

Grove Ferry Picnic Site

Management Plan 2021 to 2026



Figure 1 Riverside veteran willow pollard

Introduction

This management plan was written by Paul Sidders (KCC, Countryside Ranger) in collaboration with Louis Grover (KCC East Kent Area, Countryside Head Ranger), Mark Pollard (Grove Ferry Picnic Site, Countryside Warden). This is the first definitive management plan for the site, completed December 2020.

Why we produced this plan and what it aims to achieve.

Producing this management plan will help deliver measurable and cohesive management for the site, with review and monitoring which will ensure management remains current. The site's information base, assets, features and work plan have been collated into one document, accessible to stakeholders and interested parties. This will help with cross-working, relationships, and a general understanding of the site. The plan will identify strengths and constraints, give an overview of character and culture, and explain the aims and objectives for the site for the next 5 years.

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REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

AVIFAUNA

BOTANICAL

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1) Where are we now?

1.1 Site Description and Information Base. An Overview

Postal Address: Grove Ferry Picnic Site, Grove Road, Upstreet, Canterbury, Kent, CT3 4BP

Grid ref: TR 236631. X 623646, Y 163128

Nearest hospital with an AE: Tel: 01843 225544

Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother Hospital

St Peters Road

Margate

Kent

CT9 4AN

1.1.1 The Site Map



1.2 Location and Main Features

Grove Ferry Picnic Site is owned and managed by Kent County Council. It is situated on the North Kent Flood plain in the former Wensum Channel, in the Civil Parish of Wichambreaux and falls under Canterbury City Council. The site totals approximately 3.7 hectares, offering visitors an opportunity to seek quiet recreation adjacent to the main feature of the site; a tidal section of the river Great Stour.

1.3 Conservation and Environmental Management

Grove Ferry Picnic site supports a range of species and habitats. Habitats on the site comprise of veteran trees, grassland, scrub, and aquatic habitats. Management is primarily carried out by members of the Kent County Council (KCC) Country Parks team. Work requiring more specialised training is carried out by suitably qualified contractors.

The site comprises of a mixture of grassland areas including amenity areas nearer to the site entrance and conservation areas of meadow and scrub towards the further end of the site. The river Great Stour, which runs the length of the site, offers great value for ecology and biodiversity.

Rough grassland and scrub areas have been created and retained throughout the site. Longer vegetation and scrub areas like this are an extremely valuable habitat and one on which many species depend for their survival (Kent Wildlife Trust Land Management Advice Series; 'Scrub, its value for wildlife and how to manage it'.) In providing these areas for wildlife a balance is struck with more intensely used recreational areas. We experience biodiversity net gain; carbon sequestering and a place where people can experience a healthy ecosystem service.



Figure 2 Water vole

1.4 Use of the Site, Aesthetics and Culture

The site is well used in comparison to its relatively small size. It provides the public with an area of open space. Landscape appeal and culture are significantly influenced by the presence of the river. Typical pursuits and activities associated with it include the use of private and hired unmotorized watercraft, riverside walking and angling. A very

noticeable feature of the site is the pleasure boat moorings on the adjacent north bank of the river, belonging to the Grove Ferry Boat Club.

The site is popular for general quiet recreation, such as picnicking, outdoor exercise and dog walking. Visitors use the site to explore, outside of it, Stodmarsh NNR for bird and wildlife observation. The Saxon Shoreway and Stour Valley Way national trails share a route that passes through the site, and customers of the Grove Ferry Inn use the site's parking areas and visit the picnic site also.



Figure 3 A Canoe Wild lesson

1.5 Visitor Services, Site Facilities and Infrastructure

1.5.1 Access

Grove Ferry Picnic Site is managed for public recreation and nature conservation. The site opens at 9am every day except Christmas day and closes at dusk or 9pm, whichever is the earliest. Locking times are displayed in the car parks. There is a height barrier at the entrance of the internal car park and gate, which are locked daily.

1.5.2 Recreation

The site supports river recreation with changing facilities. There are riverside and other trails, picnic areas, seating, a toilet block, play area, and external display boards displaying information on history, wildlife and facilities.

1.5.3 Canoe hire

Canoe Wild are based on site. They offer several activities to the public and organised groups (<https://www.canoewild.co.uk/>). The company are based at the site and have an office and storage facility.

1.5.4 Catering

The Larder Catering Services provides snacks and refreshments to visitors.

1.5.5 Riverbank infrastructure

On the riverbank are several public facilities including a canoe launch, motorboat mooring and a fishing swim for disabled users. There are also several fishing swims belonging to Canterbury and District Angling Association. There is a timber constructed canoe launch used and owned by Canoe Wild.

1.6 Buildings Maintenance

All buildings and linked building infrastructure and services are managed by SKANSKA on behalf of a wider KCC Total Facilities Management contract (TFM). General waste and recyclables are also managed by SKANSKA under contract and are removed weekly from the site. Running repairs and issues are reported by site staff. Formal safety inspections are carried out or subcontracted out by SKANSKA. These Are:

Electrical inspections
Fire safety and extinguishers
Water testing
General building repairs, improvements, renewal

1.7 Health and Safety

Kent County Council has an Environment, Health and Safety Framework and manual which underpins all work at the Picnic Site. These documents cover:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974;
- Management of Health and Safety at Work 1992;
- Reporting of injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences regulations (RIDDOR, 1995); and Fire Safety Regulations, 2007.

In addition to this it summarises guidance on:

- Occupational health;
- Safety in environment work;
- Safe use of hand tools;
- Safe use of powered tools; and vehicle policy.

Water safety:

- Up-to-date water safety equipment and information are on site.

A Kent County Council Safety Advisor takes the lead on health and safety and ensures all staff are updated on changes in law and that all staff undertake the relevant training to their position. They are a link to the HSE and provide advice on all matters. A health and safety business plan was developed by the health and safety team for 2008/2009. The

park is independently audited annually for health and safety in all areas. First Aid and incident forms are monitored by this team, who investigate as and when necessary.

Covid-19:

Kent country parks have a detailed operational plan for management of country park facilities related to Covid-19. Regularly reviewed risk assessments effecting all aspects of the service are available.

1.8 Summary of Key Stakeholders

Licence holders:

Canoe Wild

With a base office at the site, Canoe Wild offer the public and organised groups water activities including kayaking, paddle boarding, river safaris and much more. Participants alight and depart from the dedicated launch, with a typical journey to or from Fordwich down river to Plucks Gutter, or lesson time nearby to the site.

© Canoe Wild Limited 2020, Canoe Wild Limited. Registered in England No 08328111. VAT No GB 154333526. Registered Office: Canoe Wild Limited, The Paddle House, Grove Ferry Picnic Site, Canterbury CT3 4BP

The Larder Catering Services

The Larder Catering Services is an onsite licence holder. It supplies fine and varied snacks and refreshments since 2019.

Other key stakeholders:

Grove Ferry Boat Club

Grove Ferry Boat Club was founded in 1964 on the south bank of the river Great Stour. They are an active boat club with various events, water activities, organized cruises, and boat exercises etc. All boat club mooring is outside of the site boundary. The club is a significant and regular user of the river.

Grove Ferry Boat Club, Grove Ferry Road, Canterbury CT3 4BP

Canterbury and District Angling Association (CDDAA)

CDAA has a licence from the district council to permit their members to undertake angling from Grove Ferry Picnic Site. The Association are responsible for the repair and upkeep of swims, other associated furniture and signage. Fishing is strictly membership only and no day tickets are available. A bailiff on behalf of the angling association repairs, monitors and patrols the club's in-house waters including Grove Ferry.

Canterbury and District Angling Association are licenced to Riversdale, 14 Mill Road, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 0AF.
enquiries@cdaa.co.uk

Grove Ferry Inn

Grove Ferry Inn neighbours the site, offering food, drink and lodgings. The Inn's patrons use the site's parking facilities.

Grove Ferry Inn, Upstreet, Canterbury, Kent CT3 4BT



Figure 4 Canterbury and District Angling Association member

1.9 Travel

Public Transport

Nearest Train station: Sturry. Approx 4.5 miles

Nearest Bus Stop: Grove ferry hill, Chislehurst. Approx 0.4 miles

Walking

The Saxon Shoreway National Trail and Stour Valley Walk pass through the site via a PROW, following the south embankment of the river. It links to Reculver, approx. 6 miles north, and Sandwich, 9 miles east.

Cycling

National Cycle Route 1 passes approx. 1 mile to the south of Grove Ferry. The site is generally accessible by the road network. Lockable bike racks are available on site.

Vehicular access via the road network

Accessible from Canterbury and Thanet via. A28 (Island Road) and Grove Ferry Road.

There is an external and internal parking area, with a height barrier at the entrance of the internal car park.

Internal access, disability access and access points

The site comprises of a path network ranging from surfaced to soft grass routes. The site is largely flat, with exception to the riverbank, which is accessible nearest to the main entrance via a surfaced route. There are two disabled parking bays.

The river and navigation

There is a right to navigate this stretch of the river, leaving from and returning to Grove Ferry Picnic Site. Kent County Council gives permission for access.

1.10 Site Heritage and History

The area took its name from a hand-drawn ferry that crossed the Great River Stour at this point. The local pub built in 1831 also takes the name, The Grove Ferry Inn. The near-by Grove Ferry Bridge was renovated by Kent County Council in September 2000. This is close to the railway level crossing, the site of a former dismantled railway station.

Fishing rights were granted during the reign of King Henry II and are still available along the riverbank today from Canterbury and District Angling Association.

Grove Ferry Boat Club, founded in 1964, whose club house is on the site, is home to recreation boats for enthusiasts and members.

Since the opening of the site, it has been managed for public recreation and is still a popular site, particularly during the summer months, for family picnics.

1.11 Current Management Arrangements

Grove Ferry Picnic site is one of the 12 KCC Kent Country Parks across the county and falls within the East Kent Area Management team. One part-time warden is based at the site.

1.12 Site Maintenance

Site maintenance is undertaken by KCC site staff; this includes daily, weekly and annual site checks. If external contractors are used, the relevant country park staff manage the works. Specialist inspections are carried out by organisations including:

- Annual tree inspections
- Play area equipment inspections (ROSPA)
- Electrical inspections

The site warden carries out day to day site repairs and maintenance. Anything that is not manageable is reported and carried out by the rangers, as well as improvements, ensuring formal safety inspections and contract work are carried out. Rangers also deal with health and safety and day to day issues on site, and manage other sites in east Kent and their associated staff. The head ranger is responsible for and oversees site operations.

The Country Park wardens are responsible for opening and closing the site, weekend working, visual inspections of site furniture and play equipment, and report issues to park rangers. They are responsible for disposing of waste and litter picking.

1.13 Marketing and Audience Development

The site is promoted by roadside brown tourism signing and is marked on the Ordnance Survey map as a Country Park with trails. In addition, Grove Ferry Picnic Site has its own pages on the www.kent.gov.uk/kentcountryparks website. The site also has its own Facebook page which is managed by a Head Ranger and Country Parks business support.

1.14 Known Issues and Challenges

1.14.1 Capacity

A known issue with the site is its small size, compared to use. At just 3.7 hectares it covers multiple uses and aspects. Summer months can experience high visitor volumes. The nearest major residential areas are too far to walk from; most visits are by car, especially when visitors are transporting watercraft. Parking areas can reach capacity during the busiest part of the season, causing overflow on to local roads, exacerbating local air pollution and carbon emissions.

1.14.2 Biodiversity and use of the site

There is significant pressure on the site, river environment and ecology from individuals, user groups and their activities. Water vole and Otter have been recorded. They and their habitat are legally protected and vegetated areas where they are present should not be disturbed unless under special licence.

1.14.3 Issues between user groups

The wide range of activities on site demand differing needs and can impact on one another.

1.15 SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis is a widely used critique to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT).

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A well-used site.• New play area installed 2021.• A good community of stakeholders and user groups.• Site facilities including play area and other amenities.• Additions through the LEADER scheme.• Available activities include water pursuits and recreation.• Natural features including river, grassland, trees and hedgerow.• Sequestering carbon with the presence of scrub and longer vegetation areas.• Biodiversity: observed interesting wildlife communities.• Discovery of water vole and otter in 2019.• The site is accessible by national walking routes.• Four miles from Canterbury.• Nearby bus route.• Marketing: Facebook page, website and online advertisement.	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Size of site.• Transport. Many visitors get to the site by private road vehicles, which contributes to local air pollution and carbon emissions.• Minimal wildlife surveys.• No recycling. (A recent case has been opened to address this).
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Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase Biodiversity with site management, i.e., retaining and creating habitat. • Internal funding of site improvements and site surveys. • Encouraging visits at off-peak times. • Encouraging responsible use regarding biodiversity. 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive use. • Climate heating, loss of nature, disease, drought, flooding. • Pollution of the air and river.

1.16 Physical Aspects

1.16.1 Geology

1.16.2 Water

1.16.3 Soil types

1.16.4 Topography

1.17 Ecology

1.17.1 Water vole survey and report 2020

The site has not been widely surveyed for ecology. But a water vole survey was carried out by Kentish Stour Project 2019, initially as part of statutory investigative work for the construction of a public boat launch. Signs were found. A later survey was carried out in 2020 along with a report, but on this occasion no signs of Water vole were found, a botanical survey was conducted to ascertain habitat. A mink raft was also used, and Otter was confirmed to have visited through print identification. Good habitat for Water vole was identified and suggestions for management.

Species

For the Species list see appendix 2.

1.17.2 The wider landscape

The site neighbours farmland and the 241 hectares of the unique wetland, Stodmarsh NNR (SAC). An overspill avifauna from Stodmarsh NNR and surrounding farmland is often observed from the Picnic Site.



Figure 5 Enjoying nature.

1.18 Land Types and Compartments

The management plan is based on a system of management compartments. These management compartments broadly follow the areas where there is either a change in habitat, management prescription or use. All compartments are recognisably different from their neighbour. For this management plan, the site is divided into four main management compartments, each divided into sub-compartments.

Main Compartments

- 1) Entrance and parking area
- 2) Amenity Grassland
- 3) Conservation meadow
- 4) River edge, flood bank

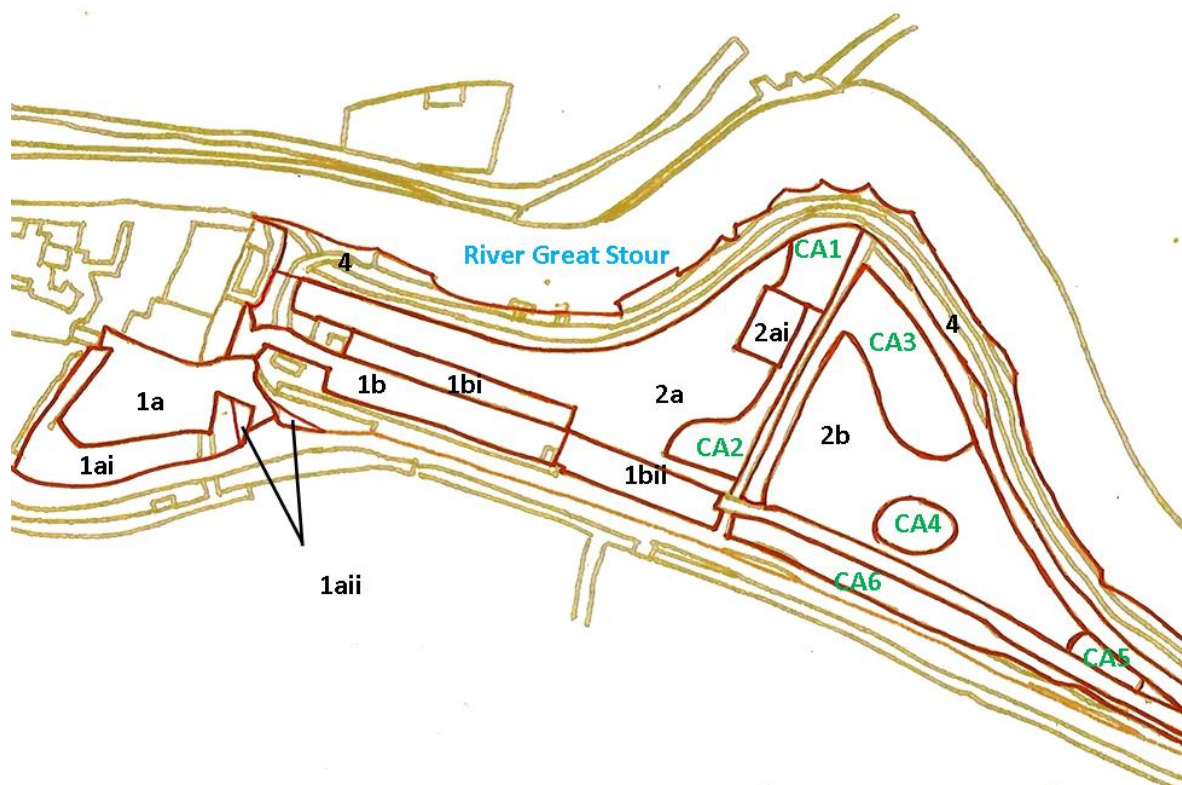
These main compartments are further sub-divided.

There are also 10 separate **Longer Vegetation and Scrub Areas (Conservation Areas)** throughout the site.

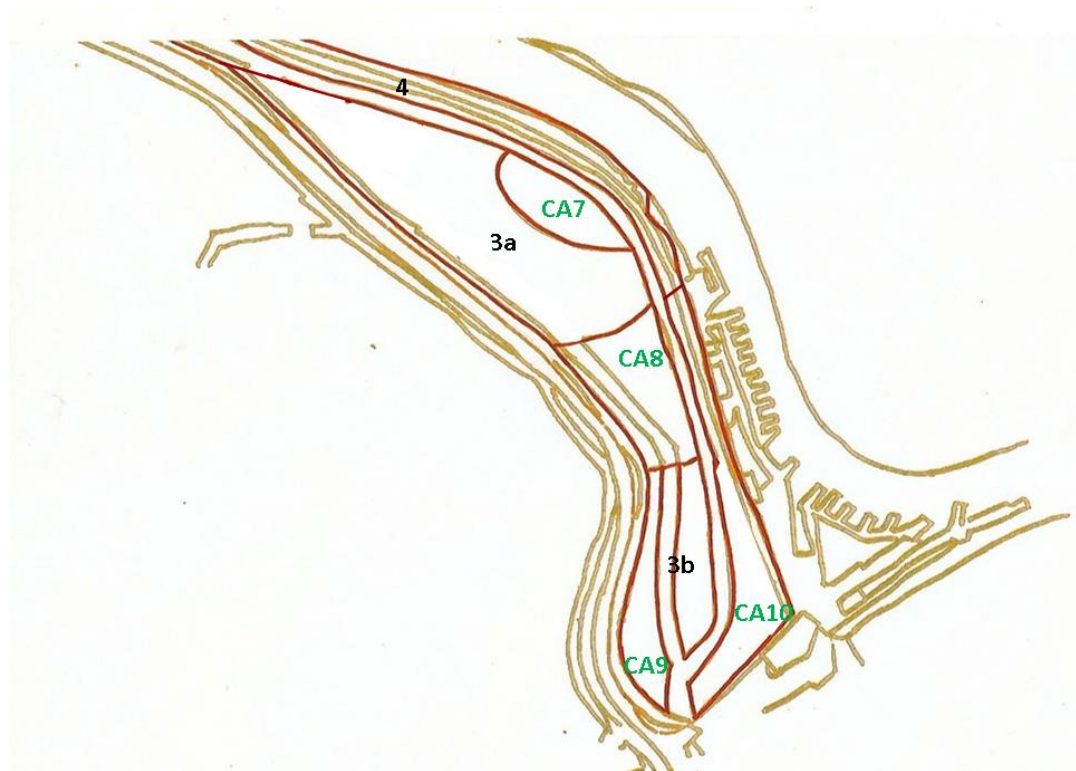
1.18.1 Compartment Maps

Compartment Map 1

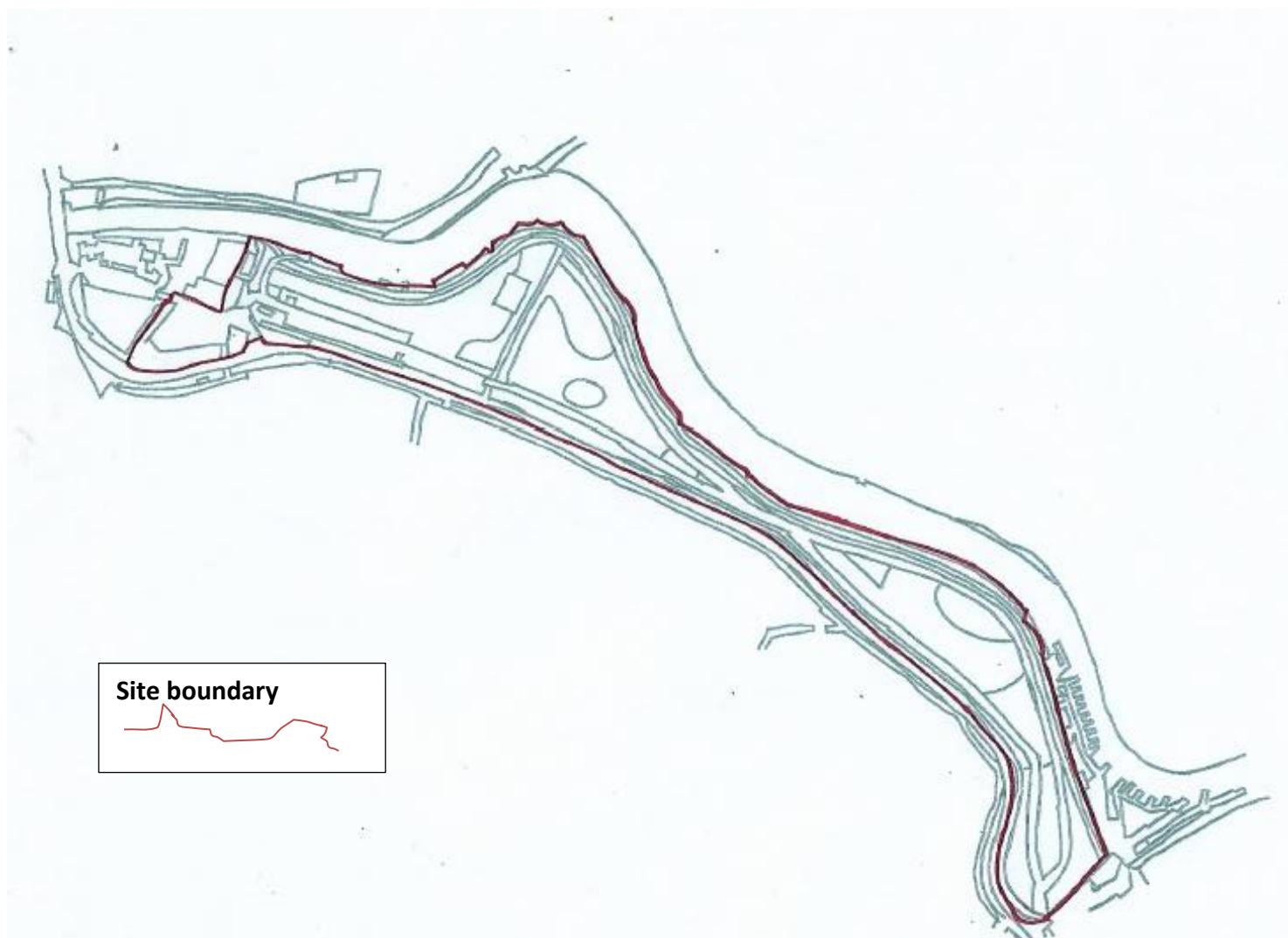
Longer vegetation and scrub areas are marked **CA** (conservation area).



Compartment Map 2



1.18.2 Site Boundary Map



Compartments in more detail

Compartment 1, Parking Area

Within this compartment are two distinct surfaced parking areas. Sub-compartment **(1a)** is the site's main entrance and external parking area (situated outside the entrance gates), and sub-compartment **(1b)** is the internal parking area (inside the main entrance gates). There are two further seasonal parking areas **(1bi, 1bii)**. There is also a vegetated area of scrub/woodland **(1ai)**, and entrance lawns **(1aii)**.

1a External Parking Area

- 1ai Roadside scrub/woodland, dividing line of woodland to the pub
- 1aii Entrance lawns

1b Internal Parking Area

- 1bi Grass surface seasonal parking
- 1bii Overflow seasonal parking

Compartment 2, Amenity Grassland

Two amenity lawn areas make up this compartment. Sub-compartment **(2a)** is next to the internal parking area and includes **(2ai)** children's play area. Sub-compartment **(2b)** is accessible either end of a hedgerow and ditch. These lawn areas are the site's main recreational areas. There are several picnic tables. **(2b)** Sub-compartment becomes an overflow parking area at peak times, to relieve pressure on the site and road network.

This compartment also includes **longer vegetation/scrub areas 1, 2.**

- 2a Amenity grassland next to the internal car park
- 2ai children's play area
- 2b Amenity grassland area

Compartment 3, Conservation meadows

This compartment is situated to the western end of the site. It consists of sub-compartment **(3a)** Conservation meadow and sub-compartment **(3b)** Conservation meadow.

This compartment includes **Longer vegetation/ scrub areas 3-10.**

- 3a Conservation meadow
- 3b Conservation meadow

Compartment 4, River edge/flood bank

Compartment **(4)** is the bankside along the length of the river and runs the major length of the site. It varies in area dependent on the state of the tide.

At the eastern end of the bankside, nearest the main entrance there are several large willows, some of which are veteran pollards. There are also a series of fishing swims which are marked with wooden sleepers. In between these swims are small sections of riparian vegetation. The bankside following to the west end of the site from the play area has no hardstand fishing swims, and largely consists of riparian vegetation. This is good water vole habitat.

- 4 River edge/ flood bank



Figure 6 Scrub and longer vegetation habitat with forage for wildlife

1.19 Buildings and Structures

Toilet/office

Building	Area	Facilities
Toilet/ Office		5 toilets including 1 disabled toilet; 3 washbasins; 1 working staff office area

All other buildings on site are privately owned by stakeholders.

Parking areas

	Disabled spaces	Tarmac surface spaces	Grass surface seasonal spaces	Total
	2	55	48	105

Site furniture

Picnic tables	
Fixed seating	3
Wooden bollards	
Plastic post rails	
Wooden post and rail	
Wooden field gates	2

Pedestrian gates	2
Entrance gates & height barrier	1
Welcome signs	3
Interpretation panels	2
Litter bins	1
Dog bins	1
Public canoe launch	1
Public motorboat mooring	1
P&D machines	2
Public fishing swim for the disabled	1
Water safety ring	1

Paths and rides

Grass	1km
Hard surface	561m

1.20 Community, Visitors and Non-users

Visitor numbers

The site has significant foot fall regarding visitor use. Evidence gathered from pay and display transactions (Euro Car Parks) and visitor surveys (JB market research Service Ltd 2016) shows there was an average per annum of 35'438 visits between 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2019. Visits between 1 Jan 2019 to 31 December 2020 were 44'967. This increase of 26.8% from the previous three-year average was a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the increased opportunity for recreation at that time. These figures do not include visits by motorcycle, cycle, foot, or non-payers. Non-payment accounts for a significant number of visits missing from the official figures. Observation by staff has concluded non-payment most commonly occurs when vehicles park on local roads when parking areas reach capacity at peak times. This increased exponentially during the first lockdown and summer holiday 2019.

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Visitor interviews

Data of face-to-face fieldwork visitor interviews carried out between 27 August and 21 September 2016 can be seen in the accompanying document.



Figure 7 The play area

1.21 Wider Policies Affecting the Site

Grove Ferry Picnic Site is currently influenced by the following designations and policies.

Kent County Council Internal Policies

The site adheres to the Kent County Council Environment Policy and the Environment and Regeneration Health and Safety Policy. As part of Kent County Council, the site also works within the ISO14001, and the Environment and Regeneration Directorate which Country Parks falls within has obtained a charter mark for Customer service excellence.

Kent County Council Environmental policies

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/environmental-policies>

Kent Country Parks Strategy

[Kent Country Parks Strategy 2023-2028 | Let's talk Kent](#)

Climate Emergency

KCC recognizes the UK environment and climate emergency and will continue to commit resources and align its policies to address this. Through the framework of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy, KCC will facilitate the setting and agreement of a target of net-zero emissions by 2050 for Kent and Medway.

In September 2020, we will set an accelerated target with associated action plan for its own estate and activities including those of its traded companies using appropriate methodologies. KCC will in addition deliver a Kent and Medway Climate Change Risk and Impact Report and develop and facilitate adoption of a subsequent Kent and Medway Climate Change Adaptation Implementation Plan by the end of March 2020. [Climate emergency statement - Kent County Council](#)

Kent's Plan Bee Pollinator Action Plan

Kent's Plan Bee is a pollinator action plan developed after a unanimous vote of the county council. It is designed to take a lead in mobilising the people, the businesses, the schools, the gardeners, the farmers, the old and the young - everybody who lives here - to act to improve the habitat and the food sources of these insects and to reverse their rapid decline. Pollinators are vital to our food, economy and environment. This action plan sets out what Kent County Council is doing. It began after a third of all Britain's honeybees died because of bad weather through the autumn, winter and spring of 2012-13. [Kent's Plan Bee pollinator action plan - Kent County Council](#)

KCC are working with partners including [Natural England](#) and [The Tree Council](#) to contribute to the national tree planting plan. KCC have pledged to plant 1.5million **trees** across Kent as part of the county council's commitment to adapting to climate change. [Tree planting statement - Kent County Council](#).

Designations and protected species

The site itself is not designated, however Stodmarsh NNR (SAC) neighbours the site.

Water vole: There are records of Water vole from the area. A survey was carried out in 2020 but no signs were found, however a preliminary survey did record signs. Water voles are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and are a priority UK Biodiversity Action Plan (JNCC, 2008) species. There are records of Water vole from 2009 at Stodmarsh.

Otter: The Otter is a European protected species and is afforded protection under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010

Green Flag Award

An application was first made in January 2021 regarding the highly acclaimed Green Flag award. The Green Flag award is available to all groups who manage open spaces (from cemeteries to town parks to woodlands). As part of this

process the site will have a desk-based assessment and field evaluation. The desk-based assessment, worth 30% of the overall assessment, requires the production of a site management plan along with supporting documentation such as photographs and leaflets. The field evaluation, worth 70% of the overall assessment, includes a site visit. Applicants are informed of the result in July.

LEADER sustainable development fund

In early 2019 funding was applied for to improve onsite facilities for recreation, specifically canoeing. Over recent years a substantial increase in private canoes, kayaks and stand-up paddle boards (SUPs) were known to use Grove Ferry to access the river. Late 2019 LEADER told Kent Country Parks a successful application had been made. Onsite improvements included a riverside public canoe launch, basic changing facilities, improved riverside access, site interpretation, self-guided river trail for boat users, four restored fishing swims and a disabled fishing swim.

The 100% grant funding, circa £43,000 was delivered during winter-spring 2019/20. The final project was managed by the site ranger team using approved contractors. These improvements have made access to the river safer and more formal. The onsite interpretation and canoe trail promote safe and careful use of the river and respect for other users and wildlife.

https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/110966/Grove-Ferry-Canoe-Trail.pdf

JNCC UK State of Nature Report 2019

<https://jncc.gov.uk/news/uk-state-of-nature-2019-report/#:~:text=The%20UK%20State%20of%20Nature%20Report%202019%20is,literature%20and%20measures%20specifically%20devised%20by%20the%20partnership.>

“The state of nature report 2019 presents an overview of how the country’s wildlife is faring, looking back over nearly 50 years of monitoring to see how nature has changed in the UK, its Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories.

As well as this long-term view, we focus on what has happened in the last decade, and so whether things are getting better or worse for nature. In addition, we have assessed the pressures that are acting on nature, and the responses being made, collectively, to counter these pressures.”

Biodiversity

The site contains nine UK Broad Habitats listed below. (The UK Biodiversity Steering Group 1998af).

Boundary and Linear Habitats, Ancient and or Species rich hedgerows, Broad-leaved woodland, Improved Grassland, Neutral Grassland, Lowland meadows, Rivers and Streams; and Standing Open Water, Eutrophic Standing Water.

2) How do we get there?

2.1 Vision for the Site

Grove Ferry Picnic Site aims to provide a welcoming, safe environment for all ages and backgrounds whilst protecting and conserving features of conservation interest. People will be able to freely enjoy recreation in a natural environment. The site aims to raise awareness of wildlife, the natural environment and healthy living.

2.1.1 Key objectives

A welcoming place:

- Allow good access flow through the car park, maintain parking bays, pay and display machines. Rake and remove leaves annually from tarmac areas. Carry out annual tree inspection. Maintain mown areas and hedges. Keep work and public areas clean, tidy, safe and secure to ensure a good welcome.
- The site's main remit is to provide an area of public recreation; therefore, Kent County Council needs to provide and maintain the car park, trails, permissive and statutory rights of way and all associated furniture and signage.

Healthy, safe and secure:

- Ensure Grove Ferry Picnic Site is a place that is healthy, secure and well-maintained.

Well-maintained and clean:

- Maintain and where desirable improve Grove Ferry Picnic Site as a public amenity.

- Maintain public access and site furniture to a safe standard.
- Maintain bankside infrastructure for recreation.
- The recent successful LEADER bid provided visitors with new facilities and infrastructure. The objective now is to maintain, where possible improve and promote new resources and the site generally.

Sustainability:

Pesticides and herbicides

- Keep use of pesticide to a minimum.
- Continue to clear weeds by hand to minimise the use of herbicide.

Recycling

A case been opened by site management with Skanska to introduce recycling.

Environmental Policy

- Continue to work within the KCC Environment Strategy.

Climate and Ecological Emergency

- Continue with carbon sequestering practices such as scrub and longer vegetation management, fulfilling commitment to the Climate and Ecological Emergency.

Site use

- Continue to promote sustainable and off-peak use through policy.

Biodiversity and heritage:

- Grove Ferry Picnic Site will be managed to provide several features including riverbank comprising of a number of habitats including tree areas, veteran pollards, and areas of reed suitable for Water vole and other riparian wildlife. Wherever possible there will be no loss of important habitat and typical species.
- In 2019 scrub and longer vegetative (conservation areas) were identified for retention and creation. It is a fundamental objective to provide habitat for wildlife, creating biodiversity net gain, sequestering carbon, and providing a healthy ecosystem service for visitors. The entire site is managed with biodiversity as a major objective. This complies with the Kent Country Parks strategy, KCC's Environment policies, commitment to the Climate and Ecological Emergency and KCC's Plan B Pollinators Action Plan.

Underpinning biodiversity and heritage objectives:

- Ensure management of the site protects and enhances biodiversity, educates, and informs the public on conservation and environmental issues.
- Maintain and enhance scrub and longer vegetation habitat, suitable for a diverse animal ecology, and a generous approach to management for that purpose.
- Continue to meet KCC's commitment to the climate and ecological emergency, KCC's Environment Strategy, and the Plan Bee pollinator Action Plan, by providing areas for nature.
- Maintain and where possible increase favourable habitat for Water vole and other riparian ecology.
- Ensure that management maintains the aesthetics and character of the site.
- Pollard veteran willows to increase longevity and achieve good management of important landscape and habitat features.

Community involvement:

- Continue to work closely with stakeholders and the wider community who use the site and the river, maintaining and improving public enjoyment of the site.

Marketing:

- Ensure the site is promoted in a way which encourages responsible, sustainable, and off-peak visiting.

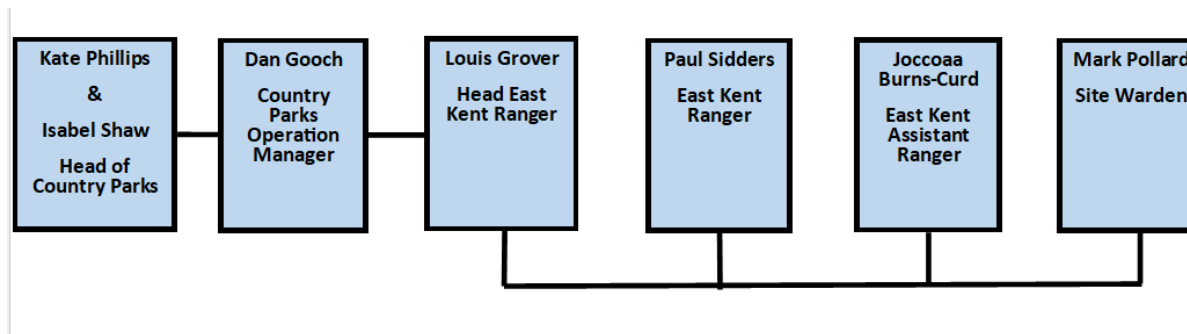
- Continue to promote healthy living and wellbeing.

Management:

- Staff training and qualifications.

All staff have core management qualifications, manual handling, first aid appointed persons, fire awareness, data protection, prevent.

Staff organogram:



Roles on site:

One part-time Site Warden is based at the site. They are responsible for opening and closing, weekend working, visual safety inspections of site infrastructure and report issues to Park Rangers. They are responsible for emptying site waste bins and litter picking.

The wider East Kent team responsible for Grove Ferry Picnic Site consists full-time countryside rangers, including one Head Ranger, one Ranger, and one Assistant Ranger. They take responsibility for more extensive site repairs, improvements, project work, health and safety, day to day issues and ensure formal safety inspections are carried out, including:

- Annual tree inspections

- Play area equipment inspections (RoSPA).

Kent Country Parks also has provision for Business support, marketing and communications.

2.2 Wider Vision and Aims

The vision and aims of the site feed back to the wider Kent Country Parks Vision: “to provide an inspirational and sustainable countryside experience for Kent’s residents and visitors.

This vision is supported by three strategic aims:

1. Provide a network of high quality and biodiverse country parks.
2. Increase visitor numbers to the country parks particularly at off-peak times and among under-represented groups.
3. Ensure the service is as financially self-sustaining as possible.

The overall vision and aims for Kent Country Parks can be found in its strategy, previously linked in the document.

https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/50918/Kent-Country-Parks-strategy-2017-2021.pdf



Figure 8 Grove Ferry Boat Club moorings

2.3 Maintenance of Equipment, Buildings and Landscape

(See summary of Maintenance of Equipment, Buildings and Landscape in appendix 2)

Daily checks

A daily site inspection is undertaken by site staff. Consideration is given specifically to the parking area, the trails (i.e., ensuring footpaths are clear, signs, gates and stiles, and litter) and the condition of buildings (obvious defects, windows, ramps, electrics, and water leaks). The site inspection form is held at the site. A copy of the site inspection checklist is on display in the office along with the daily sign sheet.

Grove Ferry inspection checklist

Items to be checked	Frequency	Action required
Gate entrance/ height barrier	Daily	Make sure operating ok
Toilets	Daily	Clean and restock, check for vandalism, fix problem if possible, or contact Ranger. Make a note of any anti-social behaviour seen or suspected
Litter bins	Daily / weekly	Empty when full into site skip.
Car parks	Daily	Check for cars before locking up, check for litter and possible obstructions
Septic tank	Weekly	Check working ok
Mown grass areas/overflow car park	Weekly	Check for glass, rocks etc. whilst on litter pick
Pay and Display machines	Daily	When emptying check its working ok and display is correct. Report any

		issues to Rangers
Manhole covers	Weekly	Check they are on and secure
Picnic tables	Monthly	Check for stability and safety, repair any problems. If totally broken remove from public use. Inform ranger
Toilets/buildings	Monthly	Visual check for broken windows/damage in general, report any damage or repairs required to SKANSKA Check secure fixings of all WCs, gutters
Trees	After gales	Check for dangerous hanging branches especially over footpaths. If tree surgery required call the Site Ranger after closing footpath.
Play area	Daily / Annually (by ROSPA)	Check surfacing is compliant and for litter/glass. Check equipment, fixtures and fittings for faults and breakages. Ensure annual safety inspections are carried out.
Water safety equipment	Daily	Check housing, life ring and rope are intact, undamaged and have not been tampered with.

Play Area

The play area is to be kept in good working order and fit for use. Regular inspections are carried out, along with the annual RoSPRA inspection. Repairs and replacement of items are actioned when required. Leaves are removed from safety surfaces annually to prolong life. The wood chip safety surface is renewed when needed.

Annual Checks

The following annual checks are undertaken:

- Testing of all tools and equipment i.e., winches, trailers electrical tools and appliances, motorised vehicles and tools and hand tools;
- Testing and checks of all buildings for general wear and tear, asbestos and PAT electrical testing;
- An annual check by RoSPRA (The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) of the children's play area.
- Annual tree inspection by an external contractor for all trees in Red zone areas, i.e., those where the public have day-to-day access. See table below for site zoning for tree inspection.

Target Zone	Colour Code	Examples of Target area	Level of Inspection	Frequency of assessment	Level of competence (Appendix 1)
Low risk	Green	Remote or inaccessible areas with no or minimal public use such as unmaintained areas or woodland away from main paths.	Ground based visual inspection of individual trees	Occasional - Every 5 years	Rangers
Medium risk	Amber	Playing fields, woodland & paths and grass areas with occasional use. No high value or vulnerable targets.	Ground based visual inspection of individual trees	Infrequent - Every 3 years	Rangers
High risk	Red	Well used assembly points, pedestrian routes, roads, footpaths,	Ground based visual inspection of individual	Frequent - Annual	Qualified Arboriculturalist

		buildings, car parks and woodland boundary abutting properties and the highway.	trees		
All Zones	N/A	All	Initial informal walk-through followed by detailed inspections of individual defective trees	AFTER SEVERE SORMS	Site staff (Defective trees reported to qualified Arboriculturalist for further detailed inspection)

2.4 Action Plan

This action plan for Grove Ferry Picnic Site is a valuation of the SWOT analysis. The action plan list's actions are based on these criteria:

- A welcoming place
- Healthy, safe, and secure
- Well-maintained and clean
- Sustainability
- Conservation heritage
- Community involvement
- Marketing
- Management

The action plan gives approaches for conserving, managing, maintaining and enhancing features and other aspects of the service. Expected standards of timescales of delivery, responsibilities, and current status are given. **For a more detailed summary of maintenance of equipment buildings and landscape see appendix 2**

Key to Action Plan

Criteria

W Welcoming place
H Healthy and secure
WM Well-maintained and clean
S Sustainability
BH Biodiversity heritage
C Community involvement
Mkt Marketing
Mgt Management

Responsibilities

P Park staff
C Contractor

Delivery Timescales

S Short term (Less than a year)
M Medium term (1 to 3 years)
L Long term (3+ years)
O Ongoing

Actions	Responsibility	Criteria	Timescale	Status 2024
Parking Areas Sub-compartments 1a and 1b Continue to maintain for access, surfaces, and litter.	P	W H WH	O	All in good condition
Play Area. Sub-compartment 2ai. Continue to monitor play area and loose fill surface.	P	W H WH	O	Renewed in 2021. Surface around roundabout replaced summer 2024

<p>Amenity Grass, gang mown rides and overflow grass parking areas. Sub compartments 1bi, 1bii, 2a, 2b.</p> <p>Maintain for informal recreation. Inspect, repair, and replace furniture, litter pick and keep presentable.</p> <p>Maintain at a sward height of about 5cm to 10cm. Cut fortnightly through the summer months.</p>	<p>P</p> <p>C</p>	<p>W H WH</p>	<p>O</p>	<p>All in good condition</p>
<p>Meadow Areas. Sub-compartments 3a and 3b shall be cut and bailed on a yearly cycle in the Autumn to ensure enough pollination and reduce damage to fauna populations. Bails to be placed in designated refuge/hibernaculum points.</p> <p>Sow seed heads of favourable wild flowing plants gathered</p>	<p>P</p>	<p>BH</p>	<p>M</p> <p>M</p>	<p>This will benefit biodiversity. It also demands less cutting, and keeps maintenance to a minimum</p> <p>Meadow 3b Cleared of scrub winter 2024. Mowed raked and flailed.</p>

during cutting.				
<p>Longer vegetation/Scrub areas. (Conservation Areas). Continue to maintain/retain these areas.</p> <p>Conservation area 1 shall be managed to create longer vegetation around a notable tree. Cut on a yearly cycle during autumn.</p> <p>Conservation areas 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 Shall be maintained for longer vegetation and scrub. Existing mature trees in these areas will be allowed to mature naturally, within health and safety limits. Dead wood shall be, if possible, left standing or as fallen material in-situ.</p> <p>Conservation area 8: will be managed as favourable scrub for general wildlife and specifically for foraging and</p>	P	BH S	<p>O</p> <p>O</p> <p>O</p> <p>m</p>	<p>This will benefit biodiversity. It also demands less cutting and keeps maintenance to a minimum.</p> <p>The presence of scrub will encourage more breeding birds and increase biodiversity in general terms.</p> <p>Ivy removed 2024 from large Willow trees to allow easier future inspection and possible pollard management</p>

nesting birds. Rotationally cut.				
Riverbank Compartment 4. Continue to maintain and where possible increase favourable habitat for water vole and other riparian ecology.	P	BH	M	Monitor for encroaching vegetation on favourable habitat for Water Vole and other riparian wildlife.
Maintain bankside infrastructure for recreation.	P	H WM	O	
Trees Check after a gale for dangerous trees and hanging branches. Inspections in green zones Inspections in amber zones Inspections in red zones Pollard Willows. Individual trees cut on 15-to-20-year rotation Pollards to increase longevity and to carry out	P P P C C	H WM BH	M L ML ML ML ML	Set aside budget for major work needing to be completed by a contractor. All riverside pollard willows cut between 2022 - 2024

general good management of a natural landscape feature.				
Vegetation areas outside of contracted and existing compartment management, and Compartment 1aii (Entrance lawn). Remove any obstruction or partial obstruction. Footpaths should be maintained to a minimum width of 1.5m.	P	H WM	O	
Hedges and Bushes outside of contracted and existing compartment management, and Compartment 1ai. Continue to cut hedges and bushes where appropriate	p	H WM	O	
Interpretation. Develop interpretation for the site that incorporates biodiversity and environmental interest	P	C BH	S	In house staff will write the wording, with professionally sourced design.
Stakeholders. Continue to work with stakeholders	P	C	O	

Publicity. Continue to publicize the site through the Kent Country Parks web site, social media platforms and noticeboards. Including Council-wide campaigns, including achievements, initiatives, and announcements.	P	Mkt	O	
Outdoor Pursuits. Continue to encourage outdoor pursuits, both through private means and through Canoe Wild. Promote The Cabin on site catering vendor.	P	Mkt	O	Positive promotion of the site and its license holders will continue through various media platforms.
Review and update the action plan and management plan annually.	P	Mgt	O	

2.5 Health and Safety

General

Kent County Council has a robust health and safety management system in place, risk assessments are carried out for all tasks and equipment and reviewed annually. The system adheres to and takes lead from;

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974;
- Management of Health and Safety at Work 1992;
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR, 1995); and
- Fire Safety Regulations, 2007.

In addition to this the country park considers:

- Occupational health;
- Safety in environment work;
- Safe use of hand tools;
- Safe use of powered tools; and
- Vehicle use.

A health and safety business plan was developed by the health and safety team to review the document and instigate any changes necessary.

Any accidents, incidents and near misses are recorded and, if needed, a Health and Safety Officer will come and investigate and, in conjunction with the Ranger, come up with any plans to minimise risk. Accident forms (H157) are held on site and sent to head office to be recorded and reviewed at staff and directorate level meetings.

On site, the Rangers take responsibility for the health and safety within the Picnic Site and associated buildings including the play area.

2.6 Standard Practices

Grove Ferry Picnic Site has its own onsite emergency health and safety plan. There are daily, monthly, annual and seasonal inspections carried out by the Wardens and Rangers. If any issues arise these are reported back to the Rangers who will ensure that action is taken to solve the problem.

Standard instructions for annual inspections, including tree inspections, machinery, and PPE, are issued centrally. Some of these are carried out by authorised staff; others are contracted out to specialist services, including Tree inspections, PAT tests and fire extinguisher tests.

Site contractors either complete a permit to work and submit a risk assessment for all works carried out on site that is authorised by the staff member who commissioned the work, or for larger contracts an NEC3 Engineering and Construction short contract is completed. Any contracts over £50,000 go through a competitive tender process. All non-specialist contractors must be from the Kent County Council approved contractor list. Kent County Council aims to use local contractors and materials in all contracts where possible. The documentation is reviewed by the central Health and Safety team on an annual basis.

2.7 Risk Assessment and Staff Training

Health and Safety on site is paramount. For all tasks and where machinery or tools are used a Risk Assessment is produced and is available to all staff and volunteers, where necessary training is given on all machinery before it can be used. Explanation such as tool talks and health and safety checks are undertaken and carried out before all activities. Electronic and/or paper copies of all risk assessments are held on site. These are reviewed annually by the wider Country Parks team and amendments made and updated centrally via the Country Parks computer network.

Kent County Council is also an Investor in People, and as such all-site staff have a personal development plan which lists all training undertaken during their employment with the council. All staff undertake core training that includes:

- Lone working

- Dealing with difficult customers
- Manual handling
- Risk Assessments
- Basic Fire Awareness
- First Aid appointed persons

Wardens also have access to a warden's handbook for the site which summarises all important information that they need to know. There is also a Volunteer Health & Safety Manual summarising the most relevant risk assessments for the volunteer team.

All staff will complete a driver's risk assessment form before driving any Kent County Council vehicle. No vehicles can be driven off road unless a basic off-road driving course has been undertaken.

2.8 Site Security

Out on site we have posters which show the KCC emergency call centre number, this is monitored 24 hrs per day. If the centre gets a call, they have details of the Rangers duty rota and can contact someone to respond to a site emergency. All gates into the park are locked every day at dusk and opened again in the morning at 08.30am.

Policing

Relevant contact kept for police and PCSOs.

2.9 Sustainability

The Kent County Council Environmental Policies and its successful implementation are reviewed annually by the KCC Environment Board, who will present any necessary changes to the Leader and Chief Executive. The Environmental policy recognises that the protection and enhancement of the environment is key to sustaining a high quality of life in Kent. The Environmental Policy recognises that our own activities have an impact on the environment, that we have a

responsibility to ensure that that these impacts are positive, and that our use of natural resources is minimised. The Environmental policy sets out Kent County Council's decisions and policies on their estate travel and transport, procurement, construction, workforce, and role within the community, all of which are of relevance to Grove Ferry Picnic Site. [Environmental policies - Kent County Council](#)

2.10 Car Park and Season Tickets

The pay-and-display car park charges £1.30 per day Monday to Friday and £2.00 at weekends and Bank Holidays. Visitors can also pay by using a mobile phone or the 'pay by phone' app. An annual season ticket can be purchased anytime for £57 and will run for 1 year from the date of purchase.

Pay and display, and associated ANPR system and all related signage and is managed by Euro Car Parks on behalf of Kent County Council.

Pay and Display Machines

Faults and damage are reported by site staff, for attendance under contract. Other on-going faults and tickets issues are attended by site staff.

2.11 Blue Badge Season Tickets

A £10 administration charge is made to register the blue badge with Kent Country Parks, all blue badge season tickets need to be renewed annually by calling 03000 41 72 72. There are two disabled parking bays.

2.12 Financial overview

Financial overview (per annum)

Expenditure – Grounds maintenance budget - 3K

Staff costs 18K

Income rents and licences - 12K

Projected income for car parking 22-23 18K.

The cost per tax paying resident of Kent is 36p for all our country parks. Our target for the future is to work towards becoming as self-financing as possible main through;

- Environmental Education, events, venue hire and team building.
- Rents and leases
- Wood products
- Internal KCC owned cafés.

We are currently as a service 76% self

3) How do we know when we get there?

3.1.1 Monitoring and Review

This Management plan has been designed as a live document, acting as a guide in the development of the site over the next five years. The delivery of aims will be measured with reviewing and monitoring.

An Annual Swot Analysis will be carried out. The information from all feedback and methods of monitoring will be fed back into the management plan.

Green Flag Scheme judges' feedback and award outcome will keep site management current and help development and improvements.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Species List

Mammals (Grove Ferry Water Vole Report 2020)

Water vole *Arvicola amphibius*

Eurasian otter *Lutra lutra*

Reptiles and amphibians (Observed by Staff)

Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*

Common Frog *Rana temporaria*

Avifauna (Observed by staff)

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Turtle dove *Streptopelia turtur*

Botanical.

Riverbank only. (Grove ferry water vole report 2020)

Canary Reed Grass - *Phalaris Arundinacea*

Sweet reed grass - *Glyceria maxima*

Marsh Woundwort - *Stachys Palustris*

Meadowsweet - *Filipendula ulmaria*,

Water Mint - *Mentha aquatica*

Nettle - *Urtica dioica*

Great Willowherb - *Epilobium Hirsutum*

Hemlock Water dropwort - *Oenanthe crocata*

Water For-get-me knot - *Myosotis Scorpioides*

Purple Loosestrife - *Lythrum Salicaria*

Hogweed - *Heracleum Mantegazzianum*

Appendix 2: Summary of maintenance of equipment buildings and landscape.

Area	Responsibility and Roles	Action	Frequency
Reporting	Site Warden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to the ranger damage which cannot be fixed, low consumable stocks, antisocial behaviour (document in site diary) 	Ongoing
	Head Ranger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversee all site works and responsibilities 	Ongoing
Main entrance gate & height barrier.	Site Warden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual check. Make sure lock and mechanisms are working. 	Daily
Toilets	Site Warden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual check. Cleaning. When required replenish consumables. 	Daily
Litter bins	Site Warden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empty when full and dispose of into skips. 	Daily/Weekly
Refuse	SKANSKA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage and oversee waste contract on behalf of KCC. 	Weekly

	Rangers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage number of skips needed, liaise with contractor. 	Ongoing
	Contractor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide general waste and recycling skips for refuse removal and disposal/recycling. 	Ongoing
Septic tank	Site Warden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check the level. Arrange for emptying. 	Weekly, but more frequently at peak times.
	Contractor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empty cess pit and removal of effluent from site. 	Promptly after being actioned.
	SKANSKA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of contract and infrastructure. 	Ongoing
Manhole covers	Site Warden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual check. Make sure secure. 	Weekly
Picnic tables	Site Warden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check stability and safety, remove from use if unsafe. 	Monthly
Toilet and office building	SKANSKA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check secure fixings of all gutters. 	Monthly
	SKANSKA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buildings for general wear and tear, asbestos and PAT electrical. 	Annually
Trees	Site Warden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check for dangerous hanging branches, especially over footpaths. If tree surgery required, call the Ranger, after closing footpaths. 	All tree work to be carried out, between November and February whenever possible: After a gale
	Rangers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground and pole saw work deemed 	Ongoing

	Rangers Rangers Contractor	manageable. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspection of trees in green zones • Inspection of trees in amber zones • Aerial and major tree work not manageable by rangers. 	Once 3 years annually Once 5 years annually Ongoing
	Contractor Rangers/ Contractor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspection of trees in red zones • Continue to cut existing Willow pollards 	Annually Individual trees cut on 15-to-20-year rotation
Pay and display machines, ANPR and associated signage.	Site warden Contractor Euro Car Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empty. Check if working correctly. Report faults and issues which cannot be fixed to the contractor under service. Report vandalism to the Ranger. • Service agreement • Management of pay and display, ANPR and all associated signage on behalf of KCC. 	Daily/Ongoing Annual, and fix faults when needed under contract. Ongoing
Winches, trailers electrical tools and appliances, motorised vehicles and tools and hand tools.	Rangers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action inspections and replacement. 	Annually check and replace out of date and faulty/broken equipment.
Mown grass picnic areas/ major rides	Site Warden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compartments 1bi, 1bii, 2a and 2b. Check for glass, rocks etc. whilst doing a litter 	Daily

and grass overflow car parks	Contractor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pick. • Grounds maintenance. Cut at 5 to 10cm. Follow-up cut around furniture and bollards. 	6 cuts from the start of March through to the end of September.
Car parks	Site Warden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compartment 1a and 1b. Check for cars before locking up, litter and obstructions. 	Daily
Entrance lawns	Site Warden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compartment 1aii. Cut at 5 to 10cm. Strim around furniture. 	Between early March and late September when needed.
Play area	Site Warden Contractor (RoSPA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compartment 2ai. Visual inspection of all fixtures and fittings. • Full Safety inspection 	Daily Annually
Meadow areas	Rangers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compartments 3a and 3b. Cut and bail. Place bails at designated hibernaculum points and apply resulting chosen green hay for wildflower sowing. 	Annually, late July - early September
Long vegetation/ scrub areas (conservation areas)	Site warden Rangers Rangers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation area 1. Cut, rake, and pile arisings discreetly. • Conservation areas 2,3,4,5,6,7,9,10. Non-intervention • Conservation area 8. Coppice a third of the area. Stack arisings on site as habitat. 	Annually, late July - early September Monitor and assess trees and vegetation. Once 5 years annually
Riverbank	Rangers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compartment 4. Riverbank. Maintain 	Between November and

	Rangers/Site warden	<p>favourable habitat for wildlife. Including the encouragement of emergent vegetation through tree cutting for Water vole.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain path. Mowing and strimming. 	<p>February whenever possible</p> <p>Ongoing. March through to the end of September, when needed.</p>
Other vegetation. Areas outside of contracted areas and compartment management.	<p>Site Warden</p> <p>Rangers/Site warden</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cutting of specified verges and edges. • Maintain Compartment 1ai and other hedges and bushes for wildlife benefit and to prevent encroachment. 	<p>Between early March and late September when needed</p> <p>Between November and February</p>

Update 2021-2022

Biodiversity and Heritage

Tree Planting

Several native trees species have been planted this year, including crab apple, wild cherry, and black poplar. This work aligns with KCCs commitment to the government's national Plan Tree in response to the climate emergency and adaptation. KCC have pledged to plant of 1.5million trees across Kent. [Tree planting statement - Kent County Council](#).

Coppicing

In 2022 the first coppicing in Conservation Area 8 was carried out. Eight equal cutting areas have been identified, allowing for annual short rotational cutting, encouraging wildlife which uses scrub such as breeding birds, invertebrates, and small mammals. This helps to creates habitat resilient and variety.



Short rotational coppicing in Conservation Area 8

Pollarding

In 2022 all outstanding willow pollards were brought back into a cutting cycle, and several new ones were created. This this traditional riverside tree management technique, prolongs tree lifespan, minimizes the chances of structural failure, provides value in the landscape, and opportunities for nesting birds and other wildlife.



KCC Ranger clearing up after contracted pollard work.

Meadows

The meadow in compartment 3a has had its annual seasonal cuts. Work included cutting with a mechanical scythe, raking, bailing, and stacking hay in refuge for reptiles, invertebrates, and other wildlife. With this annual management a habitat of finer grasses and numerous flower species is maintained.

Welcoming place, Healthy and Secure

Play area

A new play area was installed by Ebie Play Ltd in 2022. Funded through the covid recovery fund with an inclusive element and easy access. It includes exciting equipment such as a pirate ship climbing feature, team swings, inclusive roundabout, and various ramps. The play area was resurfaced with a multi-coloured wet pour, fenced, and has easy access gates.



Play area installed 2022.

Parking

To alleviate pressure site parking and road infrastructure, overflow parking at peak times is now extended into compartment 2b. Monitoring has shown inappropriate parking on the road and at the site entrance is greatly reduced with the new overflow system in place.

Visitor numbers

Based on car parking figures, visitor numbers in 2022 were approximately 100k.

Community involvement.

KCC, lease holders, volunteers and other groups have worked successfully over the past two years in maintaining and improving an open space regarded for its amenity value, biodiversity, and heritage. Volunteer involvement has included the creation of habitat for threaten and endangered species. Cross working between KCC, Canoe Wild and The Larder Catering Ltd has helped to implement safe practices for recreation river users. Amenity improvement along the riverside between KCC and Canterbury and District Fishing Club has resulted in restored fishing swims and steps for access. The Larder Catering Ltd has pioneered a litter picking initiative using customer participation, with a free drink, collected litter exchange. Monitoring indicates approximately two tonnes of litter is collected per annum.



Site Warden and KCC volunteer hard at work 2022