (*Allium ursinum*). The Riverside plants include Hemlock Water Dropwort (*Oenanthe crocata*) Anglica (*Angelica sylvestris*) and two examples of Monk's Hood (*Aconitum anglicum*).

### Riverside Walk

Riverside Walk is the strip of land lying between the River Yeo and the railway. Connecting Birchfield (Sunningdale recreation ground) and Lyde Road key site in the north to the footpath leading to Pittards in the south, it forms an integral part of an important wildlife corridor. Boundaries consist of the riverbank to the southeast and a wire fence running along the railway line to the north west. Surrounding land is predominantly semi-improved grassland over the river, with the sewage works, rough grassland and meadow on the other side of the railway. Botanical survey work carried out in June and July 2002 confirms the high value of the site and some areas are of CWS status. The site supports a diverse mix of natural habitats including native woodland, a section of river with naturally formed sandy banks, and reed bed. Most of the site supports native broadleaved woodland, and the more mature areas form a margin

along the riverbank. The remainder of the site has been planted under various native tree species including Oak, Ash and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), with the exception of an established stand of Poplar (*Populus* spp) located to the extreme south of the site. The riverbank supports native trees including Alder, Crack Willow (*Salix fragilis*), White Willow (*Salix alba*) and Ash, beneath which ground flora is relatively sparse with Ivy, Lesser Celandine and Lords and Ladies. Certain areas have been quite heavily invaded by Stinging Nettle. The waterlogged, reed bed area is typically dominated by Common Reed (*Phragmites communis*). Reed Beds are a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitat. This type of habitat is part of the natural succession from open water to woodland and without management the length of time that reed will dominate is limited unless the bed is regularly inundated with fresh water. Reed bed is regionally scarce and although botanical interest is low it is an important habitat for birds (both Reed Warbler and Sedge Warbler are know to hold territories on this site) and all stages of succession support important communities of invertebrates.



Frogs and Toads live in the lake



Hedgehogs are present in many areas



Peacock butterfly



Badgers have built many large setts





Community

## Community

### Public Use

Most visitors to Yeovil Country Park (67%) come from Yeovil, but a small number come from neighboring towns as far a field as Dorchester and Wincanton. All age groups are represented amongst visitors and almost two thirds (64%) have been visiting the sites for more than five years, and a quarter visit daily. Dog walkers are the commonest

user group to site and are well catered for with dog waste bins provided throughout the site. The rangers also provide free poop scoop bags to visitors if needed. Dog walking is always going to be a key user group for the site and this must be sensitively managed when

the team approach issues surrounding protection of the wildlife and exclusion of dogs. The District Council require dog owners to clear up after their dog throughout Yeovil Country Park. These areas are covered by the 'Dog Fouling of Land Act' which SSDC has adopted and covers public open space; this makes it an offence not to clear up after your dog; you can be given a fixed penalty or prosecuted. At present the dog warden enforces the Act and the Ranger approaches people and asks them to clear up: this works well and dog fouling is low at Ninesprings. In the original Country Park plan the aim was to enforce dogs on lead in the valley gardens however it has become obvious that it is not feasible. The main issue in this area is erosion of the bank sides as dogs travel in and out of the water; instead new fencing is being erected to prevent this wear and tear.

Cycling within Yeovil Country Park is restricted to the cycle way from Lysander Road to the A30 Sherborne Road. This surfaced cycleway is very well used and provides an important route from residential to retail and employment areas. Somerset County Council has installed a toucan crossing on the A30 enabling both pedestrians and cyclist to cross this busy road safely. We will continue to establish the needs of cyclists within Yeovil County Park, and listen to concerns voiced by other groups. At "rush hour" the cyleway is busy, with some fast moving bicycles and the ranger team may need to consider line marking the route to prevent clashes of traffic. Cyclists do use the Riverside Walk footpath to travel from Lyde Road to Sherborne Road and on through the Country Park. The path is not a designated cycleway and its use will continue to be monitored to assess levels of damage to the site. Other specialist groups associated with site are the



Fun events include an annual dog show

Yeovil and District Model Boat Club who have an annual licence with the Country Park to enable them to sail their boats on the pond. They are restricted to the pond, leaving the larger lake the territory of the wildfowl. Discussions have recently been entered with the Yeovil and District Angling Club to clarify the management of fishing along the river Yeo. It is likely that the Country Park will also enter an agreement with this club, allowing them to manage the fishing, whilst leaving them responsible for management of structures linked to their sport e.g. jetties and water side platforms. In recent years the rangers have been approached by a kayaking club about access to the river, and a mountain biking group about hosting an event in the valley gardens. Some sports are compatible with the wildlife conservation aims of the park, particularly if they are limited in area and intensity, however basic impact assessments have shown us that hosting a mountain biking event in the valley gardens would be detrimental to the infrastructure, wildlife and visiting public, and so it was refused on those grounds. Informally a number of other groups access the park for recreation including Yeovil Town Road Running Club, the triathlon training group from Cannons gym and regular meetings of the Yeovil and District Natural History Society.

Two requests reoccur again and again in the visitor surveys; the provision of public toilets at the Ninesprings play area and some sort of café facility provided on site. The ranger team has tried signposting visitors to the Gateway coffee shop and Goldenstones toilets are open for public use, but there is always a repeated request for these facilities to be clearly part of a Country Park building. Objections and concerns raised about such a structure include, the nuisance and vandalism problems they may attract, and the cost of cleaning and main-tenance. The current policy will continue to draw people's attention to existing facilities at Golden-stones and the Gateway, whilst working with the Vision team and Town Council to investigate options for a ranger base on site. The Country Park offers prime greenspace to the residents and visitors to Yeovil town. Over the past 5 years and for the foreseeable future developments will continue in the town of Yeovil and its hinterlands. It has become imperative to secure developer contributions



The annual running event include a childrens fun run



Kingfishers live in the Valley Gardens

from both residential and commercial developments to help in the maintenance and repair of the Country Parks infrastructure, considering the ever increasing level of use experienced in the park. A calculator based on land management costs will need to be developed to cost out per head a justifiable rate for PPG 17 contributions through the planning process. Finally, in the 2006 visitor survey about Country Parks 79% of visitors were satisfied or very satisfied with the park.

### Education

A large part of the ranger's workload is delivery of educational programmes. The rangers undertake planned and themed events to help the visiting public better understand and appreciate the fabulous habitats and wildlife represented at the park. The hope is that this work will lead to a greater degree of protection and less disturbance to the habitats. Many members of the public have enjoyed attending events and walks, led or organised, by the ranger team over the past 6 years. The events programme has gone from strength to strength each year, and in 2007 it is estimated the rangers saw 5500 people at Country Park events. The key annual event is the May Bank holiday fayre, attracting thousands of people each year. Started in 2003 as a small countryside event the May fayre now attracts upwards of 45 stallholders, includes a farmers market, trade stalls, local craft demonstrations and plenty of hands on activities for all ages. The close working relationship with the Town Centre Partnership sees aspects of

the town filtering out to the countryside events and the rangers travelling into town to carry out surveys and attend events. In 2007 the Breathing Places lottery funding paid for a series of woodland linked play schemes to be offered free to 8 – 12 years olds, helping the ranger team meet a raft of new young people from the town who don't usually attend countryside events. The junior ranger team will enter its third year in 2008 with the 8 annual spaces always fully booked, and a new programme of guided walks is set to run in 2008. The successful Look Out Club for children will continue to run, where the rangers organise a bi-monthly activity for the club members and help them develop their wildlife watching and identification skills. Every event is evaluated by feedback form or face to face interviews, and the information gathered at this time helps the ranger team plan subsequent years. Each year the planning starts in November with a February launch of the years programme, each year brings a different set of events, often themes run like wild foods, bush craft or bats. Take up for booked walks is good and bat walks and fungus forays are always over subscribed. The rangers lead as many events as they can, using specialists for some subjects. The admission prices are kept low, or free, to encourage everyone to join in and the passport to leisure card scheme is accepted for admission prices.

In 2008 part of the peoples millions grant bid is to develop an education pack specifically for the Country Park site. A pack that will bring to life the fantastic wildlife and landscape of the area, give national curriculum linked studies and encourage all the schools of Yeovil to walk to site and use the resource that is on their doorstep. Complimentary activities like orienteering already exist on site and will be built in to the pack, which will be launched in 2009.

### Interpretation



Playschemes at Yeovil Country Park

There continues to be a need for interpretation on site, particularly orientation information at key access points and explanatory panels from the viewpoints on site. Already on site there are 3 large map panels, which were recently replaced in 2006. Adjacent to these boards there are pin boards

for the posters erected by the rangers that advertise events or explain the conservation works occurring on site. In 2008 the wooden notice boards at all park entrances are due for a re-vamp. The Wyndham Hill Action Group have expressed an interest in sponsoring a view point plinth to be erected at the



Community





Community

top of the hill, this proposal will be worked up with the group and a local artist. The gap in interpretation on site is information and illustrations about the park's wildlife. The People's Millions funding in 2008 will allow for the development of new wildlife panels, a new wildlife trail leaflet and local artist Dennis Pearce is creating new black and white line drawings to help the rangers create a new tree trail leaflet for site. Already existing for the park is a general site map leaflet (that is due an update and re-print), the Woodlands and Waterfalls trail leaflet, the Lions Blackburn fitness trail and a self guided geology trail booklet. The trail is a mile long loop of the valley gardens with suggested exercise stations along the way; all detailed in the leaflet and developed with advice from our colleagues in Goldenstones Leisure Centre. A further popular and existing activity pack is the permanent orienteering course; put in place by the Quantock Orienteers the pack is



Volunteer events include barbecues!



suitable for individuals or groups and routes can be as long or short as you wish. On a much larger scale the ranger team will continue to investigate the feasibility of a small visitor center and café which could include interpretive material.

### Off-Site Interpretation

In the 2005 Town Centre Survey some people still maintained they did not know where Yeovil Country Park was. On further questioning they knew where Ninesprings was, but did not recognise the term Country Park. To clarify this confusion efforts will be made to get the Country Park referred to throughout town and with a continuity of terminology. There are mixed brown signs for the Country Park and this may be creating the problem. On the re-print of the new site leaflet there will be a launch and with the assistance of the Town Center Partnership hopefully we can get the message out to the people of Yeovil.

### Community

A Volunteer Ranger scheme for Ninesprings was launched on 1st November 2003 this has been expanded to cover all sites within Yeovil Country Park. During the year 2004, 213 volunteer work days were secured undertaking tasks such as Himalayan Balsam control, tree planting and erecting bird boxes and bat box surveys. After the appointment of a Country Park ranger in 2002 the team went from strength to strength. In 2007 volunteers met every Thursday and over 500 volunteer days were donated to the Country Park. On average every week 8 – 10 individuals convene to carry out practical conservation tasks that are of benefit to the park and its wildlife. These are the recorded volunteers, there are many others who litter pick and patrol the site keeping it safe and clean for its users. These un-sung community heroes, and the relationship that the rangers have formed with them, are the foundations of the Country Park and is what the 2007/8 green flag judges commented and complimented the team on.

Local people feel very passionately about the areas of open space around Yeovil and are keen to get involved in their conservation, over the past 2 years the rangers have recorded the names and contact details of any individual that expressed a wish to become further involved with the Country Park, and a Friends group will be launched in 2008 by contacting these individuals and inviting them along to a meeting. The model of a community group works at Ham Hill Country Park, and it is likely that a new Yeovil friends group will follow a similar pattern in the first instance.

Being so close to the town, the Country Park has a number of neighbours, both business and residential and the rangers strive to maintain good relations with

all these individuals. This has proved invaluable as neighbours report witnessing incidents of fly tipping, and have helped the rangers and enforcement officers trace the offenders.

To ensure that all the park users are engaged and understand the management of the Country Park the rangers will continue to host an open meeting every other year. Presenting the achievements of the past two years, and the projects coming up for the next 2. This forum will give the public opportunity to comment and in past years has been a great source of ideas and links into local business and industry e.g. possible sponsorship by Westlands.

Local Nature Reserve (LNR) status can be given to land to ensure the protection and good management of sites of value to nature conservation. LNRs contribute to the quality of environment to local people, can play a part in community development and education. It is proposed that LNR status is sought. Local authorities can acquire, declare and manage Local Nature Reserves under section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The 1949 Act required that any land declared a LNR must be "special" in a local context and be managed to preserve or enhance the natural features on which the special interest of the site depends. Declaration of land as a LNR is therefore a commitment by the Local Authority to manage the site in a manner that will protect the natural features from any substantial damage. Natural England are due to launch a new grant scheme in the spring of 2008 for LNRs.



Wyndham lime trees



Volunteer work parties



Community





# Summary of Important Features

The key species and habitats are summarised in the table below.

Site Feature	Importance		Local
	National	Regional	
Habitats			
Ninesprings			
Semi-improved grassland			Locally important
Riverside Walk			
Reedbed	UK BAP priority habitat	Regionally scarce	Locally important
Wet Carr Woodland	UK BAP priority habitat		
Wyndham Hill			
Woodland			9 ancient woodland indicator species
Grassland			SSDC BAP Lowland neutral hay meadow and pasture
Species			
Water vole	Nationally rare and threatened (Red Data Book Protected under 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act)	Biodiversity Action Plan priority species	
Badger	Protected 1981 Act		
Bats	Protected 1981 Act		
Otter	Red Data Book, EU Dir and 1981 Act		
Aspen, Monkshood, Water Horsetail			
Arrowhead			
Common Club Rush			All Somerset notable species
Green Woodpecker			Somerset notable species
Kingfisher	Legally protected		
Nesting Migratory Birds			
Sedge Warbler			
Garden Warbler			
Willow Warbler			
Chiffchaff			
Reed Warbler			
Blackcap			
Whitethroat			

Summary of Important Features



The old cottage in Ninesprings now the location of the carved otter bench



## Management Recommendations

The intervening 5 years since the conception of the Country Park has seen the ranger team learning a number of valuable lessons about the practical management of a popular urban fringe park with wildlife interest. In 2002 the team were probably quite naive about what could be achieved within the greenspace with regards to wildlife enhancement and protection, but have been surprised by the great steps forward that have been made in improving public access to the site. Now, in 2008, the team are confident in the design and locating of furniture, they understand how to create new features that are less attractive to vandals, and can manage habitats to confer the greatest degree of protection as possible for our native species. 2002 – 2007 saw the infrastructure of the park properly established and we continue now with the habitat management and enhancement of the site. The wear and tear on many park features sees a new programme of restoration and replacement e.g. trackways.

### Penn Hill

Upgrade the derelict area to southwest of Penn House, with removal of some plantings to west, south and in part to east, and stronger planting presence along northern boundary. Do not obscure lines of view across town with new planting. Programme a new generation of specimen tree planting, consistent with historical context, and to assist definition of the open spaces, develop a tree trail for the park to interpret arboretum. Create a greater sense of entrance in the vicinity of Maltravers House and the Octagon Theatre and car park through part formal planting and suitable boundary treatment. Maintenance of the Jubilee Garden with hamstone seating (millennium bench) and golden foliage plants. The steep grassy slopes on the southern and western boundaries to be cut once a year in the late summer, after the plants have flowered. Removing the grass cuttings will help to keep nutrients levels low, so restricting invasion of more competitive species. Mowing in the late summer will also benefit invertebrates. An additional benefit will be the attractiveness of the bank in flower in summertime. The trees that have limbs overhanging adjacent residential properties to the far east of the site – cut back these limbs to prevent storm damage.

### Ninesprings

Higher diversity should be encouraged, aiming for coppice with standards. At present few shrubs can tolerate the shade as the canopy has closed, resulting in only Elder, Laurel and Holly being able to grow. Encourage natural regeneration by controlling rabbit and squirrel population, leave bramble to develop then protect young saplings with tree shelters. Retain Sycamore in one area and take out Sycamore in all other areas, especially those where the crown is broken or chewed as these will post a danger in the

future. Treat stumps with neat glyphosate and hold volunteer events to clear away any young sycamore saplings. Replace the old internal, ornamental fencing on a like for like basis – using cleft chestnut rail.

### Lakeside and Steams

As the habitats with Ninesprings contained one of the two largest colonies of water voles in Somerset (in 1998) this is a significant habitat. Water voles are rare and threatened nationally, but the proximity of the town maybe protecting them from attack by mink. Water Voles require “natural” river banks with grass running down to the water, banks into which they can burrow and varied riverside vegetation. Continue to cut vegetation along Dodham Brook in sections in rotation in a 2-3 metre wide stretch in from the bank. Allows for longer vegetation between the watercourse and mown grass or tarmac paths, thereby discouraging visitors from approaching the watercourses. Complete fencing of lake area and erect new wildlife interpretation panels.

### Meadow

Thin trees at the woodland edge creating varied woodland edge habitat and selecting good specimens of native trees. Gradually re-seed of wild flower areas and suitable maintenance, ensure cut and remove achieved each year. Continue tree and plaque maintenance in the Memorial Arboretum. Compete a new all ability access route through meadows and onto lake, by upgrading existing routes and some new surfaced trail.

### The Valley Garden

Control of Ivy only in the Valley Garden to ensure that new shrubs do not suffer from too much shade and to ensure the restoration plan of the garden is successful. Paths widths need to be increased to allow light onto the path surface and with path-side management to provide a gradation of herb and shrub layers to develop at the ridge edge. Continue removal of laurel to back up the good work already undertaken to clear this shrub before it develops into larger problem. Re-plant banksides with native shrubs and spring bulbs in glades.

### Along cycleway

Counter feeling of narrow corridor by coppicing plants to south side of cycleway and development of rotational coppice management regime: Aim to improve the shape of plants and open view towards Summerhouse Hill. Cut and remove all laurel along pinch point on annual basis. Replant above with lower species to obscure Dodham Brook’s concrete encasement whilst maintaining more open character. Await confirmation of works for Dodham Brook scheme, and ensure water vole population considered.

### Summerhouse Hill

Request thinning of Bowplex planting area on edge of brook to facilitate low-level views though to bottom of hill. Maintain BBQ and picnic areas and plantings with amenity grass cut. Plant 4 more standard parkland oaks nearer to summit of hill, for rest of hill maintain open grass; contain scrub encroachment through grazing. Ensure that stocking rates are appropriate and that the slopes are not further eroded by excluding cattle from scrub on the higher slopes. Retain existing eroded areas, as these are valuable microhabitats for invertebrates, e.g. sand-digging wasps. Monitor scrub / gorse encroachment by photography, both ground and aerial. Cut on 10-15 years rotation if necessary to prevent the scrub getting leggy or dying back. Consider erection of new map panel on Railway Bridge within Bowlplex car park to inform public about access to Country Park.

### Wyndham Hill

Review treatment of the housing edge, and consider hedge planting where the edge is visually incongruous as part of a phased programme of planting improvements. Continue to monitor CWS woodland, with careful consideration of fence alignment, and incorporating shrub edge planting to buffer woodland and encompass difficult ground. Bring woodland into management with particular emphasis on thinning badly drawn trees, and encouraging coppice form. Bring woody presence between cycleway and the River Yeo into management with aim of opening views south, and varying the edge and woody structure for diversity of habitat and visual interest. Replant vandalized specimen lime trees at the head of the hill. Ensure that stocking rates are adjusted depending on the time of the year, with a higher rate in the spring and summer, reducing towards autumn as the grass growth declines. This will reduce the risk of over grazing and poaching. To improve flora on the south-westerly facing slopes, exclude cattle over the summer flowering period. Invasive brambles to be kept under control. Native hedgerows along the boundaries of the field and along the A30 are currently gappy. Ideally hedges should be a soft A shape, and should be trimmed every other year, as the fruits and nuts on which birds and small mammals feed in autumn are produced mainly on second year growth. Thicken boundary hedge with plantings. Plant mixed species hedge along northern boundary, using low growing species to retain views for adjacent residents and visitors. Escarpment: The trees overhanging the footpath should be coppiced or removed. On the steep slopes the thin sandy Yeovil soils are fragile and easily eroded. By coppicing leaning trees, the tree will be saved, as will the embankment from possible landslides. The mature coppice stools that are present on the bank would benefit from re-coppicing. Create new interpretation panel at summit of hill if Wyndham Action Group secure funding.

### Riverside Walk

Negotiate with Wessex Water to agree reduction of overgrown conifers adjacent pathway link to Riverside Walk. Create and widen existing glades associated with pathways, predominantly by cutting adjacent rank vegetation, and including some selected tree removal. When canopy closes thin trees in select locations along pathway routes to break-up sense of enclosure and create diversity. Incorporate shrub edge to glades where south facing, not only for wildlife interest, but also to introduce greater variation and nuance to this area of the park. Create open space links with rivers edge. In longer term plan, select non-native and poor specimen trees for thinning, and only local native species for restocking that typify lowland/floodplain habitat.

### Pond Restoration

All the way along Riverside Walk bankside vegetation should be encouraged by control of the Himalayan Balsam. If left unchecked the Balsam will shade out the native plants and leave the bankside unprotected during the winter months and therefore prone to erosion. This is particularly important due to the coarse sandy soil, which already shows signs of erosion. Efforts will be made to chemically treat the clumps of Japanese Knotweed to prevent its spread and kill it off over a 3 year programme. The path either side of the railway bridge is eroded and waterlogged in places, resurfacing should be considered and maintained after floods. The area of Reedbed should be cut back regularly to slow or halt succession to scrub and woodland here. Cutting back will prevent litter from building up and will help to stop the bed from drying out and becoming colonised by other species. Careful thinning of the 5000 trees, which were planted in 1991, will encourage a healthy canopy. Stack branches and trimmings to rot down, providing important sites for insects and small mammals rather than burning. Plant unsympathetic boundaries with locally native shrubs and tree species from a local source. The patches of scrub along the northern chainlink boundary should be left to provide a valuable breeding and refuge area for birds and other wildlife.

### Pollution and Water Quality Procedures

Environmental Health and other SSDC carry out visual checks of the water in the lake at Ninesprings. During the summer of 2006 the water turned a milky white colour and the Environmental Agency took samples to check for pollution levels and to establish that no action was needed. The District Council and Environment Agency have now jointly purchased a boom which can be placed across Dodham Brook in the event of a pollution incident to prevent the spread of pollution downstream. SSDC staff will continue to carry out visual checks and investigate reports from the public of pollution problems and inform the Environment Agency when necessary.





## Aims and Objectives

- Aim 1** Maintain Yeovil Country Park as a facility for the general public for informal recreation.
- Aim 2** Conserve the wildlife and landscape value of Yeovil Country Park and enhance it where possible.
- Aim 3** Use Yeovil Country Park as an educational resource, promoting an understanding of wildlife and conservation.
- Aim 4** Offer opportunities for people to get involved with the management of Yeovil Country Park.
- Aim 5** To meet all legal and other obligations.



Learning to build a stile at the Fayre

### Aim 1 – Maintain Yeovil Country Park as a facility for the general public for informal recreation.

#### OBJECTIVES

##### 1. Enable visitors to find their way to Yeovil Country Park

The Country Park is close to Yeovil town centre and is easily accessible by car and on foot and by cycle. There are a number of brown Highway tourism signs around the town directing visitors to the site, these should be monitored. The Yeovil Country Park leaflet needs to be made available in as many off site locations as possible and a positive approach would be to ensure the Country Park is mentioned in the town literature. Large branded signs need to be on show and clear at the various entrances to the Country Park, particularly the main entrances at Lyde road, Sherborne road and at the Ninesprings access points.

##### 2. Maintain paths in a good state of repair

The type and quality of paths varies hugely across the site, from tarmac and surface dressed wide cycle ways to narrow muddy tracks. All paths have a place in the park and maintenance depends on the surface and its dressing. All surfaced paths need leaf blowing regularly throughout the autumn months, and the cycleway benefits from a cleaning by the mobile sweeper every few months. Stone block work paths in the valley gardens also need regular leaf clearance, whereas un-surfaced woodland paths do not need this attention. Some paths within the valley gardens require stabilising and some erosion work using boards. Suitable surface dressings will only be used where access is designed for buggies and wheelchairs. The edges of heavily used gravel paths though the meadows will be annually weed treated, to prevent encroachment, as part of the Lufton maintenance agreement.

##### 3. Keep the site free of rubbish

The ranger team will carry out twice weekly litter picks and bin emptying runs, increasing these in the busy summer months to match demand.

##### 4. Maintain all structures (seats, benches and BBQs)

The Country Park includes a number of seats (stone), benches (metal and wood), litter bins, dog bins, wooden bridges and stone built BBQs. These will be inspected as part of regular site tours and repaired when necessary. The location of all structures will be mapped and held in the rangers office with any relevant information e.g. if benches are memorial benches. Boards on wooden structures like bridges will be painted every 3 years with anti slip paint (Screwfix) to prevent accidents.

##### 5. Address issues of dog fouling

The Country Park remains a popular destination for dog walking. Dog bins are provided at regular intervals on many pathways. The bins will be replaced on a rolling programme, ensuring they



The River Yeo

are always in a good state of repair. Bins are only provided where vehicular access is possible for the rangers. Bins are emptied by the ranger team twice per week, more if necessary. Free poop a scoop bags are carried by the rangers for handing out to the public. A positive relationship is maintained with the SSDC dog warden (enforcement officer) who regularly patrols the Country Park. A dog show is organised in the summer to educate park users and dog owners about the need for responsible ownership. A high profile case in 2006, when a member of the public failed to pay a fixed penalty notice after the ranger witnessed a fouling incident, has helped to raise park users awareness that penalties will be enforced.

##### 6. Promote and improve easy access provision

Grant funds have been secured from the Big Lottery's Peoples Millions to deliver a new 1 mile all ability access trail. The route will be created in 2008 and take in the meadows and lake area of Ninesprings. The path will be tarmac with a surface dressing and advice will be sought from the South Somerset Disability Access Group to ensure it meets the needs of its users. The path will link to the main cycleway through site so the route becomes a circular one. The new path will be detailed in the 2008/9 re-print of the site leaflet so it can be fully publicised.



Winning £80,000 from the 'People's Millions Lottery Fund'

##### 7. Ensure the site is safe

Yeovil Country Park is a varied site and a number of particular features need special annual attention. In addition to carrying out standard annual risk assessments reviews special attention will be paid to inspecting the railways sidings and the river banks. The rangers will also complete a tree safety survey annually and action the key points. The rangers are issued with mobile phones but also carry a VHF radio that links them to the town centre network and therefore the PCSO's and town centre police team. Special help and advice will be sought for engineering solution like the retaining walls and the leisure team are best placed to managed the play area in line with ROSPA regulations. With an on site ranger team any urgent risk can, at minimum, be inspected within one working day, but usually it can be remedied that day.

##### 8. Promote healthy living schemes in the Country Park

There exist a number of successful schemes for promoting activity within the Country Park. The orienteering pack covers the permanent orienteering course that exists at Ninesprings. The fitness trail is a self guided trail that follows the idea of a trim trail around the valley gardens, both packs are available from the local TIC but require further promotion. A better working relationship is needed with Goldenstones to make better use of the Country Park land for fitness initiatives. The success of the annual running race demonstrates a demand for led events, and this needs to be built upon. Cycling through the park is popular, but clashes with pedestrians require the team to consult upon the option of line marking the cycleway for clarity of traffic usage. Revisions of the site leaflet will always include suggested walking routes and circular trails and the rangers will regularly lead themed walk to encourage people to explore the Country Park and the wider countryside. The ranger team will liaise with the Active Somerset Officer across Mendip and South Somerset to develop a bank of skilled volunteers whose role it is to market the healthy living opportunities available in the Country Park, challenging non-users to come to the site and try the fitness trails and walking routes.

##### 9. Offer opportunities for feedback from visitors

The front line on site rangers are the most valuable tool in gaining feedback from visitors. Daily contact and interaction with on site users has seen the rangers gather valuable ideas and comments throughout the years, this often includes the comments about little niggles that are often the most important things to regular park users. Other feedback opportunities include annual visitor surveys face to face in the park, or in Yeovil town centre. Feedback mechanisms at all events encourage comments about the Country Park in general and not just the single event. The open public meeting is also a valuable way of harnessing public opinion.

##### 10. Make sure all user groups are considered

In an effort to ensure all users of the Country Park have their views heard the rangers will publicise and host a public meeting every other year. This forum will give all users a fair hearing to air or discuss their needs within the Country Park. The Model Boat Club entered discussions with the rangers 3 years ago and now have an access agreement to the Ninesprings pond. 2008 will see the beginning of negotiations with the Yeovil Angling Club for fishing rights on the river, and in previous years there have been discussions over access for a kayaking club on the river. The rangers are able to carry out an impact assessment for each activity and discuss the findings and options with the





relevant party. Managed access for most groups and users is usually attainable in some shape or form, and the team will continue to deal with each request on a case by case basis, this will include discussion with the South Somerset Countryside Steering Group.

**11. Maintain all boundaries in a safe and attractive fashion**

The Country Park still requires a significant amount of external fencing completing. The rangers will work towards completing the external fencing of the valley gardens, with a specification agreed with the adjoining landowner. The internal valley gardens fencing will be replaced as part of the Breathing Places grant fund. All other fences will be checked annually for integrity, and repairs conducted. Other boundary features in the Country Park include hedgerows. Most are still very young and will not need laying for a number of years but the growth on Penn Hill will require attention within the life of this plan. In all eventualities the rangers will strive to use wooden fences and natural boundaries like hedgerows, so that the wildlife value of an area is also being improved.

**12. Improve entrances to site and linkages to town**

The 2007 green flag inspection recommended improvements be made to the entrances to the Country Park. The site itself is well maintained and inviting, but some entrances do suffer from littering and weed growth in particular. Taking on board these comments new "welcome to" signs will be created for the smaller pedestrian entrances to extend the suite of green and white signs that already exist. The rangers will also work with the Street scene team to improve the maintenance of access tracks into the park. Finally the wooden notice boards across site and at entrances will be renovated and updated. The team will remain in discussion with both the Vision officers and Town Centre team about creating and signing a central entranceway into the park, most probably near Goldenstones via the octagon and Penn Hill park.

**13. Manage and reduce erosion across site**

The main problems with erosion have occurred alongside the watercourses. Rubble filled wire cages and sleeper revetment work is needed on the riverbanks of Riverside Walk. The Dodham brook has woven live willow panels that need laying every 2 years. The valley gardens of Ninesprings have steep sides and require annual attention to prevent minor landslips and dogs need excluding with new fences to stop erosion of the streamside vegetation and slippage. Additionally the steep bank between Wyndham Hill and the cycleway needs trees laying across it to provide soil traps and prevent further slippage. Innovative ways will be sought to deal with all problems and the team will avoid the use of hard



Wyndham Hill

engineering. The woven live willow panels have been very successful in the brook and technology like this will always be considered across the site.

**14. Encourage responsible recreation and public access**

In the Country Park there is a concerted effort to keep the public informed as to works that are occurring and where access is prohibited, or when they are asked to do something, they are told why. The ranger team have an events programme all based around the delivery of key messages about responsible use and access to the countryside e.g. the May bank holiday fayre. The on site rangers also provide a key point of contact and reinforce the messages about using the countryside: clear up after your dog, don't drop litter, and don't make excessive noise. The rangers will approach the public that are breaking the countryside code and try to explain why they shouldn't do it. The Country Park does attract a wide range of users and it is imperative that cyclists stay in designated areas and dog walkers clear up, the rangers are there to deliver this and can request help from PCSO's and enforcement officers with matters relating to bylaws and anti social behaviour.

**15. Apply for green flag award annually**

The Country Park is dedicated to annually achieving the Green Flag Award of excellence. Volunteers, staff and members are all involved in the judging process and the rangers embrace the comments given by the judging team. The countryside manager is a Green Flag judge and can continue to fulfil that role, whilst over the next 3 years further members of the team will apply to become judges.

**16. Manage the routine maintenance agreement with Lufton**

Lufton's Horticultural Services (SSDC) team carry out the annual maintenance at the Country Park. A maintenance pack for the year is formulated each

March for delivery by the team throughout the year. An example copy of the 2007 agreement is in appendix 7. Tasks include grass mowing, strimming, shrub bed pruning and path spraying. Close down each year includes a review of the tasks and inspection of the signed off job sheets by the team. Quarterly update meetings with senior officers ensure the annual work programme is kept on track. Budget cuts from 2008/9 will impact upon the level of work that can be contracted to Lufton's team.

**17. Support the progression of the Dodham Brook enhancement scheme**

The Foundry House development brief and Dodham brook improvement scheme: part of the Yeovil Vision, look set to vastly improve the dark and enclosed pinch point along railway walk. The rangers fully support progression of the scheme and will actively engage with the project team. From the Country Parks angle the rangers will be looking out for works that could prove detrimental to the water vole population, and will not support excessive extra lighting in the area. These developments, coupled with the evolution of the Town Council owned ski centre building, will vastly improve this area of site and firmly put the Country Park as part of Yeovil town.

**18. Locate a secure compound area for storage of materials**

Operating from a single shipping container in Goldenstones car park the rangers experience severe limitations on storage and workshop space. They have access to a garage in Petters way car park and use the compound at Ham Hill Country Park. However all these options are time inefficient and the rangers need an on site store for larger objects like gates, timber and an area to carry out repairs to furniture. There is the possibility to locate a secure compound behind the new pumping station being built on Riverside Walk during 2007/8. On completion of works this should be investigated, and if not feasible other options pursued.



The pond at Ninesprings

**19. Tap into off site funding contributions under PPG 17 developments locally**

Taking advice from Horticultural Services Officers the team needs to develop a justifiable multiplier that can be supplied to all developers who are delivering new housing within a set distance of any Country Park land. Working using the revenue budget of the park, and the annual maintenance programme, a formula can be supplied to SSDC planners to help the Country Park secure annual income and in certain cases special capital projects may be funded.

**20. Annual maintenance of play area car park**

The car park is gravel surfaced and due to the high levels of use requires annual maintenance attention. Scraping and levelling can only occur in the Spring with the drier weather. There is the option to install a solar powered parking meter in the car park to generate income; this will only be possible if the parking inspection team agree to visit the car park on patrols. We know the free car park is often abused by people parking and walking to work in the town centre, but we are also loath to remove all free parking spaces that exist for the Country Park from an accessibility point of view. This needs further investigation and discussion.

**21. Maintain relations with adjoining landowners and developers**

The Country Park borders the land of a number of owners and developers. For maintenance of fence lines and management of the rights of way it is imperative to maintain good relations. Mr Batten at Aldon Pak is supportive of the work of the Country Park and allows access across his land for special events like the running race. The ranger team need to ensure that the fences in Ninesprings are complete and that the public are not breaking through to walk on the private land of Aldon park. Other parties of relevance include the new owners of the Newton Surmaville estate, the tenant at the roundhouse and businesses like the Gateway church and ski centre operators. There are many shared accesses and boundary features, and positive relations with these individuals are paramount to the smooth and effective running of the county park.

**22. Support and advise the play team on the re-development of the Play Area**

In 2008 the play team from Leisure Services have budget to give the Ninesprings play area a face lift. The size of the site and equipment within it will all be considered. The desire is to create a cutting edge play area that fully embraces the environment that the area sits within; utilising more natural features to stimulate play and possibly encompassing water. Discussions commence in early 2008 and works are due to be completed in Spring 2009.





## Aim 2 – Conserve the wildlife and landscape value of Yeovil Country Park and enhance it where possible.

### OBJECTIVES

#### 1. Carry out species surveys and monitoring to inform management

The Country Park has an extensive species list that is compiled and maintained by the Yeovil and District Natural History Society the rangers will continue to actively feed into this report and take note of the annual revisions. Having accurate records like this is imperative to ensure that site management is protecting the species it needs to, and that other poorer areas of habitat are enhanced for species colonisation. Breeding Bird Surveys and Butterfly transects will monitor population levels of a range of species and ensure that management is not damaging these species, but is hopefully allowing for population increases and colonisations by new species e.g. removal of laurel and planting of native plant species will support larger bird populations. The butterfly transects are particularly important as butterflies are particularly good indicators of habitat health and their populations on site will tell the team if management is successfully moving towards healthier, wildlife friendly, habitats. The rangers will also specifically concentrate on the rarer species on site to ensure their populations are stable, or growing, and that no management is detrimental to their habitats. Water voles, otters and reptiles in Ninesprings and at Riverside Walk will be the focus of species specific surveys. General maintenance tasks like clearing out bird and bat boxes will also give the rangers opportunity to assess presence and absence of species and general population levels. It will also be important to monitor the re-growth of vegetation on the slopes cleared of laurel in the valley gardens, there will be some re-planting but for the most part the development of the ground flora will be natural and needs monitoring and evaluating.

#### 2. Manage the County Wildlife Sites to their optimum state

Much of the Country Parks land is designated as County Wildlife Site. The ranger team aim to conserve these habitats as good examples of Somerset habitats, supporting species usually found within them. Watercourses will be monitored and kept free of pollution and close relations will be maintained with the EA to ensure any suspect incidents are reported and investigated. The woodlands, which are currently heavily infected with invasive non-natives will be managed back to a naturally regenerating state, and away from single, even aged species stands

e.g. sycamore and laurel stands in Southwoods. Importantly, with the level of public access, the rangers and volunteers will strive to keep the entire site free of litter so it cannot pollute or be harmful in any way to the species populations.

#### 3. Apply for designation as a Local Nature Reserve.

Recognition of the importance of the habitats contained within the Country Park could be forthcoming by inviting Somerset Wildlife Trust and Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC) to consider their recommendations for designation as Local Nature Reserves (LNR). This would confer a greater degree of protection on the habitats. Much Country Park land is currently designated as a CWS; by inviting SERC to update the surveys held for this area, we will be able to monitor the community changes on this site and reassess the habitats importance. The range of habitats across the entire Country Park site gives high levels of floral and faunal diversity, by considering the Country Park as one unit it is hoped that an application for LNR status would be successful. Such a designation would also open up new funding channels for the site through Natural England's grant schemes, particularly the "Access to Nature" scheme to be launched in Spring 2008.

#### 4. Increase the floristic diversity of the meadows

To encourage greater floristic diversity on the meadows contractors will cut and remove the arisings from the site every August. By removing the nutrients the impoverished soil will only support those species capable of growth on poor soils and able to compete with other species



Foxgloves flourish in Ninesprings

of plant. The aim is for a greater diversity of dicotyledons including meadow species like vetch and hawkbits. This should also see a decrease in the currently dominating species perennial rye grass. There is also the opportunity to spread a wildflower seed mix over the meadows after a cut and scarifying exercise in the late summer to encourage colonisation by meadow species.

#### 5. Control pest species

Under the noxious weeds act the ranger team will exercise both chemical and manual control as far possible over any noxious weeds in the park. Ragwort

is not a significant problem and will be pulled by hand, with the help of volunteers, on the grazing units. Weeds requiring chemical control include the Japanese Knotweed on Riverside Walk and in the valley gardens of Ninesprings. Contractors will be used on a 3 year agreement to ensure this species is properly dealt with. Himalayan balsam along the Dodham brook will also be pulled by hand by



Cygnets hatch in May

volunteers, but this is a losing battle, as on Riverside Walk the opposite landowner does not control the balsam on their land. Giant Hogweed is present on the Riverside walk and will be treated as part of the management programme, however like the balsam the failure of neighbouring landowners to control the species on their land makes most efforts futile.

A further pest species is laurel, which in 2004 was almost a monoculture on the slopes of the valley gardens. Rangers and volunteers have carried out significant works since this time, focusing on a bank at a time and re-planting after clearance works. This schedule will continue to ensure that the valley gardens again includes a range of plants, shrubs and trees, most native and some ornamentals. The rangers will also continue to notify adjoining landowners and business tenant of their obligation to remove invasive species like ragwort to ensure that the land in the Country Park is not threatened by their lack of action e.g. ragwort on the ski centre slopes.

#### 6. Conserve and protect the water vole population

Protecting the water vole population is about delivering a joined up education and physical management scheme. The habitat of the voles will be protected by new fencing to exclude dogs from their preferred banks and burrow sites. This coupled with advising Lufton operatives on how to trim these banksides on a sectional basis should protect the voles from physical damage. The rangers will be trained in monitoring of the species and with this extra knowledge will start an educational campaign including a new wildlife leaflet and notice boards to ensure that the visiting public appreciate the rarity of this species and the need to preserve and protect it. Water voles are very cute and it should be possible to launch a really positive media campaign to ensure people are aware and respectful of their presence in the brook at Ninesprings.

#### 7. Protect and enhance landscape and archaeological features

Archaeological features on site include the strip lynchets on Summerhouse Hill, these are best protected under grassland and the grazing regime will be continued to ensure they are properly managed. Other famous local landmarks include the clumps of trees on Wyndham and Summerhouse Hills. The limes on Wyndham are particularly famous, their age and health indicates that over the next few years at least one will fail, so a scheme to re-plant another clump of 4 limes adjacent to the first will be undertaken. This way the landmark will not be lost when an old lime naturally dies. The same approach will be taken on Summerhouse Hill, by planting 9 new oak trees to replace the trees that currently exist on the slope.

#### 8. Protect and conserve species threatened by public access

In addition to erecting new fencing to create a dog exclusion zone around the persecuted wildfowl and water vole populations, there exists a need to begin a public education programme. Information supplied to the rangers indicates that fish are being stolen from the lake and river, and ducks and other wildfowl poached from the lake. Certainly the massive decrease in ducks throughout 2007 supports this theory. Large nets have also been found strung across the river to catch fish, and local anglers with the club, have reported sighting of sacks of something being carried out of site. The rangers will work with the



Water voles are endangered and protected

communications team and take advice from the EA and Natural England on how to address this. Discussions with the SSCDC community officer may also be helpful. Language line can be used to translate information signs into Polish or Portuguese to explain the bylaws relating to site and the protected nature of the wildfowl.

#### 9. Investigate sources of funding

Yeovil Country Park sits in a unique position: as well as offering recreational space for the people of the town it also includes the heavily used green commuter route. This cycleway way is used by workers travelling to and from large employers like Westland and Pittards. Currently there is no financial benefit to the Country Park of providing this service; it is an avenue that needs exploring to see if there is any leeway for



## Aims & Objectives

## Aims & Objectives





corporate sponsorship of any part of the parks life. Would businesses support a recreational officer or fund capital works? The countryside manager will approach those businesses that should have an interest in the Country Parks future, and discuss opportunities to receive their support.

### 10. Manage the Valley gardens of Ninesprings

The valley gardens are one of the most visited areas of site, and they also require most management intervention. In addition to the laurel clearance work and management of the woodlands, the infrastructure of the site is reaching an age where it requires a significant amount of attention. The steep slopes themselves are in places slipping down into the springs at the bottom of the valley – new revetment work is required to maintain the slope structures and keep soil off the pathways. The site is criss crossed by many narrow stone clad pathways, these need maintenance and leaves removing throughout the autumn and winter months. The springs themselves need clearing of leaf litter to ensure water through flow, and the bank sides need strimming twice a year. In 2008 grant funding will see the replacement of all the internal, ornamental valley gardens fencing; the old fencing was rotten and also insufficient in places where handrails are needed alongside flights of steps. The increase in area of hazel coppice, and the planting of new spring bulbs like bluebells, should see the valley gardens blooming again in spring 2008 and onwards.

### 11. Carry out annual tree safety surveys

To ensure the health and safety of tree stock at the Country Park the rangers carry out an annual inspection. The site is divided into zones and each is walked annually and a survey form completed. Only tree stock that would fall onto an area of space with public access is surveyed. Trees located centrally in woodlands with no paths are not surveyed. Any tree displaying signs of weakness is rated from 1-5 severity and the rangers then either deliver the works themselves or employ contractors to complete works.

### 12. Deliver all prescriptions under Countryside Stewardship Schemes

Wyndham Hill, Summerhouse Hill and Riverside Walk are all under a ten year Countryside Stewardship Scheme (2002 – 2012, see appendix 9 for prescription list). Various works need completing throughout this time, including tree management work on Riverside and Wyndham Hill. Tree planting on Wyndham Hill, and the creation of otter holts along Riverside Walk. This work was completed in 2003, but vandalism saw the wooden holts destroyed and the rangers will return to repair the structures and secure them more firmly. Other stewardship works are annual and include the grazing schemes for the two hills.

### 13. Carry out appropriate woodland management

A huge amount of the Country Parks land is wooded, and it ranges from new planting areas at only 1 year old, 20 year old stands and much older woodlands now in need of management intervention. In the new planting areas strimming will take place twice a year to ensure the saplings can establish and when appropriate the areas will be thinned and tree guards removed. On Riverside Walk a 20 year old stand now needs thinning and glades creating through the stand. This will improve the success rates for the remaining trees and increase the diversity of invertebrate species like butterflies. Recreationally this is also a positive move, creating meandering paths through the trees increasing the interest on the walks through this area.

Timber removed in this area will be stacked as log piles to encourage invertebrate life. Older stands of woodland exist in Southwoods and the Valley gardens of Ninesprings; here invasive non natives like laurel will be removed, sycamore will be thinned and hazel coppice extended and continue as a practice. Sadly not all the new plating schemes put in across the Country Park have been a complete success; Stanley copse a planting area at the bottom of Wyndham Hill has become a hiding area for drug addicts from the town and the local hostel. It has been decided to remove the peripheral fencing from this site and let the cattle back in to graze the area. This will reduce vegetation cover and prevent groups of people hiding in the area. Some planted specimens may survive and act to thicken the hedge that borders the highway.



Magnificent trees in Yeovil Country Park

### 14. Coordinate use and training for deployment of Dodham Brook boom

A pollution boom exists that can be deployed and strung across the Dodham brook near Goldenstones to hold pollution incidents in situ and prevent them travelling down stream and on into the river Yeo. The boom was designed by SSDC engineers and attaches at two purpose designed platforms either side of the brook. On the reporting of a pollution incident in the town and its entering the water course the rangers put the boom in place and inform the Environment Agency who send a truck to suck up the pollution from the water course. The entire boom and safety equipment is held and maintained by the ranger team. Engineers

from SSDC and the local EA officer are all trained to deploy the boom and the ranger team organise a refresher training day every 2 years for all staff to attend. The boom has been deployed twice in the 5 years and prevented some significant spills of toxic waste travelling further down stream and damaging the habitats and wildlife.

### 15. Secure funding to appoint assistant countryside ranger position

In 5 years of life the Country Park has advanced significantly and the outputs are huge, from practical land management to really successful public events. The ranger team consists of 1.2 countryside rangers and a 6 month seasonal assistant ranger to assist with practical management work. To advance and successfully manage the Country Park to the next level requires more, on site, front line staff, specifically a full time assistant ranger position. With a full time assistant the rangers are not hampered by health and safety restrictions when they cannot use power tools when working alone, and having full time cover would mean sickness and annual leave would no longer be a problem. The countryside manager will seek to secure funding for a further 6 months of assistant ranger contract to secure the future effectiveness of the Country Park team.

### 16. Manage the memorial arboretum

The memorial arboretum at Ninesprings is now full. No further trees will be planted in the site but the ranger will continue to manage the area. The tree stock will be monitored and horticultural services carry out an amenity grass cut through out the year. Most enquiries for the area are about missing plaques or replacement plaques which can be organised by the ranger team.

### 17. Rescue management of the gardens at Penn Hill

Penn Hill Park is a far more formal green space than the other compartments of the Country Park. It is the remains of the house's former gardens and with significant works could be restored to reflect this former glory. Years of only superficial management have seen the disappearance of the rose garden, rope edged paving, ornamental shrub beds and the tree specimens are no longer obvious. With assistance from the horticultural services team and with their specialist knowledge there is an aim to restore the gardens, create a trail around the specimen trees and ensure the Penn Hill Park is properly publicised and enjoyed by the public. The hamstone bench recently removed from the park will be re-located within the jubilee garden as a focal point for photographs for recently married couples at the adjoining registry office. Various benches and bins on Penn Hill also need replacing and there is likely to be a need to invest in some new planting

schemes. There are 2 extra annexes of land adjoining the main land of Penn Hill: the old nursery site and an area to the side of the law courts. These areas need significant intervention and cutting to assess their potential as public open green space, this work will be undertaken by the ranger team with the help of volunteers.

### 18. Investigate funding and contractors for dredging of lake

In 2004 the pond at Ninesprings was dredged and the extracted silt dumped in the now fenced area next to the pond. The works carried out by Alaska contractor's costs thousands of pounds and that included keeping the silt on site. Finding funding to dredge the lake at Ninesprings will require a significant amount of money, especially as it will be impossible to keep the extracted silt on site. The lake is now only very shallow and levels continue to rise as silt and leaf litter is washed down into the lake from the springs and watercourses in the valley gardens. The works will need attention within the next five years other wise the through flow of water from Ninesprings to the lake and on into Dodham brook will be jeopardised and the natural system disrupted.

### 19. Apply for Entry Level Stewardship and research Higher Level Stewardship applications

At the end of the existing Countryside Stewardship Schemes (in 2012) there will be the opportunity to apply for ELS and possibly HLS. The area Natural England Advisor needs to be invited to site to advise on the application and the works that could be contained within it. It is likely that schemes of tree planting, hedge laying and parkland tree care could be continued within it, and there is always the opportunity to look at going organic.

### 20. Manage all new planting areas

There are four new areas of woodland planted within the Country Park, and also the newly planted slopes in the valley gardens. These all need specific annual care to ensure the successful growth of the planted saplings. Part of the horticultural services contract is the twice yearly strimming of the areas and the rangers will carry out any further maintenance required e.g. removal of tree ties and guards.

### 21. Liase with Wessex water re. Reduction of conifer hedge

At the Pittards entrance to Riverside Walk a leylandii hedge on Wessex Waters land is out shading and creating a very dark and dank access path to Riverside Walk. Wessex water has been approached in the past to top the hedgerow with no success. Greater effort will be made to get the hedge reduced in the coming years.





### Aim 3 – Use Yeovil Country Park as an educational resource, promoting an understanding of wildlife and conservation.

#### OBJECTIVES

##### 1. Develop an education pack for the site

As part of the Big Lottery's People's Millions grant fund an education pack will be developed for use in schools. A consultant will be appointed to create a pack that links the natural features of the Country Park in national curriculum linked studies and plenty of plenary activities. With the town of Yeovil so close with many primary schools and 4 secondary schools there is a significant market for a quality education resource. The activities and site will be fully risk assessed and self guided trails and activities will be suggested. In addition to the formal educational resource there will be included the orienteering pack and wildlife trails as options for activity weeks. The pack will be launched on site in spring 2009 in a bid to encourage teachers to visit the site.



Bat walk in the Valley Gardens

##### 2. Tapping into the Yeovil Vision, build a visitor centre, ranger's base and provision for a café

In the five years since its designation the Country Park has evolved quickly. The level of community engagement is incredible in such a short time and the projects now underway in the second phase of the parks life are testament to the success of the on site ranger team and level of funding secured for the site. Further progression is now always going to be severely hampered by the lack of a ranger base and front line office. The rangers operate from a shipping container, they have insufficient storage for tools and materials and the container cannot be advertised as an office base for visitors for security reasons. To have flexible space where the rangers can operate a workshop from, have a public contact point and start and finish events, is key to the further development of the site. There is currently no space near to the Country Park where a Friends group could meet (without considerable expense) and there is no where for visiting educational groups or play schemes to shelter

in bad weather. Any new facility does not need to be huge, and there should always be the consideration of including public toilets and a cafe; two things that repeatedly appear on visitor surveys in the Country Park. There are considerable developments planned as part of the Yeovil Vision around the Foundry House area (one option) or the Town Council are currently looking at the next phase of use of the ski centre (a second option) though the current focus for the Country Park is the area around Goldenstones (a third option). It is thought that the focus of the Country Park will change over the next 4 years, as Goldenstones closes, and the Foundry House and Dodham brook developments progress. So although the currently favoured location is a new sustainable build near to Goldenstones, it may be that space in an existing building further to east in the Country Park would be a longer term solution. Officers will continue to be involved in all project groups for the ski centre and Vision and pursue the most viable solution.

##### 3. Establish links with local schools

The Country Park is sometimes used by local primary schools visiting and carrying out informal sessions. The development and launch of an education pack for site should further the positive links with the local schools and the rangers will listen to the needs and suggestions made by teachers.

##### 4. Provide opportunities for the public to see wildlife

Wildlife watching is being increasingly popularised by TV nature programmes. Over the last 2 years the bat walks delivered by the rangers are still very popular and always fully booked. The public increasingly want a close up experience which is often difficult to deliver, and could also be detrimental to the Country Parks wildlife. However improvements in the lake area should go some way to encouraging wildfowl back to site. There is an ambition to erect a bird hide (which would need careful design and planning to ensure it is vandal proof) next to the pond to help people study the bird life. The rangers will also continue to pursue the suggestion of a swan cam on the island that relays live pictures of the nesting birds to a website. With the swans increasingly becoming the emblem of the Country Park it would be fantastic for the public to better understand their ecology. The rangers will also develop wildlife themed guided walks, designed to point out the best areas to see water voles, kingfishers and badgers, even if they don't see one on the walk.

##### 5. Maintain all on site interpretation

The existing interpretation on site includes 3 large map panels and a suite of updateable notice boards. This is set to be expanded over the coming years. Each year the panels and boards will be inspected. Repairs carried out to the wooden frames

if necessary and a new Perspex layer placed over the interpretation panel. If the board shows signs of fading or excessive damage through vandalism then a replacement print will be ordered.

##### 6. Create new on site wildlife interpretation

As part of the big lottery's peoples millions grant new wildlife interpretation boards will be developed for the lake and Ninesprings area of site. New panels describing the wildfowl, its ecology and how to protect it will be erected along with things to look out for, like the kingfisher. To compliment this series a nature trail leaflet will be created, showing and illustrating a self guided trail that takes in some of the best wildlife and wildlife watching spots in the park. All literature will include key messages about protection of the sites wildlife and include guidance on managing your dog whilst out for a walk.

##### 7. Revise the site leaflet and print

Yeovil Country Park has a leaflet that includes an artist's map and information on the site's wildlife and history. This leaflet now needs updating and revising to reflect the recent developments in the park and publicise projects. The new edition will include the new all ability trail on the map, encourage responsible recreation in the park to help conserve the habitats and wildlife, publicise the work of the volunteer ranger team and sign post people as to where to get further information about events and educational materials.

##### 8. Deliver annual PR and marketing plan

Being a front line service and very much in the public eye the entire ranger team needs to be confident in dealing with press attention and also understand how to gain positive press editorial and coverage. Assistance from the communications team will see all rangers confident in writing draft media releases and happy doing radio



The busy May Fayre

interviews on non-contentious issues. The team will aim for some press coverage every fortnight including publicising new events, activities and countryside management works. This remains a regular item on team agendas to discuss past coverage and see what can be released in the coming month.



Creative playschemes are always popular

##### 9. Run diverse annual programme of events

From November each year the planning for the subsequent year begins. A full events programme is confirmed in January and leaflets printed in February. A list of 1000 people receive copies of the publicity material and leaflets are also sent to schools, TICS and many other outlets. Every year the large May Fayre will run on the second May bank holiday attracting around 6000 visitors. In addition to this a packed schedule of children's activities, junior rangers, guided walks and talks also runs. At each event feedback forms are given out and responses analysed annually, in response to this new events are developed each year. The team also watches current trends and in 2008 will introduce a greater range of up close wildlife watching events. Events range from free (where grant funded) to £5 for expert led guide walks e.g. the fungus foray. The team accepts the passport to leisure scheme cardholders and offers reductions on all its activities. The team make a concerted effort to offer a broad range of events that would appeal to all ages. Starting with play schemes and look out club and progressing talks and walks of varying lengths. Many of our events are reliant upon volunteer leaders and community involvement and that is generally what makes them such a success. In 2007 we estimate from our monthly records that we saw around 300 people attending organised events.

##### 10. Consider the development of an art trail

The winding paths and woodland alcoves in Ninesprings lend themselves to the development of some kind of discovery trail. Maybe an art trail that depicts the wildlife of the park. Wood could easily be sourced from the site to provide the raw materials for carving, and sculptures located within the valley gardens. It would be preferable to have pieces made of natural materials to keep the organic feel of the site. Discussions with the SSDC Arts Officer should help scope the project and it may be an opportunity to forge links with the art department at Yeovil College.



### Aims & Objectives

### Aims & Objectives





### 11. Develop the web pages for Yeovil Country Park on the South Somerset web site

Yeovil Country Park currently features on the www.southsomerset.gov.uk website under the countryside section. The information available is limited and site leaflets are featured as pdfs. The pages need re-writing to better reflect the fabulous site. More information is required on community groups like the conservation volunteers and on other ways to get involved e.g. on work experience. The species lists for the Country Park can be posted here and any newly developed literature like the education pack. The work, for financial reasons, would need to be kept in house on the SSDC web pages. If possible wildlife cams could be developed including a swan cam showing the birds nesting on the lake in Ninesprings.



Annually the Cygnets are ringed

### 12. Use on site notice boards to explain projects and opportunities

There already exist 12 wooden notice boards across the Country Park at key junctions and entrances. Each board holds a maximum of 2 A4 posters and these will continue to be used to inform the public of all projects on and forthcoming in the Country Park. The volunteer ranger team can be publicised, warnings for path closures or information on that months events. Keeping the public informed is the best way to avoid complaints, and notices explaining works like laurel clearance have been very useful in the past.

### 13. Seek funding for a visitor services ranger

With the Country Park increasingly offering something for a huge range of people and the increase in informal recreation on site there becomes an increasing need for a dedicated front line presence assisting the public, answering enquires, developing literature, running walks and talks and ensuring that the various users of the park are all catered for. Under the healthy living agendas there is a need to deliver a greater ranger of outdoor activity sessions and a range of natural play sessions. Combining all these roles in to one front line post would ensure that the park developed in the direction that its user want it to. Grant funding will be sought for a full-time visitor services ranger to join the Country Park team.

## Aim 4 – Offer opportunities for people to get involved with the management of Yeovil Country Park.

### OBJECTIVES

#### 1. Run weekly practical conservation volunteer group

The rangers will continue to run the weekly volunteer task day every Thursday. In 2007 an average of 8 volunteers attended every Thursday donating over 500 days throughout year. This gives us the equivalent of 3 extra members of staff to deliver the labour intensive projects like laurel clearance and tree planting. The ranger team sets relevant day long tasks for the team and accompanies them to deliver tool safety talks and run the power tools. Volunteers come from a wide range of backgrounds and attend for a wide range of reasons (as seen in the 2007 volunteer survey). The rangers will deliver tasks like laurel clearance, gorse coppicing, woodland management and fencing. In addition some days at other countryside sites will be organised to allow the volunteers to try skills like dry stone walling, which have limited availability at Yeovil.

#### 2. Establish a friends of Yeovil Country Park group

The Country Park already has excellent public involvement but seeing the success of the friends group model at Ham Hill Country Park and with a growing list of individuals who have expressed an interest in being further involved with the site (in a non practical way) the ranger team are keen to launch a Friends of Yeovil Country Park community group. The friends group will be launched late in 2008 and be an informal, unconstituted, community group. A clear advantage of a friends group is

Volunteers are taught traditional countryside skills



their ability to fundraise for the park. The ranger's role will be as administrative support and the group will be asked to elect a chair and treasurer. There are a number of projects developing at the Country Park that would benefit from the guidance, enthusiasm and financial support of a friends group and the rangers will suggest involvement with these. In the first instance the group will be kept small in order for it to establish, though it is likely to be thrown wider in future years.

#### 3. Run an annual junior ranger event

Entering its third year in 2008 the junior rangers is aimed at 12-16 year olds and seems to be a positive formula for the engagement of young adults during the school holidays. The project is aimed at young people with an interest in the countryside and rangers work. They carry out the work of the countryside rangers for between 3-4 days and meet a range of other young people from other schools and backgrounds. Junior rangers have returned year on year and can progress to apply for the apprenticeship scheme. Each year the rangers will run a minimum of 1 junior ranger event.

#### 4. Offer an annual apprenticeship

In its fourth year in 2008 the apprenticeship scheme aims to offer a practical training route and entry to employment for young people aiming to enter the countryside management profession. With competition for all rangers jobs high, the opportunity to spend a year working as a practical ranger and gain an NVQ level 2 in Environmental Conservation is useful. Delivered in partnership with Kingston Maurward College and Dorset Countryside the applicants for the two positions have been very varied. Each apprentice costs £5000 for the year to cover wages and training. The scheme does not guarantee employment at the end, but part of the in house training offered is the process of job applications and interviews. Past apprentices have gone on into further education or gained employment as assistant rangers.

#### 5. Deliver an open public meeting every two years

As a mechanism to keep the people of Yeovil involved in the management the rangers will host an open public meeting every other year. The evening will include presentations of achievements over the past two years and also plans for the future. The event gives the opportunity for the public to give comments to the rangers on the projects and discuss any concerns they may have. Past meetings have proved very useful forums for discussion and also helped the ranger gather support and evidence for proposed projects. A special meeting will be called to discuss the draft of each new site management plan.

### 6. Offer work experience placements

The rangers support on average 6 work placements per annum. All local secondary schools at some time have sent work experience students to the sites. The team have a Placement Policy (Appendix 10), which is followed for all sites. As a general rule only 1 placement is accepted at any one time. There is also a work placement pack that all students are issued, giving them details of risk assessments and a work diary to complete for their time on site. All placements must attend a brief interview prior to their main placement; priority is given to those students expressing an interest in the countryside and wildlife, not just those that do not want to spend a week in an office. The Ham Hill site is inspected annually by the county council to ensure it is still suitable for the student's placements. Whenever a placement is accepted the SSDC training officer is notified to keep the central records up to date.



Junior Rangers is a popular week long event

### 7. Deliver one new tree planting initiative annually

The success of the family woodlands scheme in 2006 prove the public support and enthusiasm for involvement in woodland creation and tree planting schemes. There is both financial support and a desire to help physically plant trees from the people of Yeovil and a similar scheme can be recreated in the future at the Country Park. Planting schemes will be developed for Riverside Walk and within the valley gardens of Ninesprings.

### 8. Carry out an annual visitor survey

The rangers are always keen to understand the opinions of the visiting public. Each year some sort of formal evaluation of public opinion will be undertaken. It may take the shape of an on site face to face visitor survey (completed in 2007), a visit to Yeovil town centre (completed 2006) or postal surveys (2004). This will help the team gather a variety of opinions from both users and non users of the park.

### 9. Gather feedback from all events and analyse annually

The events programme is planned in November & December and launched in January of the relevant year. During the planning phase the key themes and





**Aims & Objectives**

educational messages are considered for each event, and ways of evaluating the success of delivering this message are also confirmed. The rangers operate a number of evaluation mechanisms; at guided walks all participants are given a form to complete and hand back in, at large events feedback forms are included in the programme with prize incentives to return them. At fayre events volunteers and rangers undertake to carry out a minimum of 100 face to face surveys with the visitors asking key questions. For children's events we use a happy face / sad face system, where children select a face that reflects their experience and post it in a box. Countryside was key in developing the evaluating educational initiatives framework for SSDC and use all the mechanisms discussion within this pack. At the end of the year the feedback is compiled both quantitative (numbers attending) and qualitative data (opinions and suggestions) to help guide the development of the next years programme. Suggestions coming out of the publics comment have included nature trails for buggies and toddlers, more hands on heritage for children and wild food and cooking courses.

**10. Maintain a presence on the South Somerset Countryside Steering Group**

The steering group is the body that helps direct, advise and approve the management of the countryside sites. It is informed by reports from the rangers about the sites on a quarterly basis. It is important for the rangers to continue to attend the group, explain works, gain feedback and be informed by the experts on the group. It also gives important time for reflection on work programmes and designation of priorities.

**11. Deliver Bi-monthly children's look out club event**

The ranger team will continue to run the children's look out club for children aged between 8 – 12 years. Each month on a Saturday morning an outdoor based activity will be organised based at Ham Hill or Yeovil Country Park. In past years activities have included bug hunting, bat & bird box creation, birdfeeders, kayaking, roman walks and trips to local farms. A maximum of 24 children can attend and 10 out of 12 sessions in 2007 were fully booked. In 2008 the charge for activities will be increased to £3 per child and monies will be re-invested in the club by booking external leaders for special projects.

**Aim 5 – To meet all legal and other obligations.**

**OBJECTIVES**

**1. Carry out annual tree safety surveys**

To ensure the health and safety of tree stock at the Country Park the rangers carry out an annual inspection. The site is divided into zones and each is

walked annually and a survey form completed. Only tree stock that would fall onto an area of space with public access is surveyed. Trees located centrally in woodlands with no paths are not surveyed. Any tree displaying signs of weakness is rated from 1-5 severity and the rangers then either deliver the works themselves or employ contractors to complete works.

**2. Monitor monthly performance on balanced scorecard**

To ensure our targets are met, and we monitor the level of community involvement and achievements against the critical activities of the corporate plan, at the end of each month figures are gathered from across the ranger team and collated centrally. We record numbers of events organised, youth activities, number of participants, number of trees planted and number of volunteer activities organised and days donated. These records now cover three years and are really useful for many things including funding bids, evidence for inspections and reporting on progress towards the delivery of grant schemes.

**3. Carry out annual risk assessment updates**

A full site risk assessment exists for Yeovil Country Park. The assessment is revised and updated annually in September and action points delivered. To ensure all current health and safety legislation is covered both the SSDC health and safety officer and insurance officer attend site to inspect busy areas and discuss any problems that have arisen over the year. Separate job risk assessments are carried out for contractor works and volunteer tasks. The rangers have access to a risk assessment template and statement bank for use on all risk assessments.

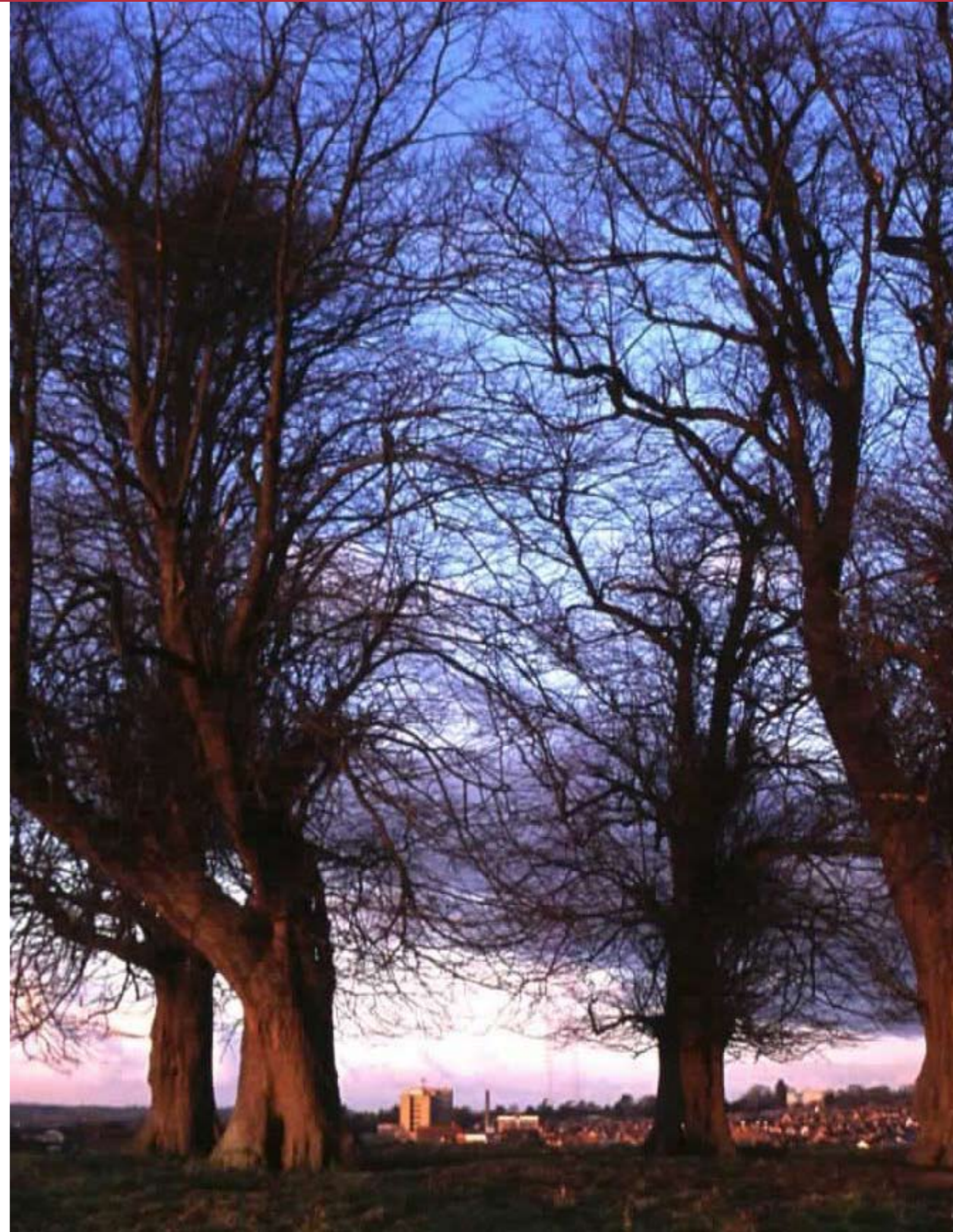
**4. Ensure bylaws up to date and relevant**

The Country Park has its own set of bylaw declared at the creation of the Country Park in 2002. These bylaws are relatively recent and only the penalties may need revision.

**5. Control all noxious weeds like ragwort and giant hogweed**

Under the noxious weeds act the ranger team will exercise both chemical and manual control as far possible over any noxious weeds in the park. Ragwort is not a significant problem and will be pulled by hand, with the help of volunteers, on the grazing units. Weeds requiring chemical control include the Japanese Knotweed on Riverside Walk and in the valley gardens of Ninesprings. Contractors will be used on a 3 year agreement to ensure this species is properly dealt with.

Wyndham Hill Lime Trees





# Prescription Tables



**Aim 1. Maintain Yeovil Country Park as a facility for the general public for informal recreation.**

TASK	WHO	WHEN? YEARS 1-5	£ COST	PARTNERS	WHERE? COMPARTMENT	COMPLETED / COMMENTS
<b>1. Enable visitors to find their way to Yeovil Country Park.</b>						
Leaflets to be available off site and at TIC's	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓	Tourism team	N/a	
Brown signs in place and relevant	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓	Highways	N/a	
The Country Park is referred to in town literature	CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	c. £200	Town Council and Town centre partnership	N/a	
<b>2. Maintain paths in a good state of repair</b>						
Annual repair programme for paths across the site	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	c. £1,000	N/a	Entire Site	
Regular leaf blowing in the autumn months	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	c. £100	N/a	Entire site	
<b>3. Keep the site free of rubbish.</b>						
Twice weekly litter picks and bin emptying	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£500	Streetscene	Entire Site	
Support of volunteers carrying out litter picks	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓			Entire Site	
<b>4. Maintain all structures (seats, benches and BBQs).</b>						
Carry out mapping exercise to include all benches, BBQs and bridges.	R	✓	c. £20	GIS team	Entire site	
Annually inspect all structures.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓		Entire site	
Deliver repairs as required.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£500		Entire site	
Repaint anti slip paint every 3 years on wooden structures.	R	✓	£50		Entire Site	
<b>5. Address issues of dog fouling.</b>						
Provide dog waste bins in relevant locations across the Country Park	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£300		Entire site	
Empty bins twice per week	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓	Streetscene	Entire Site	
Maintain close working relationship with the SSDC dog warden.	R + CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓			
<b>6. Promote and improve easy access provision.</b>						
Deliver new all ability trail around the lake area	R + CM	✓	£50K	Big Lottery Fund	Ninesprings	
Ensure new route publicised	R + CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓			



# Prescription Tables



**Aim 1. Maintain Yeovil Country Park as a facility for the general public for informal recreation.**

TASK	WHO	WHEN? YEARS 1-5	£ COST	PARTNERS	WHERE? COMPARTMENT	COMPLETED / COMMENTS
<b>7. Ensure the site is safe.</b>						
Carry out annual risk assessment reviews	CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓		Entire site	
Invite H and S officer and Insurance officer to site for annual inspection.	CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓		Entire site	
Communicate effectively with Leisure team over management of play area.	R + CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓	Leisure	Ninesprings	
Inspect railways sidings annually for movement.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓	Engineering SSDC	Ninesprings	
Rangers to carry VHF radios to town centre police.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£500	Town centre partnership	Entire site	
Carry out annual tree safety survey.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓		Entire site	
<b>8. Promote healthy living schemes in the Country Park.</b>						
Market the Blackburn Fitness trail around the valley gardens.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓	Comms team	Ninesprings	
Consult on line marking the cycleway for clearer definition between walkers and cyclists	R	✓			Ninesprings	
Deliver annual running race to encourage beginners.	CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£200	Yeovil road running club	Ninesprings	
Encourage Goldenstones to use site to deliver outdoor fitness initiatives.	CM	✓		Goldenstones	Ninesprings	
Maintain and update permanent orienteering course on site.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£100	Quantock Orienteers	Ninesprings	
Assist in the development of Active Somerset Volunteers to market healthy living schemes in the Country Park	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Active Somerset Officer	Entire Site	
<b>9. Offer opportunities for feedback from visitors.</b>						
Carry out annual survey about Country Park.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£100		Entire Site	
Rangers operate front line service talking to site users every day.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓			
At all events include a feedback mechanism.	R + CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£100			



# Prescription Tables

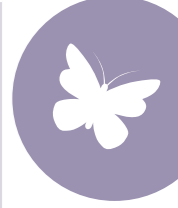


TASK	WHO	WHEN? YEARS 1-5	£ COST	PARTNERS	WHERE? COMPARTMENT	COMPLETED / COMMENTS
<b>10. Make sure all user groups are considered.</b>						
Manage annual access licence with model boat club.	CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	-£25	Model Boat Club	Ninesprings	
Enter negotiations with angling club over new river fishing agreement.	CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	TBC	Angling Club	Riverside	
Host open public meeting and invite all user groups.	R + CM	✓	£150			
Host educational event for dogs and owners.	CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£300	Enforcement	Ninesprings	
In partnership host annual cycling event.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Local charity	Ninesprings	
<b>11. Maintain all boundaries in a safe and attractive fashion.</b>						
Continue external re-fencing of valley gardens at c. 300m / annum	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£10,000	Contractor	Ninesprings	
Re-fence internal valley gardens c. 700m	R	✓	£7,000	Big Lottery Fund + contractor	Ninesprings	
Carry out full fence check every year.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Volunteers	Entire site	
Manage hedgerows on Penn Hill, lay in 2012	R	✓			Pen Hill	
<b>12. Improve entrances to site and linkages to town.</b>						
Replace vandalised sign at Lysander Road entrance.	R	✓	£500	Contractor	Ninesprings	
Create new "welcome to" signs for subsidiary entrances.	CM	✓	£600	Contractor	Ninesprings + Riverside	
Refurbish on site notice boards – re-colour yaffle logo.	R	✓	£2000	Contractor	Entire site	
Work with Vision team re. Links to town.	CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	TBC	Vision Group and director	Entire site	
Discuss improvements to access paths with street scene team.	CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Streetscene	Ninesprings	
<b>13. Manage and reduce erosion across site.</b>						
Carry out revetment work in river banks	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£3000		Riverside	
Lay trees on Wyndham bank.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Volunteers	Wyndham	
Employ contractor to lay willow bank panels in Dodham Brook.	R	✓	£500 / annum	Contractor	Ninesprings	
Erect fence to prevent dogs accessing water in Ninesprings.	R	✓	£3000	Big Lottery Fund	Ninesprings	
<b>14. Encourage responsible recreation and public access.</b>						

TASK	WHO	WHEN? YEARS 1-5	£ COST	PARTNERS	WHERE? COMPARTMENT	COMPLETED / COMMENTS
Deliver Country Park fayre annually with countryside education material focus.	R + CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£2000 / annum	Town Centre partnership + big lottery fund	Ninesprings	
Keep up to date information posters on site to ensure public well informed.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£300 / annum		Entire site	
Enforce no biking and no dogs zones.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓			Ninesprings	
<b>15. Apply for green flag award annually.</b>						
Apply for award annually.	CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£400	Civic Trust	Entire site	
Remain active members of the scheme as a venue and judge.	CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Civic Trust		
<b>16. Manage the routine maintenance agreement with Lufton.</b>						
Plan full years work in March every year.	CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£18,700 / annum	Horticultural Services	Entire site	
Meet quarterly to assess progress and highlight problems.	R + CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Horticultural Services	Entire Site	
<b>17. Support the progression of the Dodham brook enhancement scheme.</b>						
Attend meetings and offer site knowledge and advice on schemes.	CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	TBC	Vision group	Ninesprings	
Ensure habitat of water voles not damaged in any way.	R + CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓			Ninesprings	
<b>18. Locate a secure compound area for storage of materials.</b>						
Develop new store on Riverside behind new pumping station.	R + CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£3000	Engineering Team	Riverside	
<b>19. Tap into off site funding contributions under PPG 17 developments locally.</b>						
Develop justifiable multiplier for Country Park maintenance to supply to planning and developers.	CM	✓			Entire Site	
<b>20. Annual maintenance of play area car park.</b>						
In spring level and sometimes re-gravel play area car park.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£800 / annum	Contractor	Ninesprings	
Discuss installation of solar powered parking meter.	CM	✓	TBC	Engineering Team	Ninesprings	
<b>21. Maintain relations with adjoining landowners and developers.</b>						
Support and advise the Play team on the re-development of the Play Area	R + CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£80,000 Grant funding	Play Team	Entire Site	
	CM + R	✓			Ninesprings	



# Prescription Tables





# Prescription Tables



**Aim 2. Conserve the Wildlife and Landscape value of Yeovil Country Park and enhance where possible.**

TASK	WHO	WHEN? YEARS 1-5	£ COST	PARTNERS	WHERE? COMPARTMENT	COMPLETED / COMMENTS
<b>1. Carry out species surveys and monitoring to inform management.</b>						
Support YDNHS in their management of species list for the Country Park.	R + CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£50 / annum	YDNHS	Entire Site	
Carry out Breeding Bird Survey.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Volunteers	Ninesprings	
Carry out butterfly transect.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Volunteers	Entire site	
Monitor reptiles at Riverside Walk.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Volunteers	Riverside	
Monitor water vole population and ensure careful management of river back vegetation.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£200 training cost YR 1		Ninesprings	
Monitor plant life and re-growth in valley gardens post clearance.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Volunteers	Ninesprings	
Annually clear out bird and bat boxes.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Volunteers	Ninesprings	
Carry out otter surveys	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£200 training	Apprentices	Riverside	
<b>2. Manage the County Wildlife Sites to their optimum state.</b>						
Monitor water quality in brook, river and lake.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		EA	Ninesprings and Riverside	
Annually replace "frog matt" to prevent algal blooms in lake.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£1500 / annum	Contractor	Ninesprings	
Manage woodlands to a naturally regenerating state.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£1000	Volunteers	Entire site	
Maintain all habitats free of litter.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£400	Volunteers	Entire Site	
<b>3. Apply for designation as a Local Nature Reserve.</b>						
Discuss with Natural England the possibility of LNR designation.	CM	✓		Natural England	Entire Site	
Consider application to Access to Nature grant fund	CM	✓		Natural England	Entire Site	
<b>4. Increase the floristic diversity of the meadows.</b>						
Ensure meadows cut and arisings removed every august.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£3002	Horticultural Services	Ninesprings	

**Aim 2. Conserve the Wildlife and Landscape value of Yeovil Country Park and enhance where possible.**

TASK	WHO	WHEN? YEARS 1-5	£ COST	PARTNERS	WHERE? COMPARTMENT	COMPLETED / COMMENTS
<b>5. Control pest species.</b>						
Pull ragwort by hand across the sites.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Volunteers	Entire site	
Treat Himalayan balsam on watercourses.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓			Riverside + Ninesprings	
Spray twice annually Japanese knotweed.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£1500 / annum	Contractors	Riverside + Ninesprings	
Continue laurel removal in valley gardens.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£500 / annum	Volunteers	Ninesprings	
Treat giant hogweed annually on river banks.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£500 / annum	Contractors	Riverside	
<b>6. Conserve and protect the water vole population.</b>						
Inform Lufton of bank side vegetation management principles. Cut 10m, leave 20m.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	TBC	Horticultural services	Ninesprings	
Fence lake and brook area to create dog exclusion zone.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£3000	Big lottery fund	Ninesprings	
Every two years employ consultant to assess species population levels.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£200	Consultant	Ninesprings	
Deliver public education initiatives to protect species e.g. wildlife information boards.	R + CM	✓	£1000	Big lottery fund	Ninesprings	
<b>7. Protect and enhance landscape and archaeological features.</b>						
Maintain grazing agreements to ensure grassland managed and strip lynchets preserved.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	-£700 income / annum	Tenant farmer	Wyndham and Summerhouse	
Plant 9 oaks on Summerhouse Hill.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£650	Volunteers and CSS	Summerhouse	
Plant 4 limes on Wyndham Hill.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£700	Wyndham Action group	Wyndham	
<b>8. Protect and conserve species threatened by public access.</b>						
Erect new fence and enforce dog exclusion zone around lake to protect wildfowl.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£3000	Big lottery fund	Ninesprings	
Erect information posters in Polish and Portuguese about wildfowl.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£150	Comms team	Ninesprings and Riverside	
<b>9. Investigate sources of funding.</b>						
Investigate corporate sponsorship for various facets of park.	CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Local business	Entire site	



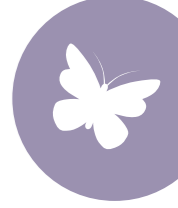
# Prescription Tables





# Prescription Tables

TASK	WHO	WHEN? YEARS 1-5	£ COST	PARTNERS	WHERE? COMPARTMENT	COMMENTS
<b>10. Manage the valley gardens of Ninesprings.</b>						
Clear each slope of laurel and re-plant with native and some ornamental species.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£500	Volunteers	Ninesprings	
Extend the area of hazel coppice.	R	✓ ✓ ✓		Volunteers	Ninesprings	
Plant bluebells and primroses for spring colour.	R	✓ ✓ ✓	£2000	Wee tree nursery	Ninesprings	
Clear the watercourses of leaves in Autumn.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Volunteers	Ninesprings	
Clear the paths of vegetation and leaves throughout the year.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Volunteers	Ninesprings	
Re-fence the entire valley gardens internally.	R	✓	£5000	Contractors	Ninesprings	
<b>11. Carry out annual tree safety surveys.</b>						
Carry out annual tree safety surveys and Action identified risks.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	Varies annually c. £5000	Contractor and arborist	Entire site	
<b>12. Deliver all prescriptions under countryside stewardship schemes.</b>						
Complete trees works at Riverside Walk.	R	✓ ✓ ✓	£2000	Contractor	Riverside	
Repair otter holts on Riverside.	R	✓	£100	Volunteers	Riverside	
<b>13. Carry out appropriate woodland management.</b>						
Stim vegetation growth in new planting areas across site.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£400 / cut	Horticultural services	Entire site	
Thin planting area at Riverside.	R	✓		Volunteers	Riverside	
Create and mow glades through woodland at Riverside Walk.	R	✓			Riverside	
Extend hazel coppice in valley gardens on 7 year rotation.	R	✓ ✓ ✓		Volunteers	Ninesprings	
Remove tree guards from established trees.	R	✓ ✓ ✓		Volunteers	Entire site	
Remove fence line from Stanley copse and open to grazing cattle.	R	✓	£500	Contractor	Wyndham Hill	
Under direction of YDNHS re-plant the pumping station site at Riverside	R	✓ ✓ ✓	£500	Engineering	Riverside	
<b>14. Coordinate use and training for deployment of Dodham Brook boom.</b>						
Rangers maintain operational kit for boom deployment.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£50 / annum	EA	Ninesprings	
Host a refresher training day on boom deployment.	R	✓ ✓ ✓		EA	Ninesprings	



# Prescription Tables



TASK	WHO	WHEN? YEARS 1-5	£ COST	PARTNERS	WHERE? COMPARTMENT	COMMENTS
<b>15. Secure funding to appoint assistant countryside ranger position.</b>						
Identify grant programmes that would fund staff members.	CM	✓			Entire site	
<b>16. Manage the memorial arboretum.</b>						
Monitor tree stock within the arboretum and replace as necessary.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£2000 / annum		Ninesprings	
<b>17. Rescue management of the gardens at Penn Hill.</b>						
Reinstate the rose garden.	R	✓	£2000	Horticultural services	Penn Hill	
Label the trees and create a tree trail.	R	✓	£1000	Arboricultural officer	Penn Hill	
Prune and manage the fruit trees in the orchard.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓			Penn Hill	
Reinstate the millennium bench within the jubilee garden.	R	✓ ✓ ✓	£300	Contractor	Penn Hill	
Continue management and clearance in shrub beds.	R	✓ ✓ ✓	£1500	Contractor	Penn Hill	
Clear over grown nursery site and disused land beside law courts – assess potential	R	✓ ✓ ✓	£1000	Horticultural services	Penn Hill	
<b>18. Investigate funding and contractors for dredging of lake.</b>						
Take advice from the EA about dredging the lake.	CM	✓		EA	Ninesprings	
Gain quotes from contractors for works.	CM	✓	TBC	Contractor	Ninesprings	
<b>19. Apply for Entry Level Stewardship and research Higher Level Stewardship applications.</b>						
Discuss opportunities of HLS with Natural England Advisor.	CM	✓		Natural England	Entire site	
<b>20. Manage all new planting areas.</b>						
Stim areas twice annually.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£400 / cut	Horticultural services	Entire site	
Remove tree guards as appropriate.	R	✓ ✓ ✓		Volunteers	Entire site	
1. Liase with Wessex water re. Reduction of conifer hedge.	R	✓	TBC	Wessex Water	Riverside	

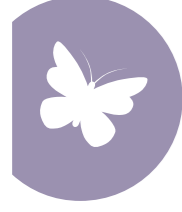


**Aim 3. Use Yeovil Country Park as an educational resource, promoting an understanding of wildlife and conservation.**

TASK	WHO	WHEN? YEARS 1-5	£ COST	PARTNERS	WHERE? COMPARTMENT	COMPLETED / COMMENTS
<b>1. Develop an education pack for the site.</b>	R	✓	£1000	Big lottery fund	Entire site	
D eliver a teachers day to launch it.	R + CM	✓	£200		Entire site	
<b>2. As part of the Yeovil Vision build a visitor centre, ranger's base and café.</b>	CM + R	✓			Ninesprings	
Develop draft plans for a centre	CM	✓		Property services	Ninesprings	
Seeking planning advice upon first draft ideas.	CM	✓		Property services	Ninesprings	
Secure funding for the scheme.	CM	✓	TBC.C. £250,000	Various	Ninesprings	
Advertise for a refreshment franchise.	CM	✓			Ninesprings	
Seek planning permission via first resolution.	CM	✓		Planners	Ninesprings	
Develop interpretation for centre.	CM + R	✓	c. £4000	Consultant	Ninesprings	
Building phase commences.	CM	✓	c. £250,000	Contractor	Ninesprings	
<b>3. Establish links with local schools.</b>						
Promote education pack and ranger service to schools.	R	✓		Local schools	Entire site	
<b>4. Provide opportunities for the public to see wildlife.</b>						
Create a new bird viewing area e.g. hide at the old silt dump with an interpretation panel.	R	✓	£5000	Contractor	Ninesprings	
Deliver wildlife themed events and talks.	R	✓	£1000	Volunteer	Entire site	
Develop new wildlife guided walk	R	✓			Ninesprings	
<b>5. Maintain all on site interpretation.</b>						
Ensure map panels in good state of repair.	R	✓	£100 / annum		Entire site	
Erect leaflet dispenser at main notice board.	R	✓	£300		Ninesprings	
<b>6. Create new on site wildlife interpretation.</b>						
New wildfowl panels to be erected around lake.	R	✓	£500	Consultant	Ninesprings	
New park wildlife panels to be erected on site.	R	✓	£500	Consultant	Ninesprings	
Devise new nature trail and complimentary site leaflet.	R	✓	£500	Consultant	Ninesprings	
<b>7. Revise the site leaflet and print.</b>						
Update and make relevant the existing Country Park leaflet and print and distribute.	R	✓	£1500	Graphic designer	Entire site	



TASK	WHO	WHEN? YEARS 1-5	£ COST	PARTNERS	WHERE? COMPARTMENT	COMMENTS
<b>8. Deliver annual PR and marketing plan</b>						
Aim for 1 positive media story every month.	R + CM	✓		Comms team + Local press	Entire site	
Ensure rangers trained and confident in delivering media interviews.	R + CM	✓		Comms team	Entire site	
Maintain positive working relationship with the communications team.	R + CM	✓		Comms team	Entire site	
<b>9. Run diverse annual programme of events.</b>						
Events leaflet produced and launched every February.	CM	✓	£3000 / annum	Graphic designer	Entire site	
Deliver annual major fayre in may.	R	✓	£2000 / annum	Town centre partnership	Ninesprings	
Respond to feedback on forms e.g. deliver more nature focused activities.	R	✓			Entire site	
Run events to appeal to all ages.	R	✓			Entire site	
Develop events with key messages e.g. dog show.	CM + R	✓	£1500 / annum	Various	Entire site	
Encourage use of Country Park by other groups for events e.g. cycling event.	CM + R	✓		Local charities	Entire site	
Investigate the possibility of outdoor performances.	CM	✓		Arts officer	Ninesprings	
<b>10. Consider the development of an art trail.</b>						
Work with SSDC's arts officer to progress sculpture trail.	CM	✓	TBC	Arts Officer	Ninesprings	
<b>11. Develop the web pages for Yeovil Country Park on the south Somerset web site.</b>						
Carry out monthly checks to ensure that all displayed information is up to date.	R	✓		IS team	Entire site	
Enhance and develop the level of information available.	R	✓	£2000	IS team	Entire site	
Ensure all new publications are available on the web.	R	✓		IS team	Entire site	
<b>12. Use on site notice boards to explain projects and opportunities.</b>						
Make best use of posters on site to advertise and market events and the park.	R	✓	£200 / annum		Entire site	
<b>13. Seek funding for a visitor services ranger.</b>	CM	✓	TBC	Local business and grant funders	Entire site	



## Prescription Tables

**Aim 4. Offer opportunities for people to get involved with the management of Yeovil Country Park.**

TASK	WHO	WHEN? YEARS 1-5	£ COST	PARTNERS	WHERE? COMPARTMENT	COMPLETED / COMMENTS
<b>1. Run weekly practical conservation volunteer group.</b>						
Organise a volunteer task day every Thursday.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£1000 / annum	Volunteers	Entire site	
Offer training opportunities to regular volunteers.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£500 / annum	Volunteers	Entire site	
<b>2. Establish a friends of Yeovil Country Park group.</b>						
Launch a new group and define their purpose.	R + CM	✓	£400	Community members	Entire site	
Organise 6 weekly meetings and book venue.	R + CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Community members	Entire site	
Encourage funding bids from the group.	R + CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Community members	Entire site	
<b>3. Run an annual junior ranger event.</b>						
Organise a 3 day project in the holidays.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£50		Entire site	
<b>4. Offer an annual apprenticeship.</b>						
Recruit new apprentice in May, to start in September.	CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£5000 / annum	Kingston Maurward College		
Coordinate training with Kingston Maurward College.	CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Kingston Maurward College		
Complete their NVQ level 2 by March annually.	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Dorset Countryside		
Train apprentices in job applications and interviews.	R + CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Dorset countryside		
<b>5. Deliver an open public meeting every two years.</b>						
Host local public meeting and include consultation on future projects.	CM + R	✓	£300 / annum		Entire site	
<b>6. Offer work experience placements.</b>						
	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		Local schools	Entire site	
<b>7. Deliver one new tree planting initiative annually.</b>						
	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£300 / annum		Entire site	
<b>8. Carry out an annual visitor survey.</b>						
	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£300 / annum		Entire site	
<b>9. Gather feedback from all events and analyse annually.</b>						
	R + CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£200 / annum		Entire site	
<b>10. Maintain a presence on the South Somerset Countryside Steering Group.</b>						
	CM + R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£100 / annum	Volunteers and members	Entire site	
<b>11. Deliver monthly children's look out club event.</b>						
	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	Cost neutral		Entire site	

**Aim 5. To meet all legal and other obligations.**

TASK	WHO	WHEN? YEARS 1-5	£ COST	PARTNERS	WHERE? COMPARTMENT	COMPLETED / COMMENTS
<b>1. Carry out annual tree safety surveys and Action identified risks.</b>						
	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓			Entire site	
<b>2. Monitor monthly performance on balanced scorecard.</b>						
	CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓			Entire site	
<b>3. Carry out annual risk assessment updates.</b>						
Organise annual site inspection visit from H and S and Insurance officers.	CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		H & S Officer	Entire site	
<b>4. Ensure bylaws up to date and relevant.</b>						
	CM	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓		H & S Officer	Entire site	
<b>5. Control all noxious weeds like ragwort and giant hogweed.</b>						
	R	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	£2000 / annum	Contractors	Entire site	

## Review

### Annual Review

Annual progress will be monitored by the South Somerset Countryside Steering Group, where each winter an update report will be delivered by the Countryside Manager. Most likely cause for under achievement will be budget cuts and changes in staffing levels.

### Long-term Review

The plan is designed to last for 5 years seeing the complete delivery of the existing Countryside Stewardship Scheme. BY 2012 the Country Park should have investigated and hopefully secured ELS and will be in a position to again look for further project funding to deliver a combination of both practical management and educational and interpretational schemes.

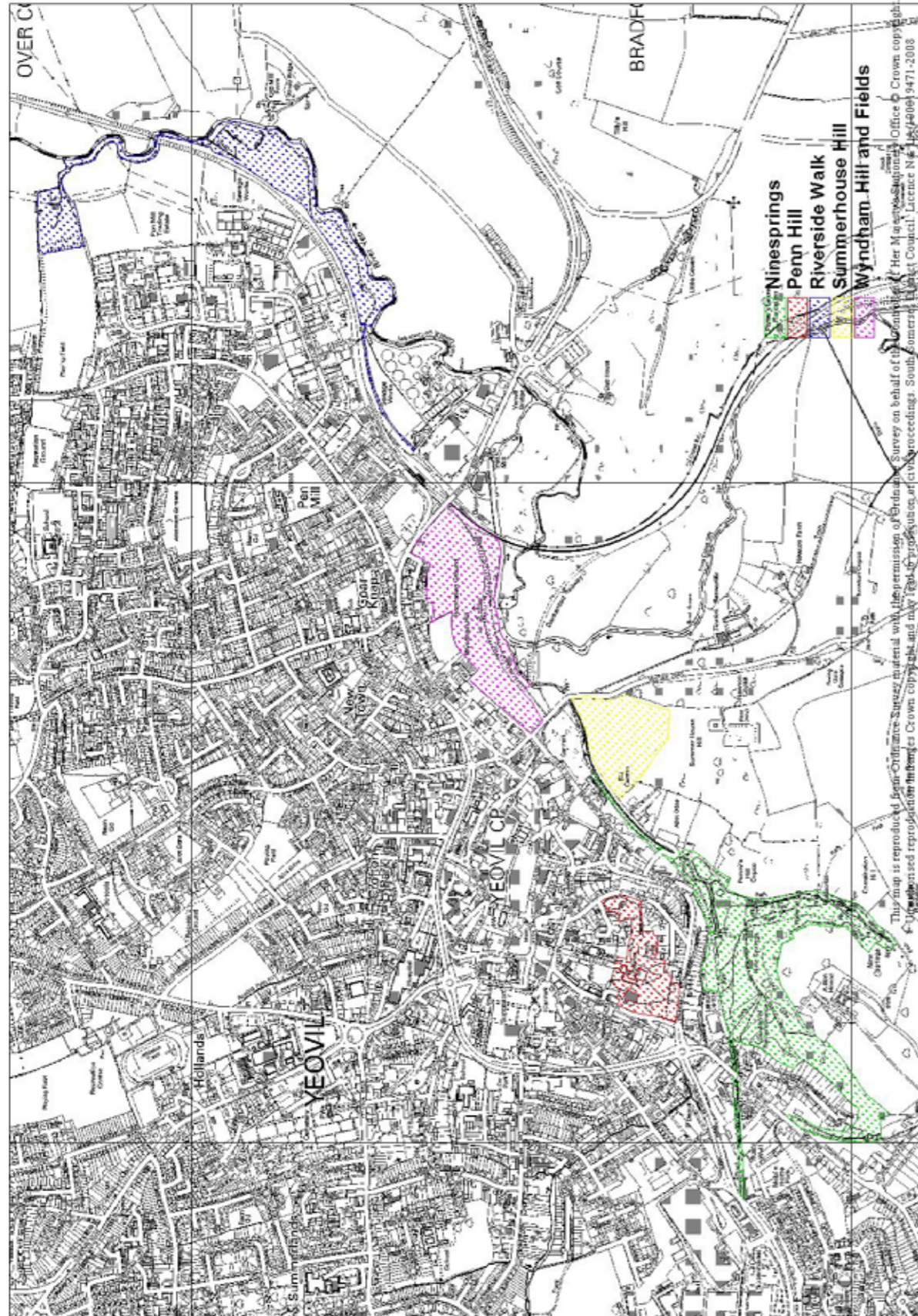


## Prescription Tables

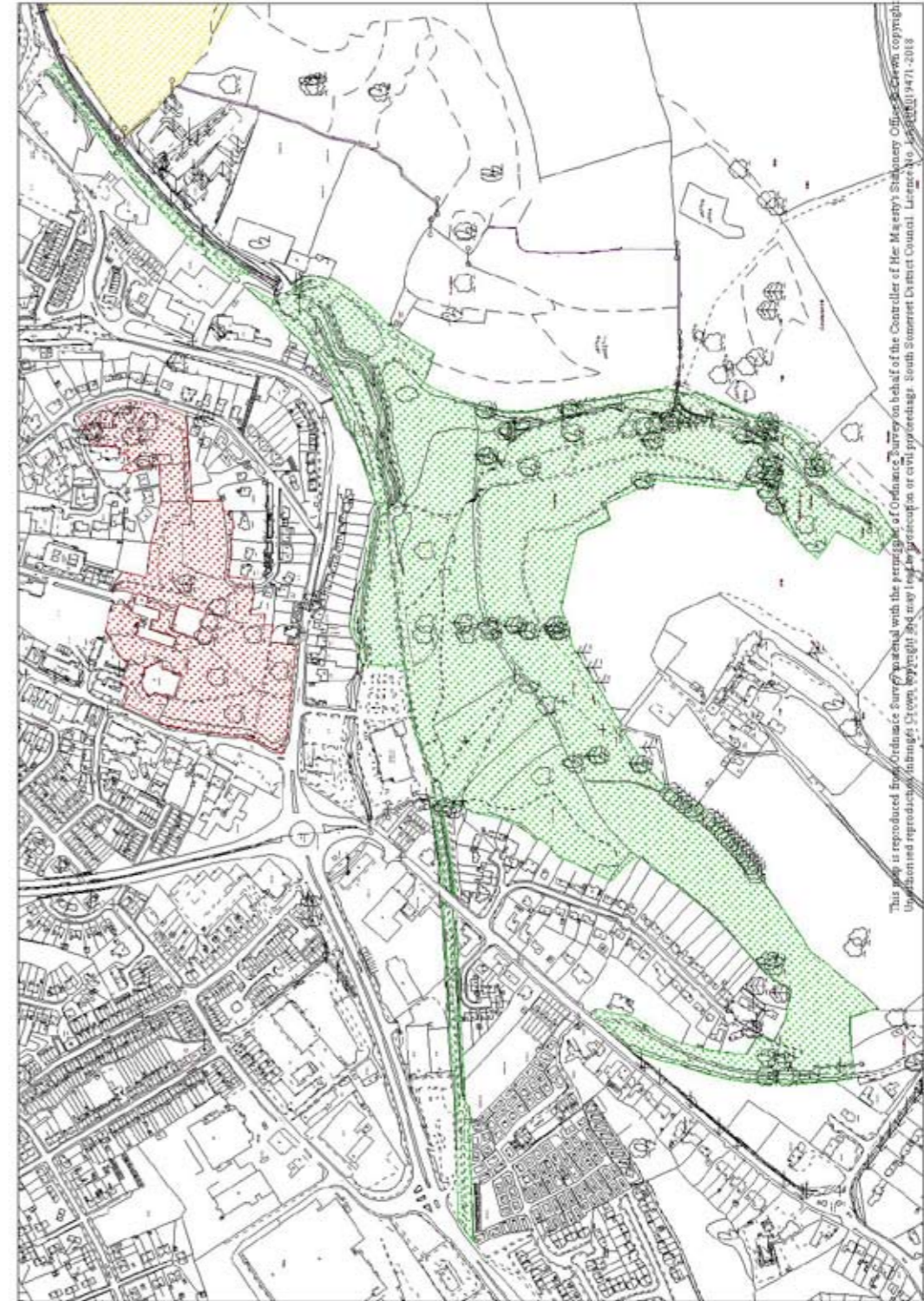




### Appendix 1 – Yeovil Country Park

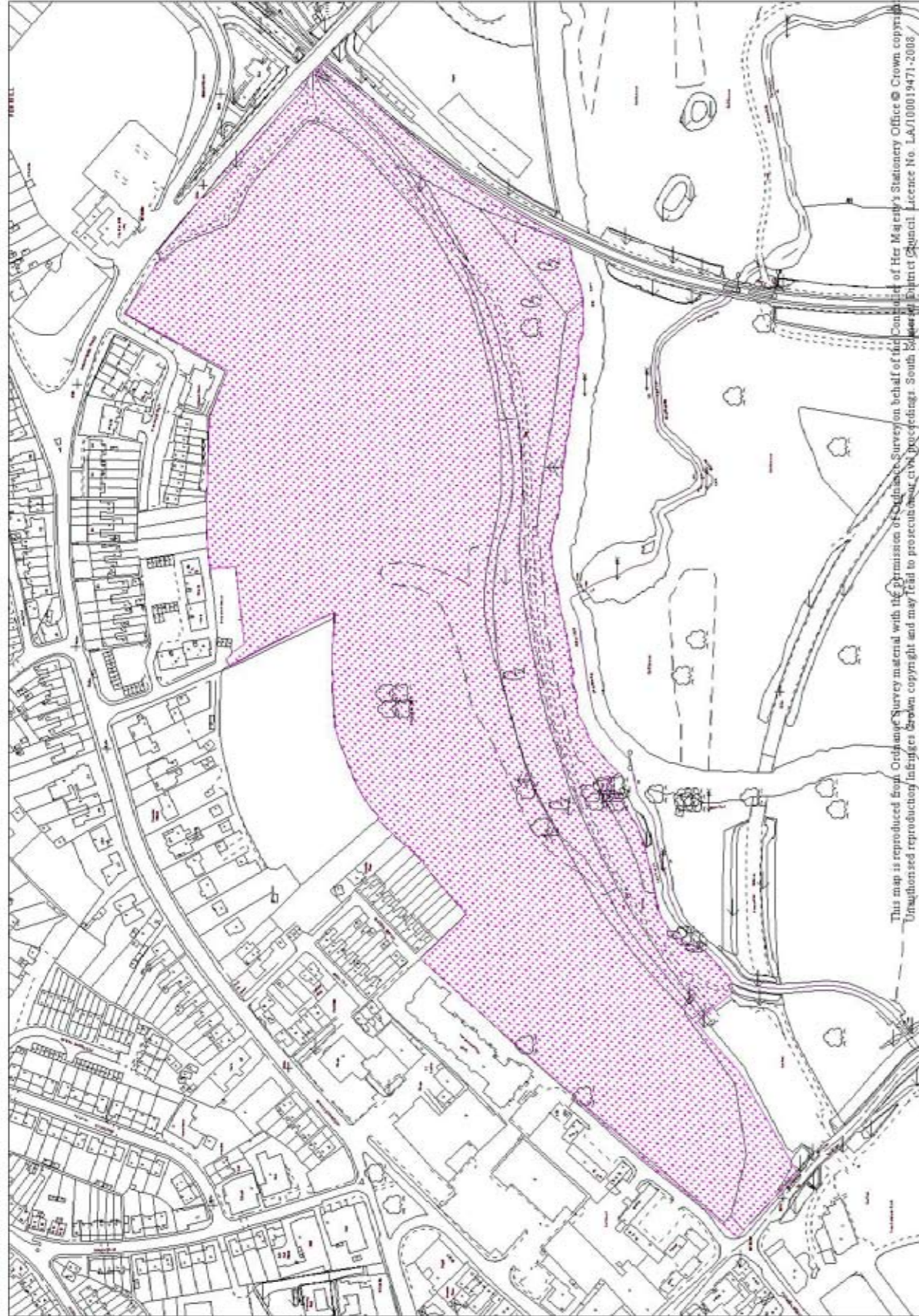


### Appendix 2 – Ninesprings Management Compartment





### Appendix 3 – Wyndham Hill Management Compartment

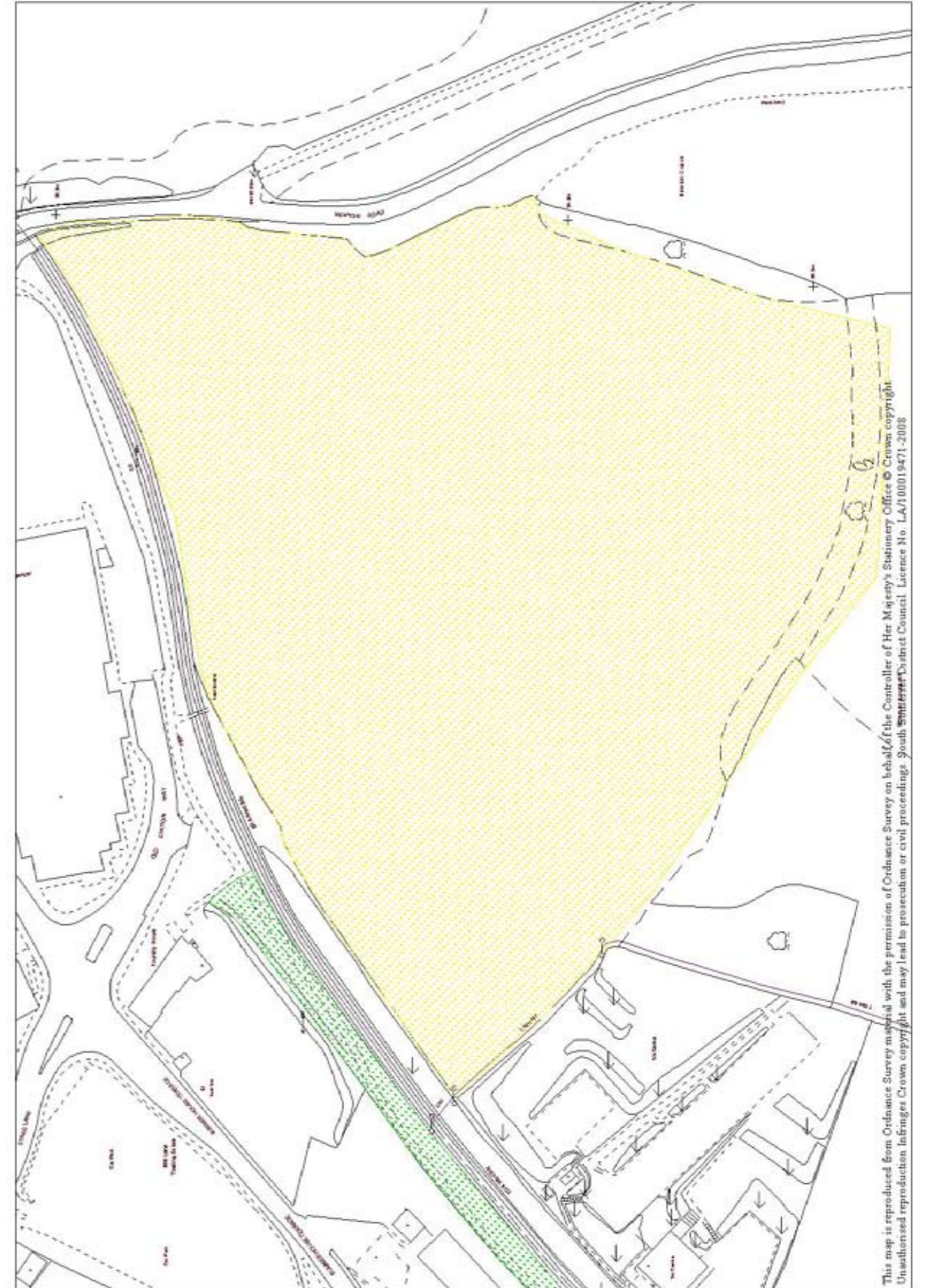


## Appendix 3

Wyndham Hill Management Compartment



### Appendix 4 – Summerhouse Hill Management Compartment



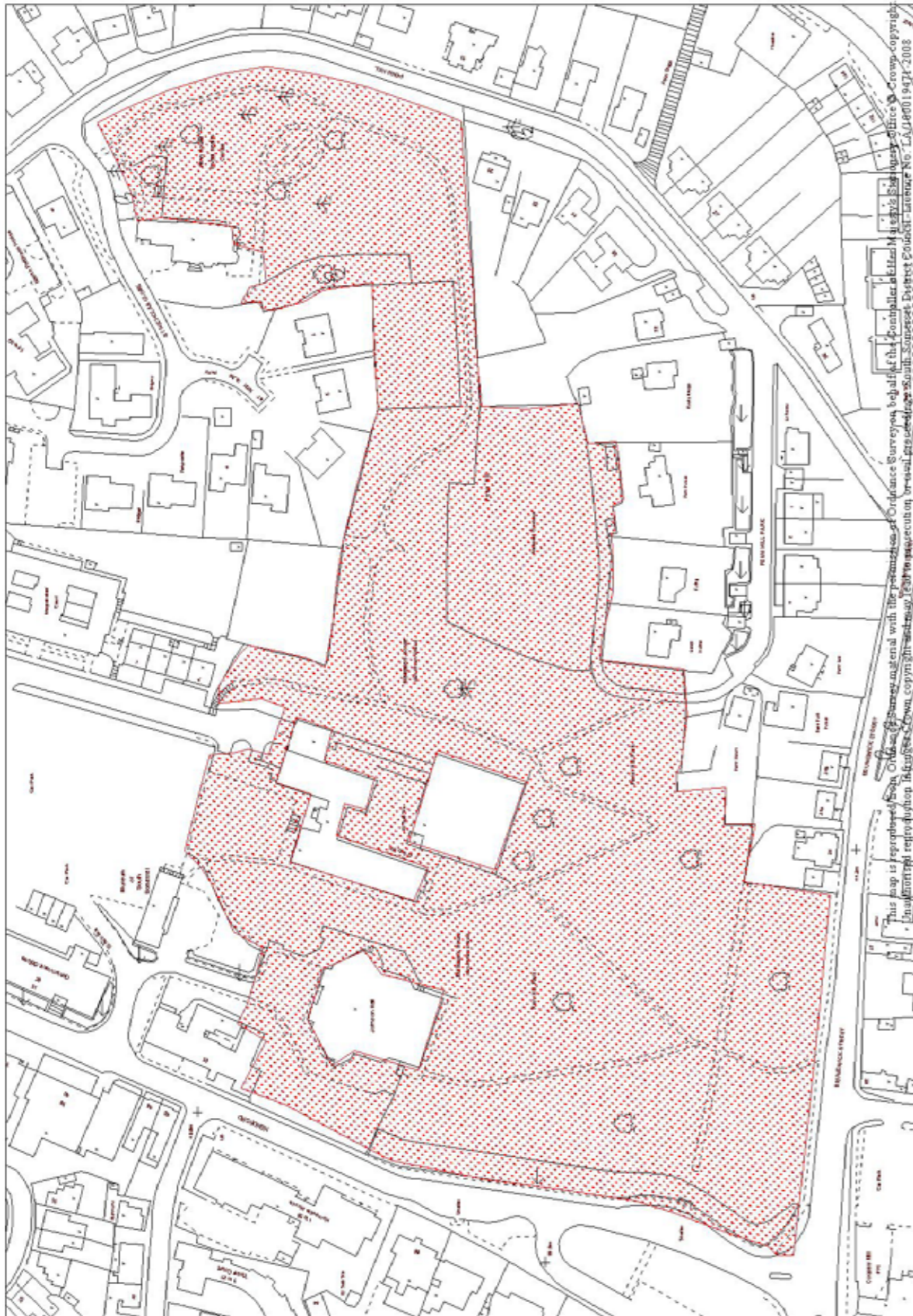
## Appendix 4

Summerhouse Hill Management Compartment





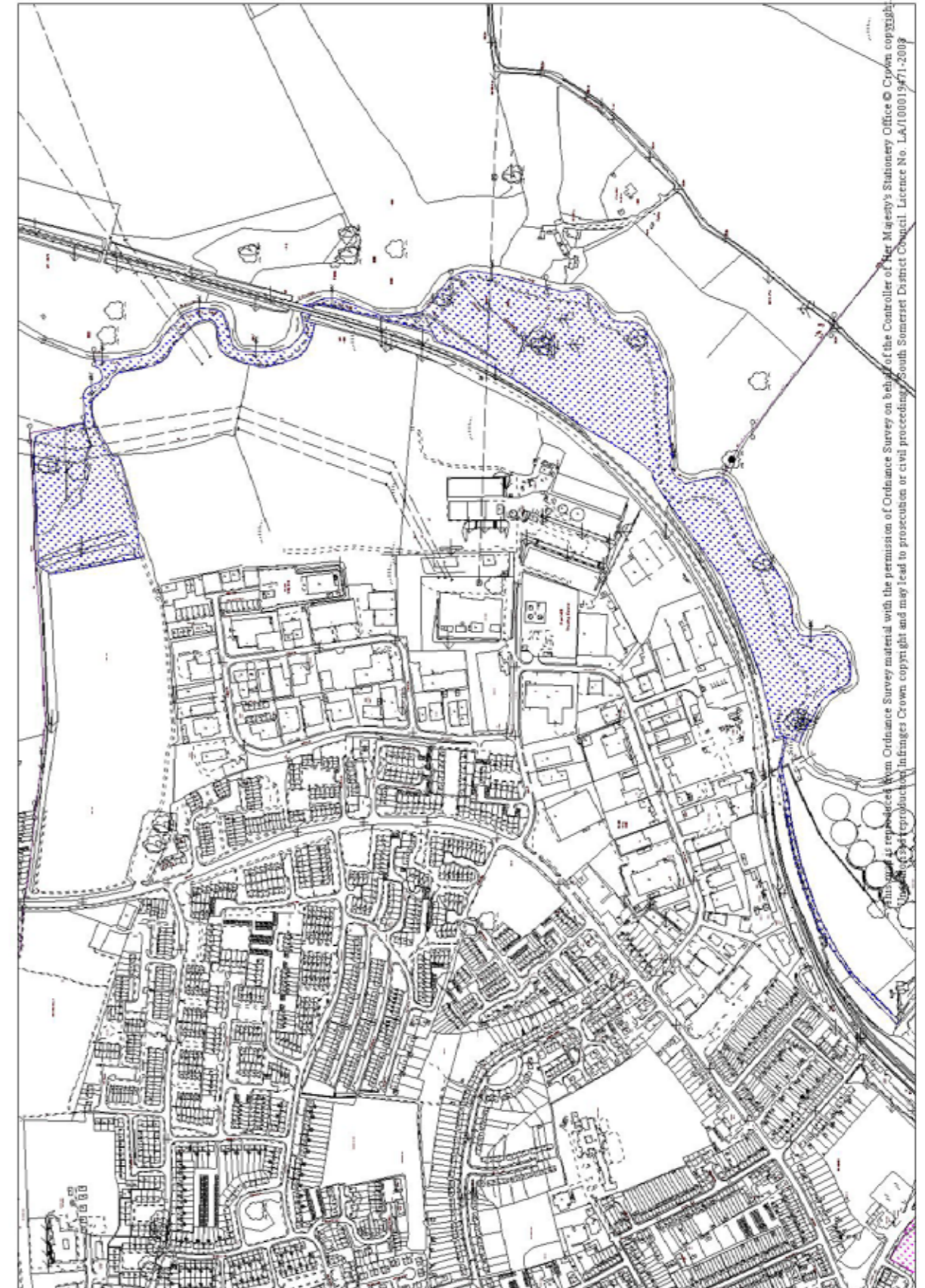
### Appendix 5 – Penn Hill Management Compartment



**Appendix 5**  
Penn Hill Management Compartment



### Appendix 6 – Riverside Walk Management Compartment



**Appendix 6**  
Riverside Walk Management Compartment









# Appendix 9



Work to be completed during agreement year	Fields or Boundary Number in schedule 1	Work Code	Description of work	Area length or number	Unit Rate £	Total £	Date claim to be made by
2010/2011	ST5616 5415	TS1	Tree surgery minor	10	43.00	430.00	31 Oct 2011
2010/2011	St5616 9268	CBT	Coppicing bankside trees	2	29.00	58.00	31 Oct 2011
2010/2011	ST5616 9268	P	Pollarding	1	22.50	22.50	31 Oct 2011
2010/2011	ST5616 9268	TS1	Tree surgery minor	4	43.00	172.00	31 Oct 2011
2011/2012	ST5616 5415	CBT	Coppicing bankside trees	1	29.00	29.00	31 Oct 2012
2011/2012	ST5616 5415	TS1	Trees surgery minor	10	43.00	430.00	31 Oct 2012
2011/2012	ST 5616 9268	CBT	Coppicing bankside trees	2	29.00	58.00	31 Oct 2012
2011/2012	ST5616 9268	P	Pollarding	1	22.50	22.50	31 Oct 2012
2011/2012	ST5616 9268	TS1	Trees surgery minor	4	43.00	172.00	31 Oct 2012

## Annual Payments

£1,113.50 annually for fields ST 5616 2070 (5.22 Ha) and ST5616 5415 (7.88 Ha) grazed as lowland pasture P1. To be grazed with cattle / sheep for a period of at least 10 weeks between 1 April – 30 November. No over poaching or under grazing, maximum sward height 50 – 100 mm throughout growing season. Graze at density of 1LU / hectare at any one time 1 April – 30 June, to minimise damage to flowering plants. No supplementary feeding. Control thistles by cutting.



# Appendix 10



## Appendix 10 – Placement Policy

Throughout 2007 the Country Park rangers in particular have suffered at the hands of organisations requesting an un reasonable number of student work placements. This may be down to the length of time requested, or for the level of risk associated with the individual. Following a team discussion we have formulated the following guidelines to help staff accept or refuse placements.

Organisations that we currently deal with:

### Pupil Referral Unit (Chard and Yeovil)

– usually wanting one day week for individuals permanently excluded from school.

### Youth Offending Team

– needing a week of reparation work for 2 or 3 individuals, come with a team leader.

### CHICS Plus Programme

– various individual students referred through the programme, usually as under achieving in school.

### All Yeovil and Stanchester secondary schools

– general 1 or 2 week work experience placements. Yeovil College – usually 1 day a week for 3 + months as part of conservation course.

### Cannington and Kingston Maurward Colleges

– long term placements as part of college courses – whether one day a week for 3+ months or full time for 1 – 2 months.

### Individuals – for example home tutored students.

It should be noted that the rangers at Ham Hill Country Park run a volunteer team on a Wednesday and in Yeovil Country Park the day is Thursday. It is felt that the ever increasing requests from schools and colleges to take placements could have a detrimental effect upon the dynamic of our volunteer teams. These are currently comprised of adult volunteers, who give up their time to work with the rangers. They do not necessarily expect to be working along side a group undertaking reparation

work, or excluded pupils. Additionally the rangers are not trained social workers and at times the work can be hazardous. We feel that the risks are too high to continue to offer the same number of placements, and we will now not be allowing them on our regular volunteer days.

The team have decided the following:

- We will continue to accept work experience placements from schools for 1 or 2 weeks at a time. The maximum number we will take at any one time is 2 placements. All requests must be directed through the coordinator Natalie Weston. It should be noted that we will give priority to students wishing to work in the countryside, not just individuals that don't want to go to an office.
- Any Youth Offending Team placements must be accompanied by a team leader and timings and projects must be arranged with the rangers in advance.
- We will not accept individuals from colleges or other organisations on regular weekdays excepting the standard volunteer day. The rangers have a busy workload, and most of it is not suitable for un qualified students / volunteers. This must be understood by external organisations.
- For groups like the PRU wishing to bring a team of students for a day or so we will now implement a charge. The charge is £20 per person per half day. This will include a relevant project with a ranger to lead it. Training in use of hand tools, use of SSDC PPE and refreshments. These days will need to be arranged with the site ranger in advance, much like you would organise a school visit.

There are substantial risks in working in the countryside with hand tools. These new guidelines take this into account. Both our Country Park sites are open public access and we need to ensure that both staff and public are safe and that the reputation of South Somerset District Council is not jeopardised.



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### Acknowledgements

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- Deborah Wilson**, Administration Assistant, SSDC
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- All the members of Yeovil and District Natural History Society**

Bibliography/Acknowledgements





# Yeovil Country Park

Management Plan  
2008 – 2012

Opportunities to Enjoy and Conserve  
Wildlife and Countryside



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