



Brockhill Country Park management plan 2023 – 2028

Kent Country Parks

Written by Louis Grover, January 2023

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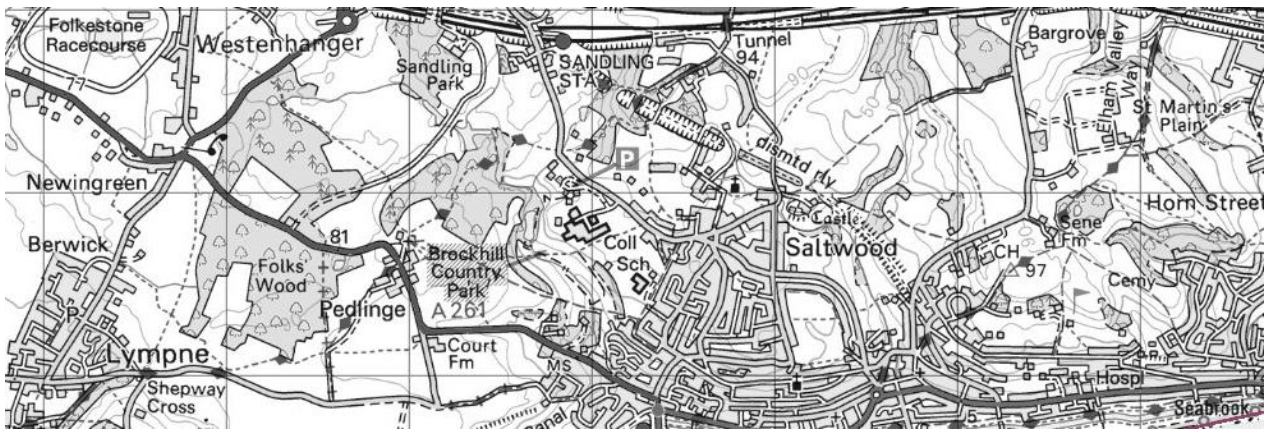
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GENERAL INFORMATION

Location and site description

This management plan covers the Kent County Council countryside site known as Brockhill Country Park, Nr. Hythe, Kent. Brockhill Country Park is located in the Kent Downs AONB, in the Civil Parish of Saltwood, and falls under Shepway District Council. The site totals about 22 hectares and offers visitors an opportunity to roam in the countryside, whilst enjoying beautiful sea views over the English Channel.



The park is owned and managed by Kent County Council and was purchased in 1946. Brockhill Country Park has been open to the public since 1986, when management passed from the adjacent School (Brockhill School) to the Country Parks Department.

The site is managed to provide a recreational resource with way-marked paths, a picnic area, play equipment,

Food and refreshments provided at the Brockhill Café, organised events and an educational programme delivered throughout the year.

In addition, it is a valuable site for wildlife, with areas of amenity turf, grazing pasture, marshy grassland, Oak, Ash and Beech woodland, patches of scrub, a stream (known as The Brockhill Stream), a Victorian Lake supporting some aquatic and emergent vegetation and scattered Oak and veteran Ash trees.

Contact Details

Louis Grover Head Ranger Brockhill Country Park, Sandling Road, Saltwood, Kent, CT21 4HL, Telephone 03000 420993.

Vision for the Site

Brockhill Country Park aims to provide a welcoming, safe environment for all ages and backgrounds. To Protect, conserve and enhance biodiversity whenever possible whilst maintaining features of heritage interest.

Conservation Management

Brockhill Country Park supports a diverse range of species and habitats. It is an important site for ecology at a local level. Habitats on the site comprise of woodland (including veteran trees), grassland, amenity, semi natural neutral grazed areas and meadows. Aquatic habitats include a lake, streams, marsh and ponds. Management is primarily carried out by site rangers and volunteer groups.

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 site staff manage the works. Specialist inspections are carried out for.

- Annual Tree inspections
- Play area equipment inspections (ROSPA)
- Electrical inspections
- PPM works such as Legionella testing, water temperature, intruder, and fire alarms.

Buildings at Brockhill

Café – The now café was built in 1996. Built as ranger office small café/kiosk and with exhibition centre for interpretive panels and site information. The need for café expansion was clear by 2009. The ranger's office was converted into more kitchen space and exhibition centre became sit down inside café area. The building is rented to Brockhill Catering under a lease agreement, with income coming into site budget.

Badger room – Used for events, school visits and corporate venue hire. The room has kitchenette, toilets and Wi-Fi.

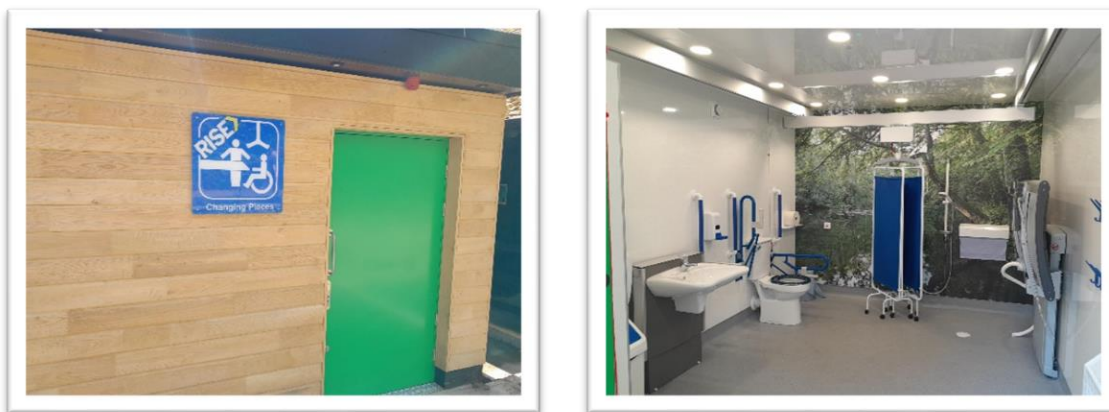
<https://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/kent-country-parks/corporate-venue-hire>

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/kent-country-parks/outdoor-learning-with-kent-country-parks>

Toilet block – comprising of female, male and disabled toilet rooms.

Changing Place – This is a purpose built room includes, toilet with support aids, height adjustable changing bench, shower, height adjustable sink and ceiling hoist. The building was funded by a Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL).

<https://www.changing-places.org/>



The Changing place inside and out

Workshops and machinery stores – 3 buildings house machinery, tools, and equipment. 1 building is used for workshop.

buildings are managed by SKANSKA on behalf of a wider KCC Total Facilities Management contract (TFM).

Rubbish and recycling.

General waste and Dry mixed recyclables are collected by the appointed SKANSKA contractor under contract. General waste, recycling and dog bins are available for use on site. Green waste from the café is composted where possible.

Brockhill Site Staff

Rangers – Head ranger (full time), Ranger (full time) Assistant ranger (part time).

Responsible for site management at Brockhill Country Park and other sites in East Kent; Pegwell bay Country Park, White Horse Wood Country Park, Grove Ferry Picnic Site and Parkwood Picnic site.

Wardens – 2 part time wardens working alternate weeks throughout the year based at Brockhill only. Responsible for opening and closing the site, weekend working, visual inspections of site furniture, play equipment and report issues to Park rangers. Waste and litter picking management.

Visitor Services and Events officer* (VSEO)– (part time) Based at Brockhill, responsible for the planning and delivery of annual events, management of the badger room for venue hire and events. This post comes with income targets, income going towards the site budget.

Education Ranger * (ER) – (part time) Based at Brockhill, responsible for the planning and delivery of school and nursery groups. This post comes with income targets, income going towards the site budget.

*ER and VSEO often work together to deliver and secure income.

VISITORS TO THE SITE

Visitor numbers have increased year by year. Over the lifetime of the Last management plan 2017 – 20122 around 475,000 visitors were recorded using data captured by the ANPR camera at the entrance gates. A recent survey of visitors to the park rated it as highly satisfactory in all areas, the common descriptive word used for the site was '*Beautiful*' Visitor access to the park is by car, public transport, two public footpaths which cross the park and two internal way-marked trails all with gated access points. Brockhill Country Park is managed as a Country Park by Kent County Council as a recreational resource and for nature conservation. The provision of recreational facilities is a major factor in site management. The site offers an attractive grassy area with fine specimen trees, and recreational facilities, a pleasant walk around the Victorian pleasure garden, including the tree fringed lake, a valley walk giving fine views of the distant sea and open grassland along the Brockhill Stream. The site provides free access for the public.

The Country Park supports recreational facilities. There is a café, play area, public toilets, purpose-built classroom/venue hire building, Forest School education space, way-marked trails a surfaced pay-and display car park (for approximately 70 cars).

A site leaflet showing facilities, way marked trails and site layout is available both on site as a paper version to be taken away and at the Kent Country Parks website.

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/kent-country-parks/find-a-kent-country-park/brockhill-country-park>

Throughout the park several interpretive panels can be found. They describe the site by following a theme '*what did the Victorians ever do for us*'. These panels give a more detailed account of the history of the site from the 1800's to present day.

Environmental Education and Events

Since the autumn of 2010 Brockhill Country Park has had an Education Ranger, experienced in delivering environmental education sessions. The Education Ranger is one of 3 Country Park's Education staff holding a Level 3 Forest School Practitioner qualification. The Education Ranger and Education staff from other Kent Country Parks are responsible for delivering Kent Country Parks 'Outdoor Learning Programme' which offers a wide variety of educational opportunities which enhance the curriculum for all ages. Over The last 12 months 2022 has seen us deliver events to 1,857 ticket holders and their families. The revenue raised from these events stands at £11,496.82. This Helps us justify the work we carry out, from endless tree surgery bills to the planting of our wildflower meadows, it is through the generation of events income that we can continue the conservation work we do, protecting a pocket of land which we and the community around Brockhill hold so very dear.

Aside from the figures above there is an impact that is far harder to quantify, but arguably, at least from the privileged position of the team working here, holds such reward and value. Watching children try hot chocolate for the first time, sat around the fire with their peers under the canopy of trees, with noses red from the cold but eyes so wide and filled with excitement, truly is a privilege to behold. For some of our youngest visitors, particularly the attendees of our weekly toddler group (not included in the above figures but in the Education figures below) they had little to no interaction with

others before attending. One mum explained during the first session, while her timid little one clung to her leg unable to look me in the eye, how her 1-year-old had only ever met her; sister, dad, and grandma, to her those were all the humans she was aware of. It has been an honour to watch her grow, slowly building up confidence around others and developing such a fascination with the natural world around.

Wherever possible we re-use items around the site to create props and play settings for our event attendees, not only does this help us save money but also reduces the environmental impact of our events. Old mink traps now contain fake spiders to decorate the park each Halloween, large black wooden planks, which had to be removed from our boardwalk, are now a racing track for cars along with some tyres. A collection of cones, building site signage and rubble sacks are now a very well-loved builders' yard for the children to enjoy. Using these items along with coppiced wood from the site allows us to build more narrative when delivering, tying in stories about the wider work we do, the trees we are using and the responsibility we all hold towards the environment.

The whole Brockhill team contribute towards our events by sharing ideas and knowledge allowing us to ensure the events we are delivering are reflective of the park as a whole. Being a small team of just two rangers, a two day a week events and Visitor Services Officer and a two day a week Education Ranger all working from the same office allows this to happen organically. Having had the addition of a Kickstarter in 2022 has without a doubt made the above possible. We are keen to grow our events and education offering further, we see so much potential for fun and learning here at the park.

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/kent-country-parks/outdoor-learning-with-kent-country-parks>

The programme is available all the year round and caters for Early Years, Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 and GCSE and 'A' Level groups carrying out fieldwork. Students can experience the Park's biodiversity by exploring the woodland and grassland habitats or dipping for creatures in the easily accessible Brockhill stream. The Park is also an ideal site to safely investigate watercourses as the stream flows into the historically important Royal Military Canal. The Education Ranger can help visiting schools plan and design their visit and work with them to ensure that specific programmes of study are covered. A focused programme of achievable tasks designed to enrich the curriculum through environmental adventure. This programme aims to help develop language, mathematical, physical, social and emotional skills. It also encourages an appreciation and respect for

environment. Students learn important skills such as handling risks, working with others and using their own initiative to solve problems. Activities include campfire cooking, environmental artwork, shelter building and using tools.

How to find Brockhill Country Park

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/kent-country-parks/find-a-kent-country-park/brockhill-country-park/find-us>

WIDER POLICIES STRATEGIES AWARDS AND DESIGNATIONS

Brockhill is influenced by the following designations and policies.

Kent Country Parks Strategy

<https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/countryparksstrategy#:~:text=We%20are%20privileged%20to%20own,that%20Kent%20has%20to%20offer.>

Kent County Council environment policy

https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/10669/KCC-Environmental-Policy.pdf

Non-statutory Designations

Brockhill Country Park has been designated as a *Local Wildlife Site* (LWS) [LWS_ RF_NM SH33 by Kent Wildlife Trust. LWS are designated wildlife sites that are important in a local context

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

Brockhill Country Park lies within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

<https://kentdowns.org.uk/>

AWARDS AND BENCHMARKING

We will work to ensure that the park and the visitor facilities are maintained and improved to the highest possible standards in line with this management plan. We will meet all statutory and mirror industry best practise in our custodianship of the land. We will retain the Green Flag Award that we currently hold and seek continued opportunities for additional external recognition through programmes such as the South and Southeast in Bloom Award.

Green Flag Award

Since 2007 Brockhill Country Park has applied for and attained the Green Flag award. This includes a desk-based assessment 30% of final score and field evaluation 70% of final score. Applicants are informed of the result in July.

<https://www.greenflagaward.org/login>

South and Southeast in Bloom (Country Park category)

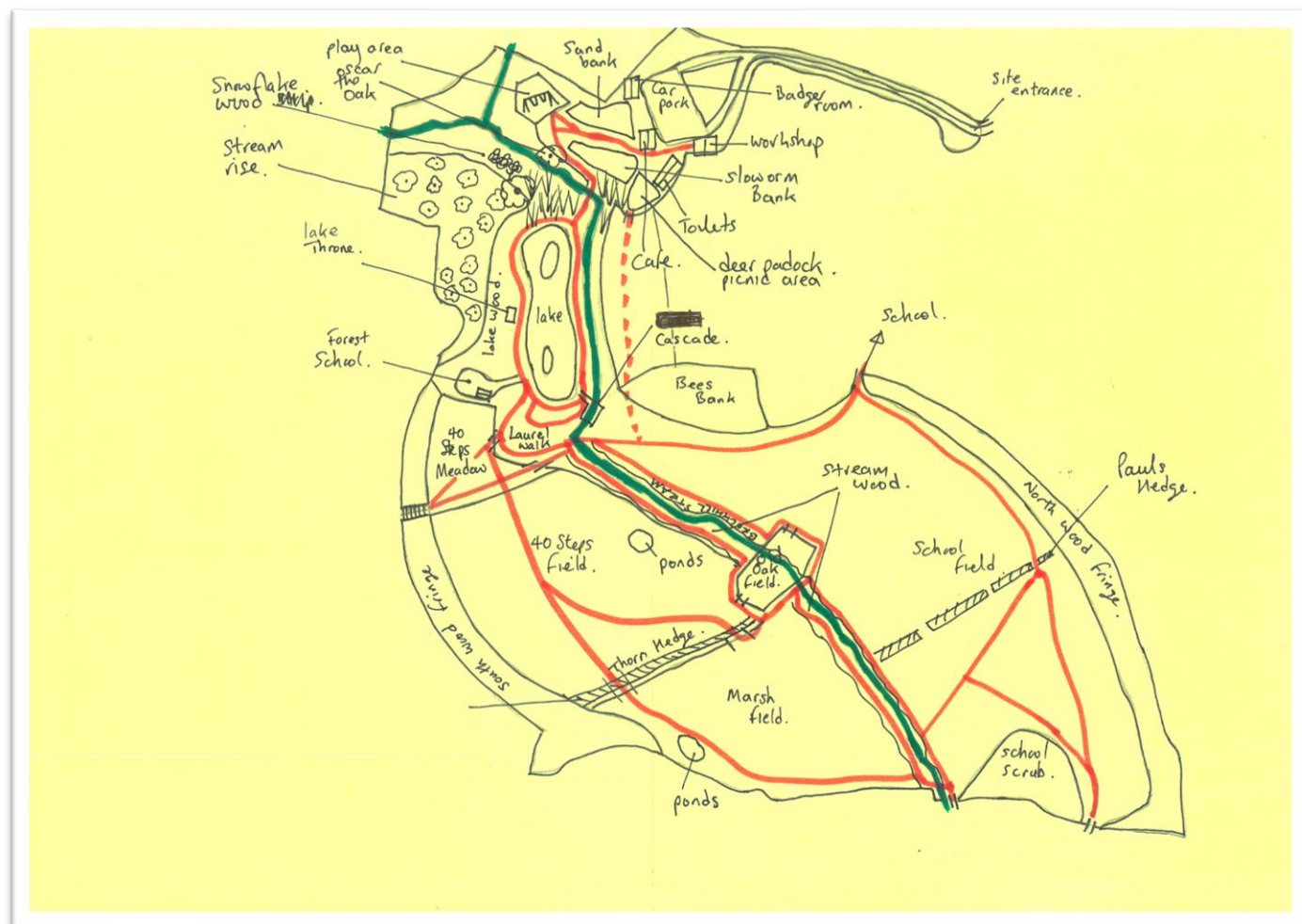
Since 2011 Brockhill has achieved gold standard winning over all category champion for 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022

<https://www.sseib.com/>

SITE MANAGEMENT, LANDSCAPE AND WILDLIFE

Compartments

The management plan is based on a system of management compartments. These compartments broadly follow the areas where there is either a change in habitat or a change in boundary. All compartments are recognisably different from its neighbour. For this management plan, the site is divided into areas and given names reflecting their local environment or physical features.



Map Showing compartments.

This map is temporary whilst an electronic version is created.

Landscape

The site lies in Natural England's Wealden Greensand Natural Area. Natural areas are subdivisions of England, each with a characteristic association of wildlife and natural features. They provide a way of interpreting the ecological variations of the country in terms of natural features, illustrating the distinctions between one area and another.

The Wealden Greensand Natural Area follows the outcrop of the Upper and Lower Greensand. This outcrop forms a conspicuous ridge running east to west across Surrey and Kent to terminate in coastal cliffs at Folkestone Warren. Lowland heath is the most characteristic habitat of the Natural Area; however, it also includes part of several river valleys. These support a series of wetland habitats including alluvial grazing meadows with drainage ditches, marshy grassland, reed beds and wet woodlands. Other habitats include dry acidic grassland and parkland, and a number of large, artificial ponds that are notable for aquatic flora and invertebrates. In addition, the site lies within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Due to the enclosed nature of the valley ravine, the climate within the Country Park tends to be milder than the surrounding countryside. This in conjunction with unpolluted air has allowed the development of an important site for the lower plant groups including epiphytic ferns, lichens and bryophytes.

Topography

The topography of the site is varied with the upper reaches of the Brockhill Stream forming a narrow valley, which widens and deepens as the stream runs southwards forming a deep broad valley with steep stepping natural terraces.



Geology

The geology of Kent is composed of rocks that date from the Cretaceous and Tertiary age (140-50 million years). The upper reaches of Brockhill Country Park lie on the Lower Greensand Sandgate Beds while the geological composition of the lake area and surrounds are Lower Greensand Artherfield Clay. The sides of the Brockhill Valley are Lower

Greensand Hythe Beds and the valley itself is deep landslip.

The Lower Greensand Beds were laid as sediments by warm shallow seas in the Cretaceous period (100 million years ago). Originally the Greensand Beds were covered in a layer of chalk, but the elements eroded this process to reveal the Upper Greensand and expose the defined concentric outcrops of chalk.

Within the Country Park a number of boulders are found scattered through the pastures and in the woodland used in the construction of the dilapidated stream weirs and cascade. The boulders are thought to be from the local Hythe Beds. Hythe Beds are a series of sandstones with irregular courses of hard gritty limestone known as Kentish Rag or Ragstone.

Hydrology

Brockhill Country Park lies within the catchment area for Brockhill Stream. Brockhill Stream and its tributaries cover approximately 373 hectares, extending to the north and west of the site. The majority of the land within the catchment area is agricultural and woodland, with the M20 and mainline railway dissecting the catchment area to the north. Brockhill Stream runs through the centre of the site in Compartments 3a, and 3c. The total length of stream within the Country Park is 930 m, and it is between 1 and 1.5 m wide. The stream supports two Environment Agency habitat types – riffles and pools. Brockhill Stream would in the past have fed the Victorian Lake through an elaborate weir and cascade system. This system has now become disused and dilapidated. The main cause for the dilapidation of the water features is that the stream channel is known to shift considerably, undercutting the banks resulting in slumping and alluviation. In many places the meandering of the stream course has simply cut new channels around the weirs, often forming vegetation islands within the stream channel. The knock-on effect of these processes is the accumulation of excess silt and the nutrient enrichment of the lake. In addition there is virtually no freshwater replenishment to the lake (other than from rainfall and a spring to the west of the lake). The lake is

approximately 150 m by 50 m in size and over 2 m deep in places (Compartment 3b). It was constructed in its current form between 1845 and 1860 by William Tourney, with further slight modifications between 1893 and 1897.

The footbridges, cascade and weir system was constructed between 1890 and 1900. The Oxford Archaeology report (2004) suggests that the lake was developed over medieval fishponds. In historic value terms the water features of Brockhill Country Park was identified as being of Local Interest.



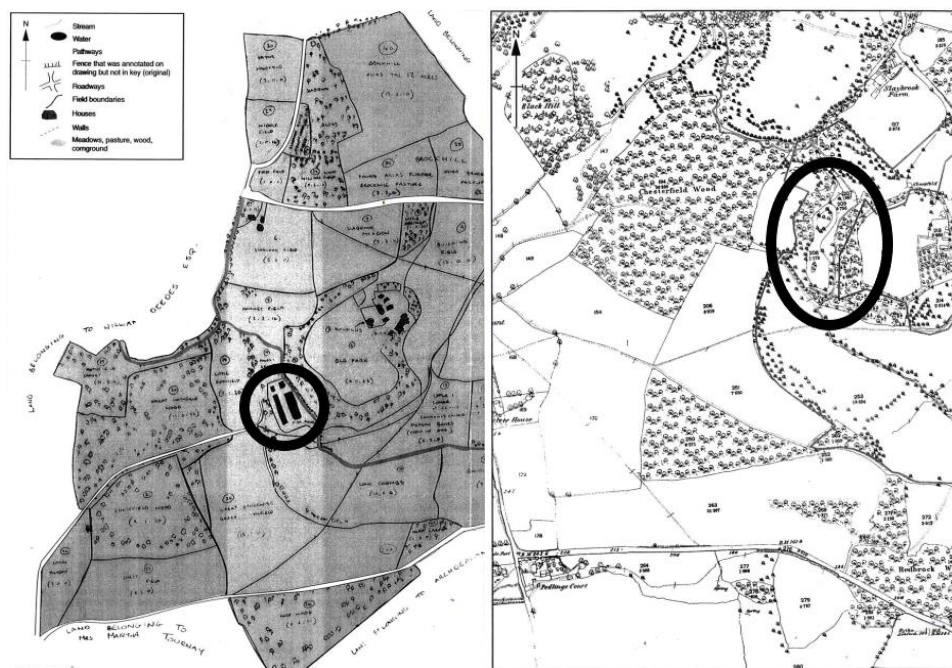
In addition, there are a number of areas of marshy grassland and wet flushes which are fed by springs. The same springs feed a small pond on the western boundary of the site.

BROCKHILL HISTORY

Historical Timeline

- The area around Brockhill Park is likely to have been the site of human activity since the early prehistoric period. Evidence of Mesolithic and Neolithic settlement has been found and the excavations surrounding the park have revealed an extensive Bronze Age funerary landscape.
- During the Roman period there was much activity in the area including roads, the nearby port of Lympne on the Saxon Shore and closer to the park a probable Roman building and possible Roman cemetery.
- By 1280 Sir Warren de Brockhull was residing at Brockhill which appears to have become a separate manor within a larger Saltwood estate. Seven generations later in 1498 the Tournay family married into the Brockhull line with John Tournay
- The estate, divided several times, passed through the Tournay line until the suicide of William Tournay in 1903. After several changes of ownership, Kent County Council took ownership of the site in 1947.

- The park is now separated, both physically and visually, from its Jacobean manor house (c 1611) which lies within the grounds of the adjacent Brockhill Park School.
- The woodland gardens began to be created sometime between 1845 and 1872, termed the *Wilderness* in the Oxford Archaeological report. The process of laying out a network of streams and dams began at this time and would continue throughout the coming decades, taking around sixty years. This phase of work had a profound impact on the landscape of Brockhill, turning what were 4 pools associated with fish farming into the lake we see today.



These two maps show the changes in the lake shape.

Picture 1 (left) as four ponds. Map dates from 1845

Picture 2 (right) lake in current shape map dates from 1872

- Exotic trees, shrubs and plants were added to the woodland to create an all year-round attractive pleasure garden. Such as Rheum, bamboo, Rodgerisa,



- The main cascade was constructed in 1890 and the series of cascades and weirs are one of the most important remaining historical features.
- In 1903 when William Tournay died, he was buried along with his dog Daisy, on the island in the Wilderness Garden Lake.
- There are several notable ancient trees. In the Deer Paddock area are several walnut (*Juglans regia*) and around the park are mature ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*).

Heritage Features

Some heritage features remain intact at Brockhill, notably the Brockhill cascade, weirs and sluices.



HABITATS OF BROCKHILL COUNTRY PARK

Brockhill Country Park supports a range of vegetation types, which in turn support a variety of plant, animal, bird and invertebrate assemblages. Approximately half of the site is characterised by semi-natural neutral grassland, with small areas of more species-rich marshy grassland and meadow areas created by site staff in recent years. The remaining area of the site consists of semi-natural woodland, which in parts has been modified by the planting of exotics during the Victorian period, plantation woodland and scrub. A large artificial lake and stream further add to the interest of the site along with a couple of small spring-fed ponds. In addition, several important veteran trees are found throughout the site in particular in the deer paddock Picnic area and valley.



Woodland, scrub and Hedgerows

There are areas of Beech woodland, to the west of the lake. This is characterised by a canopy of *Fagus sylvatica* (Beech) and the only other canopy tree is *Fraxinus excelsior* (Ash) which often develops as a coloniser of gaps. This species in the last few years has been hit hard by ash die back disease. The understorey is poorly developed due to the dense shade create by the *Fagus sylvatica* (Beech). At Brockhill Country Park, the field-layer is dominated by *Mercurialis perennis* (Dog's Mercury) and *Allium ursinum* (Wild garlic) None of the woodland in the site boundary is recognised as being of ancient origin.

To the North of the lake there is woodland characterised by a canopy of *Quercus robur* (Pedunculate Oak), *Fraxinus excelsior* (Ash), *Crataegus monogyna* (Hawthorn), *Carpinus betulus* (Hornbeam) and *Alnus glutinosa* (Alder). This area also has historic plantings of *Larix decidua* (European larch). The understory constitutes of *Acer pseudoplatanus*

(Sycamore), *Cornus sanguinea* (Dogwood), *Rubus spectabilis* (Salmon berry), *Pseudosasa japonica* (Arrow Bamboo), *Mercurialis perennis* (Dog's Mercury), *Galanthus nivalis* (Snowdrop) and *Leucojum aestivum* (Summer Snowflake).

There are two fenced tree belts of mixed plantation on the western and eastern boundaries of the site. The tree belt on the western side of the valley includes young *Castanea sativa* (Sweet Chestnut), *Fraxinus excelsior* (Ash), *Pinus nigra* (Austrian Pine), *Quercus cerris* (Turkey Oak), *Quercus robur* (Pedunculate Oak), and *Ulmus procera* (English Elm). The plantation on the eastern boundary is planted in single-species blocks and includes *Acer campestre* (Field Maple), *Acer pseudoplatanus* (Sycamore), *Fraxinus excelsior* (Ash), *Pinus nigra* (Austrian Pine), and *Quercus robur* (Pedunculate Oak). *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* (Bluebell), which is partially protected under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act and is found in the woodland areas of Brockhill Country Park.

Brockhill Country Park contains several notable tree specimens in particular in the picnic area tree species of note include two *Juglans regia* (Walnut) which are important for their lichen flora. In addition, there are a number of mature *Quercus robur* (Pedunculate Oak) throughout the site, and these are a feature of the Country Park.

Some areas of scrub have been left to develop in the valley. Typically containing *Crataegus monogyna* (Hawthorn), *Prunus spinosa* (Hawthorn), *Alnus glutinosa* (Alder), *Rubus fruticosus* (bramble). Scrub is valuable for wildlife providing, shelter, nesting and overwintering opportunity and food.

A number of hedges are present on site. They range from more formal Beech hedges, along the entrance driveway and around the car park to large well established field hedges managed for wildlife. A 100m hedge was planted during winter 2022/23 in the valley dividing the school field north to south. Hedge features provide protection, shelter, nesting, overwintering opportunity and food along with providing a network of linear connectivity routes for all wildlife between woodland habitats.



Grassland

The majority of the grassland types found at Brockhill Country Park are relatively species-poor, but there are several small mosaics of species-rich grassland, in particular where there are local differences in soil moisture content (i.e., the areas of marshy grassland in the valley). There is amenity grassland surrounding the café and car park to the north of site these areas are primarily used for picnicking and informal recreation.

The grassland on either side of the valley is grazed by cattle and sheep owned by the neighbouring Brockhill Performing arts college farm. These areas are made up of a mosaic of grassland types. Mainly dominated by *Lolium perenne* (Perennial rye grass) with varying amounts of *Cynosurus cristatus* (Crested dogs tails), *Festuca rubra* (Red fescue, and *Agrostis capillarias* (Common bent). There are also tussocks of *Dactylis glomerata* (Cocks foot) and *Hlocus lantanus* (Yorkshire fog) common broad leaf plants within the grassland are *Achillea millefolium* (Yarrow), *Cerastium fontanum* (Common mouse ear) *Trifolium pratense* (red clover), *Trifolium repens* (White clover), *Cirsium arvense* (Creeping Thistle) and *Urtica dioica* (Common nettle). There are several discrete areas with anthills in the pastures. These show longevity of grassland and good grassland management. Smaller patches of more species rich grassland are present towards the southern of the site these include *Anthoxanthum odoratum* (sweet vernal grass), *Leontodon hispidus* (Rough hawkbit) and *Rumex acetosa* (common sorrel).

There are also areas which hold plants attributed to calcareous grassland such as *Phleum bertolonii* (smaller cats tail), *Trisetum flavescens* (Yellow oat grass). This is more evident with some areas having plants such as *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (Pyramidal orchid), *Briza media* (Quaking grass), *Linum catharticum* (fairy flax), *Ophrys apifera* (Bee orchid), *Pimpinella saxifraga* (Burnet-saxifrage), *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (southern marsh orchid) and *Veronica serpyllifolia* (Thyme-leaved speedwell)



Bee orchid and Southern marsh orchid

The flushes found to the south of site, support an intricate mosaic of wetland and marshland species. Here, *Juncus inflexus* (Hard Rush) although locally dominant in places is joined by a number of other graminoid species including *Agrostis stolonifera* (Creeping Bent), *Carex divisa* (Divided Sedge), *Carex hirta* (Hairy Sedge), *Carex pendula* (Pendulous Sedge), *Deschampsia cespitosa* (Tufted Hair-grass), *Festuca arundinacea* (Tall Fescue), and *Holcus lanatus* (Yorkshire-fog). Forbs include *Apium nodiflorum* (Fool's Water-cress), *Cirsium palustre* (Marsh Thistle), *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted-orchid), *Filipendula ulmaria* (Meadowsweet), *Galium palustre* (Common Marsh-bedstraw), *Lotus pedunculatus* (Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil), *Lychnis flos-cuculi* (Ragged-robin), *Mentha aquatica* (Water Mint), *Pulicaria dysenterica* (Common Fleabane), *Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum* (Water-cress), *Scrophularia auriculata* (Water Figwort), and *Veronica beccabunga* (Brooklime). Some areas of marshy areas are being invaded by *Equisetum palustre* Marsh horsetail. One county important plant was recorded during the 2003 survey – *Carex strigosa* (Thin-spiked Wood-sedge). *Carex strigosa* was found in one of the areas of marshy grassland.



Water mint and ragged robin

An area of grassland approximately 1 acre in size at the foot of the forty steps has been improved as meadow during works carried out by site rangers from 2018. This enhancement work was triggered by the adoption and drive to improve KCC owned land for pollinator species through 'KENT PLAN BEE'.

https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/103905/Kents-Plan-Bee.pdf



Meadow at foot of Forty steps in July 2022

The area of grassland was cut raked, scarified, harrowed and seeded, this work took place between 2018 and 2022 with great results. The meadow area will be extended using green hay from the existing meadow.



Spreading yellow rattle seeds



Yellow rattle seeds



Baling grass in meadow



Bales from meadow

Brockhill Stream

The Brockhill Stream runs through a small, deeply shaded gill, surrounded on both sides by frequent *Alnus*

glutinosa (Alder) and *Fraxinus excelsior* (Ash) with occasional large *Quercus robur* (Pedunculate Oak). The under-storey consists of *Acer campestre* (Field Maple), *Crataegus monogyna* (Hawthorn), *Corylus avellana* (Hazel), and *Rubus fruticosus agg.* (Bramble).

The stream contains no aquatic vegetation. Marginal and bank-side vegetation species include *Angelica sylvestris* (Wild Angelica), *Apium nodiflorum* (Fool's Water-cress), *Cardamine pratensis* (Cuckooflower), *Carex pendula* (Pendulous Sedge), *Carex sylvatica* (Wood-sedge), *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* (Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage), *Iris pseudacorus* (Yellow Iris), *Mentha aquatica* (Water Mint), *Myosotis scorpioides* (Water Forget-me-not), *Oenanthe aquatica* (Fine-leaved Water-dropwort), *Oenanthe crocata* (Hemlock Water-dropwort) and *Sparganium erectum* (Branched Bur-reed) and *Cardamine pratensis* (ladies smock).

During a recent study of the stream a university student carried out *Neomys fodiens* (Water shrew) survey along the length of the Brockhill Stream between sept 2014 and April 2015. Over 20 sampling point's water shrew were found to inhabit 4.3% of the survey area and found in areas of the stream where no human activity was present (compartment 3a). This shows the stream supports an abundant freshwater invertebrate community.



Fools watercress and crossed leaved golden saxifrage

Lake

The vegetation in the Victorian Lake is sparse, limited by the heavy shading of overhanging trees, an often vertical 'engineered' bank, deep leaf litter. An aquatic plant survey identified only four aquatic species namely *Ceratophyllum demersum* (Rigid Hornwort), *Lemna minor* (Common Duckweed), *Potamogeton crispus* (Curled Pondweed), *Potamogeton pectinatus* (Fennel Pondweed) and *Potamogeton natans* (Broad-leaved Pondweed). The lake supports a good variety of pond invertebrates such as Dragon fly larvae, Damselfly larvae, water hoglouse, leech, water scorpion, caddis fly larvae, pondskater, lesser water boatman, fresh watershrimp. The lake is spring fed from the western side this spring runs continuously but flows are reduced during the summer reflecting annual rainfall.

The lake supports a thriving *Bufo bufo* (Common toad) community, used as a breeding pool, the increase in individuals using it over last few years has been astonishing. On a torch survey during this plans life 134 individuals were counted around the fringes, one spawning ball of males and females were thought to hold up to 12 individual animals. *Triturus vulgaris* (Common newt) are also found in the lake along with *Rana temporaria* (common frog) and *Pelophylax ridibundus* Marsh frog are also present. There are number of fish species that live in the lake too *Cyprinus carpio* (common carp), *Rutilus rutilus* (Roach), *Scardinius erythrophthalmus* (Rudd), *Anguilla anguilla* (Eel) and less commonly *Perca fluviatilis* (Perch).

The Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* (kingfisher), *Ardea cinerea* (Heron) are both common birds to see around the lake along with *Anas platyrhynchos* (Mallard duck) and *Gallinula chloropus* (Moorhen). During the spring and summer a breeding pair of *Aix galericulata* (mandarin ducks) are often seen courting on the lake.



Common toad and Kingfisher

LOWER PLANTS ASSOCIATED WITH THESE HABITATS

Bryophytes and Lichens – Sixty-two species of bryophytes were recorded during a 2003 survey. This includes two county important species

Fissidens pusillus var. *pusillus* and *Leskea polycarpa*. Both species are associated with the wooded areas of the Brockhill Stream, which has been recognised as an important habitat for lower plants. The assemblage of bryophytes and lichens at Brockhill Country Park is recognised as being of County Importance. Malcolm Watling the East Kent Bryophyte Recorder confirmed that the site is one of the best in East Kent.

The majority of the bryophyte species were found in the sheltered humid conditions of the woodland, along the deeply-shaded streamside, on submerged tree roots and immersed boulders, as well as growing along the cascade and weirs. The shaded, sheltered Ash, Oak and Elder near the lake and streamside's provide excellent habitat for epiphytic mosses and liverworts as do the scattered ragstone boulders in the grassland areas of the valley and the ragstone walls in the ornamental woodland garden area. The drier, slightly more acid woodland supports commoner species such as *Mnium hornum* and *Polytrichum formosum*.

Eighty-four species of lichen were recorded during the 2003 survey, including seven county important species *Calicium viride*, *Pertusaria flavida*, *Pertusaria multipuncta*, *Physcia aipolia*, *Pseudevernia furfuracea*, *Pyrenula macrospora* and *Schismatomma niveum*. Many of the lichens are associated with the relict mature trees in particular the Walnuts in the picnic area and on the veteran Oak and Ash.

Fungi – During November 2003, a full species list was produced, as a result 122 species of fungi have been recorded, which includes two species which are county important *Perenniporia fraxinea* and *Ischnoderma resinaceum*. In addition, the record of *Xanthoriicola physiae* was the first occurrence of this species in Kent.

ANIMALS AND BIRDS ASSOCIATED WITH THESE HABITATS

Mammals

There are two Badger setts on the site, one of which was re-located. Although Badger activity was noted around the sett it was thought not to be a main sett. Grassland and the bordering hedgerows provide good cover and foraging for Badgers. Woodland and scrub are favoured by *Meles meles* (Badger) for foraging and sett digging.

Various small mammal surveys have identified Wood Mouse, Pygmy Shrew, Bank Vole, Field Vole, and Mole. Although these species are fairly ubiquitous to woodland, grassland and stream habitats, it appears the site supports a healthy population which in turn provide good feeding opportunities for raptors and owls. As said previously *Neomys fodiens* (Water shrew) have been found in sections of the Brockhill stream along areas without human interference. Both Rabbit and Grey Squirrel and Fox are known to be present at Brockhill Country Park, however Rabbit grazing and damage to trees by Grey Squirrel do not seem to be a particular problem.

Bats

Seven species of bats have been recorded on the site (1.*Soprano pipistrelle*, 2.*Pipistrelle*, 3.*Noctule*, 4.*Daubentons*, 5.*Serotine*, 6.*Natterers*, 7.*Brown Long eared*). Daubentons bat were recorded feeding exclusively over the lake, all the other bats were found along the woodland edge, hedgerows, and grassland habitat. Many species of bat roost in trees, some species of bat are primarily woodland species, and the woodlands within the surveyed area are particularly suitable for bats. There are many veteran trees with cracks, cavities and woodpecker holes. These features all provide excellent sites for bats to roost in. The open grassland and mature hedgelines provide good foraging for a number of species of bat which could roost elsewhere in the area. Serotine is listed as a Kent BAP species whilst the other species, apart from Natterer's, are listed in the Kent Red Data Book (Waite 2000).

Reptiles and Amphibians

The woodland edges, scrub and rough grassland provide suitable habitat for reptiles. Slow Worm, Grass Snake and Common Lizard are on site. The wetter areas along the streams are especially suitable for Grass Snake. In September and October 2008, eighteen Slowworms were translocated to Brockhill CP as a result of ecological mitigation in relation

to the development of the former Wyvern School in Ashton, Kent. The Lake and ponds are suitable for amphibians. Palmate and Smooth Newts, Common Frog, Marsh frog and common toad are found in the lake and ponds.

Birds

A total of 36 breeding bird species were recorded in 2021 this is a reduction from 46 species holding territories within the park boundaries in 1982. Of these 36 species, Kingfisher is protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Kingfisher, Green Woodpecker, Dunnock, Willow Warbler and Goldcrest) are on the Amber List. Song Thrush, Goldcrest are also included in the Kent Red Data Book. A relatively large number of territories were found on the site creating a high density of breeding birds especially in the most important habitats such as the woodland, lake, stream and areas of scrub. The areas of open grassland supported no breeding birds but are important feeding areas for many of the breeding species such as the raptors, owls and Green Woodpecker.

A complete list of the birds recorded at Brockhill Country Park

| Species | Breeding Bird Surveys | | | Winter (2008-11) | Casual/ migrant | Notes |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|---------|------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | 2021 | 2008-11 | 2003 | | | |
| Pheasant | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Canada Goose | | | | | ● | |
| Greylag Goose | | | | | ● | |
| Mute Swan | | | | | ● | |
| Mandarin Duck | | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Gadwall | | | | ● | | |
| Mallard | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Pintail | | | | ● | | |
| Teal | | | | ● | | |
| Tufted Duck | ● | | | | | |
| Swift | | | | | ● | |
| Cuckoo | | | | | ● | |
| Feral Pigeon | | | | ● | | |
| Stock Dove | ● | ● | | ● | | |
| Woodpigeon | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Turtle Dove | | | | | ● | |
| Collared Dove | | | ● | | | |
| Moorhen | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Coot | | | ● | | | |
| Little Grebe | | | | | ● | |
| Lapwing | | | | ● | | |
| Woodcock | | | | ● | | |
| Jack Snipe | | | | ● | | |
| Snipe | | | | ● | | |
| Green Sandpiper | | | | | ● | One on 8 Dec 2001 |
| Black-headed Gull | | | | ● | | |
| Mediterranean Gull | | | | | ● | |
| Common Gull | | | | ● | | |
| Herring Gull | | | | ● | | |
| Lesser Black-backed Gull | | | | | ● | |
| Cormorant | | | | | ● | |
| Grey Heron | | | | ● | | |
| Osprey | | | | | ● | One on 20 Apr 2009 |
| Sparrowhawk | | | ● | ● | | |
| Goshawk | | | | | ● | One on 4 Apr 2020 |
| Buzzard | ● | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|----|----|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Firecrest | | | | ● | | |
| Goldcrest | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Wren | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Nuthatch | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Treecreeper | ● | | ● | ● | | |
| Starling | | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Blackbird | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Fieldfare | | | | ● | | |
| Redwing | | | | ● | | |
| Song Thrush | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Mistle Thrush | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Spotted Flycatcher | | | | | ● | |
| Robin | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Dipper | | | | | | ● One 25 Jan - Mar 1989 |
| House Sparrow | | | | | | ● |
| Dunnock | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Grey Wagtail | | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Pied Wagtail | | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Meadow Pipit | | | | | | ● |
| Chaffinch | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Hawfinch | | | | | | ● Up to 3 in Jan/Feb 1989 |
| Bullfinch | ● | | ● | ● | | |
| Greenfinch | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Linnet | | | ● | | | |
| Lesser Redpoll | | | | ● | | |
| Crossbill | | | | | | ● 7 over on 24 April 2011 |
| Goldfinch | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Siskin | | | | ● | | |
| Yellowhammer | | | | | | ● |
| Reed Bunting | | | | ● | | |
| Total | 36 | 36 | 46 | 56 | 94 species recorded in total | |

| | |
|-------|---|
| ● | The 2021 Breeding Bird Survey was undertaken by Ian Roberts |
| ● | The 2008-11 Breeding Bird Survey is based on the results of the BTO Bird Atlas breeding surveys |
| ● | The 2021 Breeding Bird Survey was undertaken by Sean McMinn of Marsh Environmental |
| ● | The 2008-11 Winter Survey is based on the results of the BTO Bird Atlas winter surveys |
| ● | Any additional species recorded have been listed as casual/migrant occurrences |
| Notes | Dates have been provided for the more unusual records |

As at June 2021

Breeding bird table from survey 2021

Invertebrates

The invertebrate interest of Brockhill Country Park is extremely high with 883 species recorded. The LWS schedule states that “the site is known to be outstanding for Diptera (flies) with crane flies being a particularly important group”.

In terms of Diptera records, Brockhill Country Park ranks second in the Diptera list for Kent. In addition the site ranks second in Kent for its crane flies.

The site has been surveyed continuously by the same surveyor, Laurence Clemons, between 1987 and 1999, and he undertook a 2003 survey on behalf of the Kent Wildlife Trust. Between 1987 and 1999, 1057 records of 689 species in 10 insect orders were recorded. The 2003 survey recorded 598 records of 430 species from 12 insect orders, of these 194 species had not been found in previous years. A list of the 12 insect orders is below;

| |
|--|
| Coleoptera (Beetles) |
| Dermaptera (Earwigs) |
| Diptera (True Flies) |
| Ephemeroptera (Mayflies) Hemiptera (True bugs) |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees, sawflies and wasps) |
| Lepidoptera (Butterflies and moths) |
| Mecoptera (Scorpion flies) |
| Neuroptera (Lacewings) |
| Odonata (Damselflies and dragonflies) |
| Orthoptera (Crickets and grasshoppers) |
| Placoptera (Stoneflies) |
| Psocoptera (Booklice) |

COMPARTMENTS

GRASSLAND

COMPARTMENTS -40 Steps Meadow, 40 Steps Field, Marsh Field, School Field and Slowworm Bank

Management Considerations

Brockhill has been grazed by cattle and sheep for at least thirty years. The six core cattle and approximately 26 ewes (Texels and Southdown) are owned by the adjacent Brockhill Park School and are available year-round for grazing. Brockhill county park's main purpose is to provide an area for public recreation, maintain access and improve the land where possible for wildlife. As well as the grassland described earlier in the document the valley also contains five areas of spring fed rush-pasture/marshy grassland which add the structural and species diversity of the grasslands. The grassland habitats are known to support protected faunal species such as Slow Worm, Grass Snake, Badger, several small mammal species and a number of rare/notable invertebrate species (in particular Dipteran species for which the site is of County Importance.

Management Objectives

- Maintain or enhance the diverse and varied structure of the grasslands and their constituent species composition. Maintain or increase the wide-range of animal and invertebrate species
- Maintain and enhance the existing grazing pastures for nature conservation and public use.
- Control weed species, i.e., *Cirsium* (Thistle) and *Rumex* (Docks) *Jacobaea vulgaris* (ragwort).
- Keep open water in the pond in compartments 4a and 3d for wildlife.
- Manage scrub areas to maintain structural diversity with no loss of areas of grassland.

Prescriptions

- Grazing is to be maintained on the site as it creates a varied sward structure beneficial to many species including the resident amphibian, reptile, invertebrate and plant assemblages.
- Weed species are to be controlled, preferably through manual hand-pulling or grazing but the application of foliar-acting herbicides may be used to control some invasive species in particular *Cirsium vulgare* (spear thistle) and *Cirsium arvense* (creeping thistle).
- Tree seedlings are to be removed from Compartments 40 steps meadow, 40 steps field, marsh field, school field and slowworm bank hand-pulling or digging and transplanting elsewhere on site to prevent the eventual decline and loss of these habitats.
- On the western Bees Bank compartment small bare patches of ground, approximately 2m by 2m, are to be maintained for solitary bees and wasps.

Especially *Andrena bucephala* and *Andrena labiate* these are two scarce solitary bees found at Brockhill Country Park during summer surveys in 2016.

- Scrub is reviewed annually to assess scrub encroachment into areas of grassland. Scrub areas should be maintained at current levels but should be cut, in late autumn / winter, in rotational to create variation in vegetation height and density.

Monitoring grassland;

- Monitor scrub and tree seedling encroachment in all grasslands.
- Assess the sward height of grassland in all compartments to maintain varied heights and density.
- Continue ongoing recording of birds, fungi, herpetofauna, invertebrates, plants and small mammals.
- Monitor butterfly and bee species through

BROCKHILL STREAM, LAKE & OTHER WATERBODIES

COMPARTMENTS – Brockhill Stream, Lake, Valley Ponds and Marsh Field

The whole site is designated as a Local Wildlife Site and as such is of county importance.

Habitats

The water bodies of Brockhill Country Park comprise of 5 distinct features, namely, the Brockhill Stream, the Victorian Lake and a spring-fed clay lined ponds in Marsh Field and 40 Steps Field. Wet flushes and open springs Marsh Field. The Brockhill stream contains no aquatic vegetation but has a high diversity of moss and liverwort species growing on its banks, boulders and stones and on submerged tree roots. It is surrounded on both sides by woodland dominated by *Alnus glutinosa* (Alder) and *Sambucus nigra* (Elder) sub-community woodland.

The aquatic habitats are known to support several species of bat (including Daubenton's). Birds like Kingfisher and several rare and notable invertebrate species and a healthy population of small mammals including Water shrew.

Management Considerations

- Although the species of small mammal supported are ubiquitous, they provide good feeding potential for raptors and owls.
- Brockhill Stream consists of a system of weirs and cascades of local historical importance.
- The spring-fed pond feeds Marsh Field.
- Brockhill stream and its tributaries' catchment area extends over 373 hectares the majority of which is agricultural and woodland.

Management Objectives

- Enhance plant diversity and quality of aquatic habitats within Brockhill Country Park.
- Maintain the Brockhill Stream's diverse and varied habitat structure and historical features in some cases site rangers and volunteers repair weirs and cascades to retain the important features.
- Manage the silt trap at the small spring on the western side of the lake.
- Reduce the nutrient-status of the lake.
- Create consistent freshwater flow into the lake.
- Manage open water to prevent algal blooms.
- Allow the development of marginal vegetation around the Victorian Lake by development of soft-engineered banks.
- Increase shrub species along the southern half of the Brockhill Stream to increase its usage as a wildlife corridor.

Prescriptions

LAKE

- The nutrient levels of the lake can be reduced by removing leaf-litter in autumn and the annual cutting and clearing of aquatic vegetation in late summer. Aquatic vegetation should be cut on a rotational basis leaving 50% of the lake remains vegetated.
- Trees should be removed to the south of the lake to reduce leaf-litter, also opening the canopy, and increasing sunlight. Chalara (ash die back disease) resulting in the removal of dead or dying ash trees is having a major impact on the woodland around the lake.
- Lemna minor (Common Duckweed) in the past the lake has suffered from extreme duck weed growth. There has been no duck weed since 2018.
- Algal blooms in high summer are controlled in the main by the solar powered aerator, depending on the severity of the bloom the petrol-powered water pump may need to be run overnight.

STREAM

- Brockhill Stream and the spring-fed pond should be managed as minimum intervention. Though occasional maintenance will be required to maintain the flow.

Monitoring and Required Surveys

- Monitor the stream / boulders rocks and submerged roots for their lower plant species assemblages.
- Continue ongoing recording of birds, fungi, herpetofauna, invertebrates, plants and small mammals.

AMENITY & RECREATIONAL AREAS

COMPARTMENTS – Car Park, Deer Paddock, Play Area

Management Considerations

The site's main remit is to provide an area of public recreation; therefore Kent County Council need to provide and maintain the car-park, toilets, way marked trails, public viewpoints permissive and statutory rights of way and all associated furniture and signage.

Management Objectives

- Maintain and where desirable improve Brockhill Country Park as a public amenity. Where there is no conflict with public interest, enhance the biodiversity value of existing amenity grassland and recreational areas.
- Maintain public access and site furniture to a safe standard.
- Maintain Beech hedge along driveway and keep front entrance tidy.
- Organise annual inspection of play area by ROSPA. Maintain site furniture.
- Maintain outdoor classroom in Forest School.
- Where possible create areas of rough uncut grassland providing valuable habitat for wildlife among the more public areas.

Prescriptions

- Maintain paths, removing any obstruction or partial obstruction. Footpaths should be maintained to a minimum width of 1.5m.
- Vehicle and emergency access routes should be maintained to a minimum height and width of 3m.
- Maintain Compartment 1a as an area of close-mown grassland. Sward height should be maintained at about 5cm 10cm. Mowing is to be carried out as appropriate using site tools and machinery.
- Sloworm Bank will be managed as wild flower meadow. Cut annually in early autumn to ensure seed set and to reduce damage to invertebrate populations and to avoid killing or disturbing Slow Worms. Yellow rattle, wild carrot, oxeye daisy, knapweed and yarrow seeds have been sown in this area to increase biodiversity
- Areas of scrub shall be maintained to their current limits. Trees in these areas will be allowed to mature naturally, if suited to the area and within health and safety limits. Dead wood shall be, if possible, left in trees as standing timber or as fallen material in-situ.
- The car-park area, lawns and children's play area and shall be kept free of litter and in good state of repair.

Monitoring and Required Surveys

- Annually inspect all trees in accordance with Kent County Council's Health and

Safety Framework. Any trees which require felling may be used for the production of logs for sale.

- Check all fences, gates and stiles to ensure they are effective, safe and in a good state of repair. Ensure that any problems are identified and dealt with immediately.
- Continue ongoing recording of birds, fungi, herpetofauna, invertebrates, plants and small mammals.
- Monitor butterfly and bee species.

WOODLAND

COMPARTMENTS – Lake wood, Snowflake Wood, Stream Rise, Stream Wood, North and South Wood Fringes, Sand Banks.

All compartments will be managed as non-intervention other than for health and safety works which will be as a result of the annual tree inspection. This will benefit the current and historical structure of the woodland and the bird and fauna species indicative of it, such as the bat species and *Meles meles* (Badger). The loss of so many Ash Trees has resulted in a dramatic decline in older trees and trees with cavities. We must retain our old and middle age trees for this reason.

Management considerations

- The woodlands within the Country Park are generally not accessible to the public although access is not restricted; this is due to the position of public rights of way and permissive paths. The woodland acts as a haven for wildlife and gives character and landscape value to the Country Park. We will retain non-native species such as *Rhododendron*, Laurel and bamboo linked to the historical value of the site. These species will be monitored and not let to spread or change the woodland makeup.

Charlara

Ash dieback disease is having a profound effect on this site. The makeup of *Fraxinus excelsior* (Ash) within the canopy is thought to be around 25%. Monitoring of trees by Wardens and Rangers is carried out on a continual basis. Where work is required to make any tree safe, professional tree surgeons or site staff will do this, either triggered by need or as part of the annual tree inspection. An Ash die back Kent Country Parks code of practice can be found under the health and safety section of this document.

Management Objectives

- To maintain a mixed healthy and safe varied structural woodland befitting the landscape and historical value of the Country Park.

Prescriptions and monitoring

- Monitor woodland structure.
- Monitor tree and shrub regeneration within gaps, left as a result of ash tree death or removal.
- Ensure a good amount of dead wood is within compartments.
- Monitor sycamore re-growth in Northern sections of woodland and control where necessary.
- Monitor areas of *Fallopia japonica* (Japanese Knotweed) and *Heracleum mantegazzianum* (Giant Hogweed) and treat when necessary.
- Monitor old and veteran trees on site.
- Carry out annual tree inspections (method and zoning document can be found under the Health and safety section of this document).
- Monitor non-native species outlined earlier within the understory of the woodland compartments and carry out works to control and keep them at current levels.
- Plant trees to replace lost *Fraxinus excelsior* (Ash) specimens with other natives; *Carpinus betulus* (Hornbeam), *Tilia cordata* (Small leaved lime), *Quercus robur* (English Oak), *Larix deidua* (European Larch), crab apple (*malus sylvestris*), wild cherry (*prunus avium*).

WHAT DID WE ACHIEVE BETWEEN PLAN 2017 – 2022?

Between Brockhill Country Park achieved a great deal. Some key achievements are listed below. This also included keeping the Country Park open during the Pandemic!

Site management and conservation

- Surveys – Breeding birds, bumblebees, solitary bees, moths, Ecological scoping survey along with biodiversity enhancement and management recommendations by Kent Wildlife trust.
- Establishment and management of wildflower meadows.
- Maintaining a healthy lake
- planting of approximately 500 appropriately chosen trees
- The development and maintenance of grassland habitats
- Effective management of aquatic environments, creation of ponds, and restoration of marshland.
- Wildlife zones set up around veteran trees and floristically sensitive areas have been set aside.
- Planting of 100m of habitat connecting hedgerow with standards.
- Training volunteers in bee identification and survey techniques.
- Hibernaculum creation and establishment of basking areas for reptiles
- Installation of permanent water supply into 40 steps and Marsh field to enable spring and summer grazing.
- Installation of new play area and sculptures with Covid Recovery funding.

Awards

- We have kept our green flag status and also won Country park of the year 5 times in the South and South East in Bloom Award, Country Park category.

Education and Events

Visitor Services and Events an example – 2022

Value

2022 has seen us deliver events to 1,857 ticket holders and their families. The revenue raised from these events stands at £11,496.82. Helping us justify the work we carry out, from endless tree surgery bills to the planting of our wildflower meadows, it is through the generation of events income that we can continue the conservation work we do, protecting a pocket of land which we and the community around Brockhill hold so very dear.

Aside from the figures above there is an impact that is far harder to quantify, but arguably, at least from the privileged position of the team working here, holds such reward and value. Watching children try hot chocolate for the first time, sat around the fire with their peers under the canopy of trees, with noses red from the cold but eyes so

wide and filled with excitement, truly is a privilege to behold. The value of the work we do to support, inspire, and build children's fascination with the natural world may not be proven until they themselves become adults. However, we hope that this respect, passion and inquisition they currently hold will go on to contribute towards a more sustainable and healthier planet.

Sustainability

Wherever possible we re-use items around the site to create props and play settings for our event attendees, not only does this help us save money but also reduces the environmental impact of our events. Old mink traps now contain fake spiders to decorate the park each Halloween, large black wooden planks, which had to be removed from our boardwalk, are now a racing track for cars along with some worn tyres. A collection of cones, building site signage and rubble sacks are now a very well loved builders yard for the children to enjoy. Using these items along with coppiced wood from the site allows us to build more narrative when delivering, tying in stories about the wider work we do, the trees we are using and the responsibility we all hold towards the environment.

Events Offering

We offer events during every school holiday, over time we have recognised that our most popular events are themed to seasonal events such as; Halloween, Christmas, Pancake Day, Valentines ect. The idea of attending a willow workshop, learning about the history of the plant followed by a nature trail and ending in campfire cooking, may seem intimidating and inaccessible to families who are not used to spending time in nature. However when offering this event as a themed Easter event, it becomes more accessible and we were able to deliver welcome to 291 families.

Further Examples of our 2022 events can be found below.

Cupid's Quest - Create a bow and whittle an arrow to take home. After some target practice they will set out on a quest trail across the park, completing challenges themed around all the things to love in nature. Before toasting a marshmallow and enjoying a smore around the fire.

Pancake Pioneers - Upon arrival head to the Badger Room to receive your mission briefing before setting off to hunt down your ingredients hidden across the Deer Paddock. Then have a go at creating a spark before cooking a pancake over the campfire.

Queen Bees, In partnership with the Bumble Bee Conservation Trust - Join us for an activity filled session exploring nature and learning all about bees! Create a queen bee crown before setting off on a fact finding trail. Then gather in our forest school area to plant your own bee garden to take home. All before heading out with the Bumble Bee Conservation Trust to, catch & I.D bees while exploring the wildflower meadows.

Poo Pioneers - Create a poo slingshot (to take home) while learning about why poo is so important to eco systems, the explore the park working out who did which poo on our poo-ineers trail. Figure it out to earn your chocolatey prize ready for a campfire cook up.

Bugs @ Brockhill - Join us on a creepy crawly exploration! Meet exotic insects in our animal handling session before heading out for a mini beast safari to discover the bugs at Brockhill all before creating your own clay minibeast to take home.

Spooktacular - Come and join us at Brockhill Country Park on an adventure to save the fairy tales we know and love! 🍂 Whittle a wooden wand before setting off on your trick or treat quest across the park. 🍄 With your recipe book in hand, enjoy the park transformed with spooky fairy tales, avoid the poisonous tricks and identify the yummy treats ready to cook up a cure! Save the fairy tales to earn your own treat at our campfire cook up!

Father Christmas @ Brockhill - Head to our Elf workshop to saw and paint a wooden decoration, before setting off on a festive trail spotting Father Christmas's lost items along the way. Warm up around the fire and enjoy a story before meeting the big man himself! If you've managed to spot all his lost items, he may even have a little something for you!

Future

Over the next 5 years we would like to continue delivering events and working with partner organisations to increase children's understanding of, and affiliation to, the natural world. We intend on continuing to develop our events to ensure we keep relevant to what interests children and remain relevant within the children's events market. Overall we hope to continue working in symphony with the site, using what it offers and the opportunities it provides to engage children in nature events.

WHAT WILL WE AIM TO ACHIEVE DURING 2023 – 2028?

We understand at Brockhill that with global, national, and local loss of biodiversity we have a responsibility to act. As part of this plan and going forward, we will be rewilding areas of the country park to establish new areas of scrub and establishing woodland, this work will take place in school field, and School scrub with the exclusion of grazing where appropriate. Along with this work other areas of the park outside the main public and recreation areas will continue to be managed with a non-intervention approach. Other than underplanting with native trees, helping woodland areas to recover from the loss of ash trees attributed to ash die back disease. Some areas will of course need to have tree inspections to keep areas safe.

This work will go hand in hand with our efforts over the last 4 years to establish areas of meadow the 40 steps field, known as 40 steps Meadow. Allowing scrub to establish and thicken in School Scrub and the southern end of School field. These improvements will give a resource of food, shelter, and breeding areas for a multitude of wildlife, also linking into KCC's PLAN BEE Strategy which reflects the national Pollinator Strategy.

https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/103905/Kents-Plan-Bee.pdf

In 2020 we created a large, fenced area around a massive veteran oak tree on the edge of the stream between School field and 40 steps Field, this too will be allowed to scrub up.

Advice

In 2021 we commissioned Kent Wildlife Trust to help us appraise Brockhill's current biodiversity value and suggest recommendations for further biodiversity improvement.. Although This report will go some way to influence the work we carry out over the next 5 years. We will not be held to its recommendations and prescriptions. We will take a fluid approach while carrying out careful monitoring and watch for improvement or decline in habitat quality along the way. Some areas of management will remain the same, for example play area, car park, picnic areas and recreation space. Below is a summary of the recommendations made by Kent Wildlife Trust.

Ecological Scoping Survey Report with Biodiversity Enhancement Recommendations (2021) Kent Wildlife Trust



Compartment map used by KWT for their report.

Discussion and recommendations from the report for us to consider.

- Site supports high diversity of wildlife across a broad taxa range, including species of conservation concern, of which some are ecologically poorly understood. (a cautious approach is suggested).

Meeting objectives for rich biodiversity.

- Habitats of short grassland- mature woodland.
- Heterogeneity of habitats. (mosaics).
- Gradual changes
- Favouring natural regeneration and well-regulated livestock grazing rather than planting.

4.2)

Grassland

- Sheep graze in certain areas where they feel secure.
- Western side of valley currently only grazed in winter.
- Eastern side of valley taller more ruderal (colonisers) species than western side.
- Horsetail and great willow herb dominate in wet areas in compartment 2 (Marsh Field).
- Site would benefit from slight stock increase or longer grazing season in both wet and drier areas.

- Introduce occasional/ rotational, spring/ summer grazing on Western side. Graze orchid areas too, otherwise habitat will be lost. These areas are defined by grazing so will recover quickly. Seeding and flowering will take place if areas are not overgrazed. Billiard table look not recommended.
- Divide compartment 6, Eastern side into two compartments. Helping to control grazing and increase options and availability of different habitat structure. New fencing and hedge would give diversity of habitat. Oaks at intervals, or area inside double fence for natural regeneration.

Grazing suggestions

Compartment 1 (Forty Steps Meadow, Forty Steps Field)

- Replace hay cutting with rotational, Spring/ Summer grazing. This saves time and resources.
- Graze annually in winter (September, October- March)
- Graze Spring/ summer (May-August). An average of one year in three.
- We do not have to keep to these specifications. Monitor. Ideally short grass with occasional tussocks.

Compartment 2 (Marsh Field)

- Graze annually winter (September, October-March)
- Remove stock before compartment is grazed out.
- Allow for a patchwork of scrub. The process is already happening due to stock habits.
- Consider reintroducing rotational Spring/ Summer grazing once desired grassland/ scrub mix (mosaic) has been achieved.
- Long term management for wood pasture, scattered scrub, and grassland glades.
- Monitor for desired biodiversity outcomes. Adjustments will be needed over time alongside working with BPAC.
- Wet flushes are of particular importance with distinct and scarce assemblages of plants. More open flush should not be allowed to scrub over, so stock should not be excluded.

The current grassland habitat varies

- Species poor areas are especially on the Eastern side of valley, where agricultural activity has been more intensive. This can be reversed over time using green hay from higher diversity areas to accelerate the process. This could be used for areas nearer to the car park. It is more cost effective and using local provenance.

4.3

Wetland

- Small areas of channels and boggy ground are present. Occurring widely over the site.
- Mostly in the open or semi shade. One or two area are heavily shaded, supporting different assemblages.
- Waterlogging creates suitable conditions for distinctive and scarce communities of plant,
- These areas are botanically the richest on site.
- The most extensive area is in compartment 2.

Wetland suggestions

- Consider increasing water levels in selected areas.
- To be done gradually and in stages. A flush at a time.
- Construct low dams or bunds of wood and earth. Local alder would be a good option. It is rot resistant.
- Mechanically excavate small pools. Dig these in botanically poor areas (horse tail/ greater willow herb).
- Gradually build dam levels. They are not leak proof and should not produce widespread flooding.

4.4

Woodland

- Two main areas of woodland are on site. (Shaws/narrow strips).
- Compartment 3 on the western edge and Compartment 7 on the Eastern edge.
- Areas have an even age structure.
- Localized enrichment due to spayed fertiliser drift from adjacent land (nettle, cleavers, cow parsley).
- Not in the ancient woodland inventory but quite old.

- There are several woodland indicator species (ramsons, mochatel, stinking iris).

Woodland Suggestions

- Remove non-natives (holm oak, scots pine). Ringbark for habitat of fell and stack.
- Remove/ reposition fence in places where there is enrichment, poor ground flora. This could be done when fencing needs replacement. A softer and varied habitat/ landscape division would be achieved.

4.5

Stream

- Shading greatly influences. Low light levels limit diversity of plants, invertebrates, and other wildlife.
- Woodland along stream edge may not be ancient but is quite old.

Consideration for proposed vegetation clearance

- Consider proposed clearance work regarding accessibility and potential erosion and increased damage to bank.
- Higher light levels would improve conditions for certain species at expense of shade-tolerant wildlife communities (lower plants, and invertebrates).
- Removal of scrub and other vegetation may encourage stock grazing, impacting on ecology

Stream suggestions

- Carry out small-scale experiments on the stream corridor.
- Coppice in rotation rather than adopt more frequent management.
- Survey desired in clearance areas, ideally use experts to assess potential impacts (invertebrates, lower plants).
- Reduces impact from public in cleared areas with natural barrier and long vegetation.

4.6

Future survey work

- Biodiversity information is generally good, but not formal.
- Broad range of wildlife recording from KMBRC.
- Breeding bird survey carried out 2021. Once 5 years annually needed.

- Declines likely outside control measures of site.

Inevitably there are some gaps in knowledge.

- Certain invertebrate groups are not recorded.
- Little or no information on aquatic species in stream.
- No records of dormouse despite potentially suitable habitat. Is this a genuine absence or data absence?
- Information is less well known for invertebrates, lichens, mosses, bryophytes, and liverworts. On going contact with specialist is to be encouraged.
- It is not feasible to survey for every taxa group

Monitor for.

Vascular plants

- More research is needed on distinctive and autecological requirement of notable species (ferns. Mosses, bryophytes, liverworts, fungi). This is highly desirable because of the importance of the site for them.

Invertebrates

- Information is lacking on certain invertebrate groups.
- Little or no information on species in the stream. It would be helpful to better understand key species present, together with habitat requirement, as this may influence decisions.

Targeted visits

- Mid June- August search for white letter hairstreak. Determining status in the area, and if there is a breeding colony on site. They are easily overlooked, using high canopy.

WORK TO CARRY OUT DURING THIS PLAN BY COMPARTMENT

| |
|---|
| Compartment |
| Car park |
| Allow good access flow through the car park, maintain parking bays, pay and display machines. Rake and remove leaves annually from tarmac areas and compost. Carry out annual tree inspection. Promote Classroom/venue hire room for use by schools, nurseries, and other private groups. Keep the room clean, tidy and in good repair for its function. Maintain mown areas, hedges along entrance drive and around buildings and car park. Cut area of bluebells annually after flowering next to entrance drive. Keep works compounds secure, tidy and safe for purpose. Keep 'species seen recently' board up to date. Litter pick. |
| Deer Paddock picnic area |
| Maintain mown areas for informal recreation, inspect, repair and replace furniture, maintain and improve access paths for the public. Litter pick and keep presentable. Empty general waste, recycling and dog bins dispose of in Main skip ready for collection by contractor. Carry out annual tree inspection. |
| Slow worm bank (deer Paddock) |
| Cut yearly in the Autumn, rake and bale arising's and compost. Treat/remove some nettles, ragwort and creeping thistle. Improve biodiversity and habitat for pollinators by broadcasting yellow rattle, wild carrot, oxeye daisy, knapweed and yarrow seed after cutting on lightly scarified areas. |
| Sand bank |
| Monitor erosion and rabbit damage. Carry out annual tree inspection, litter pick. |
| Children's play area |
| Keep play area in good working order and fit for use. Carry out regular inspections along with the annual ROSPA inspection. Repair and replace items as actioned or when required. Inspect, repair and replace furniture. Remove leaves from safety surfaces annually to prolong its life. Carry out annual tree inspection. |
| Snowflake wood |
| Non-intervention area of woodland. Carry out annual tree inspection. Clear some areas for snowdrops near Oscar the Oak. Monitor Ash die back |

| |
|--|
| Stream Rise |
| Non-intervention woodland. Monitor recently planted Oak Hornbeam and sweet chestnut. |
| Lake Wood |
| Monitor large mature ash trees for ash dieback on Slopes and banks. Monitor recent planting of small leaves lime, cherry, oak, hornbeam, tulip tree and larch. Cut back lake path edges to ease access. Cut Lake bank edges each autumn to reduce organic matter entering the lake. |
| Lake |
| Keep lake clear of debris, fallen trees and rubbish. Maintain access path around the lake, repair when required. Rake and remove leaves from the path surface to prolong its life. Monitor and record wildlife. Regulate lake levels. Run solar powered aerator to reduce algal blooms and increase dissolved oxygen levels in water column. Distribute kiln dried powdered chalk annually from boat between November – February. This is to regulate PH of water and help reduce organic material on the bed of the lake. |
| Forest school education area |
| Carry out regular inspections of the forest school, (especially prior to use), carry out annual tree inspection. Mow and strim area to reduce nettles during growing season. Promote area for use by schools, nurseries, and other private groups. Lock gate at night during summertime to discourage anti-social behaviour and vandalism. Litter pick. Inspect furniture, fire pit and boundary fence. Repair or replace if required. |
| Brockhill Stream and stream wood |
| Primarily non-intervention area of stream. However, if required remove large blockages allowing normal flow. Maintain stream dipping areas at the southern end of stream for use by education groups. A section will be identified during summer of 2023 to open up by removing vegetation to create lighter conditions. This is a recommendation of the KWT scoping report. |
| Ponds |
| Maintain at least 20% open water in the ponds by removing encroaching plants such as fool's watercress and yellow flag iris. Monitor algal blooms and species associated with small ponds. |
| Old oak field |
| Monitor the establishment of scrub (30% is optimum) habitat around large |

veteran oak. Graze lightly in Spring, late summer. Looking for Scrubby, tussock assemblage.

40 steps meadow

- Install temporary electric fence on the boundary line with 40 Steps field between February – late August. This is to keep grazing animals off the meadow while in flower, pedestrian access will be maintained. (*Green hay can be cut and baled for use on other parts of the 40 steps Meadow and 40 Steps Field*)
- Manually cut creeping thistle, dock, nettle where control is needed.
- Remove electric fencing In September for Grazing by cattle
- Cut, rake and collect other areas of the 40 Steps meadow manually in autumn to reduce residual nutrient levels in the soil.
- Carry out monthly bee survey March - October, compare data to previous years.

40 steps Field

- Graze area is early spring and summer dependant on sward.
- Top with flail areas of creeping thistle to 150mm.
-
- Cut, rake and bale agreed areas to keep grass growth low and ready for autumn scarification.
- Scarify the areas and sow yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) autumn 2023. Monitor spring growth. Use green hay collected from 40 steps meadow and spread in other areas of 40 steps field.
- Hay cut July/august if grass is useable. Give bales to Brockhill school farm.



- Graze areas October – February, monitor ground for damage, remove cattle before poaching occurs in wet months.
- Monitor plant community and grassland structure.
- Carry out monthly bee survey March - October, compare data to

| |
|--|
| previous years. |
| Marsh Field |
| Lightly Graze spring summer occasionally. Graze more heavy late summer early autumn with cattle. Remove cattle before poaching occurs in wet months. Monitor plant community and grassland structure. Carry out monthly bee survey, compare data to previous years |
| School Field |
| Graze throughout the year with sheep. Grazing may also be carried out by cattle depending on available grazing. Monitor scrub levels. Monitor plant community and grassland structure. Treat Spear thistle with appropriate selective herbicide. Pull ragwort. Carry out monthly bee survey, compare data to previous years. Plant 2 - 3 standard trees to create a parkland feel to the field. Fence the trees to protect from Grazing. |
| School Scrub |
| Grazing should be enough to create a diverse structure of scrub and other plants. Manual cutting should be adopted to help achieve this structure if not by grazing. |
| Bees Bank |
| Keep areas of open and bare ground suitable for solitary bees and wasps especially <i>Andrena bucephala</i> and <i>Andrena labiate</i> these are two scarce solitary bees found at Brockhill Country Park during summer surveys in 2016. Treat Spear thistle with appropriate selective herbicide. Pull ragwort. |
| Pauls Hedge and thorn Hedge |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pauls Hedge, monitor hedge plants and standard tree growth. Water in summer if required, make sure protective hedge fence is intact. Repair if broken. - Thorn hedge. This hedge was flail cut in 2022. Monitor growth, possibly cut next in 2025/6 by flail. Cut to at least 3m wide 3m high |
| South wood fringe |
| Remove all diseased ash trees on the woodland bank of compartment 4aa and replant with flowering trees, wild cherry, wild rose, crab apple, spindle. |
| North Wood Fringe |
| Remove all diseased ash trees on the woodland bank of compartment 4aa and replant with flowering trees; wild cherry, wild rose, crab apple, spindle. |

SITE MAINTENANCE (Maintenance of Equipment, Furniture, estate infrastructure and Buildings)

Daily Checks

A daily site inspection is undertaken by site staff. This follows a standard protocol, site staff have created an aid-memoir to ensure all aspects of the check are completed consistently. Consideration is given specifically to the car park area (including the entrance drive), 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 park. A copy of the site inspection checklist is on display in the office along with the daily sign sheet.

Brockhill 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 in diary 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/over flow 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 |
| Dog Bins | daily | Empty when required |
| 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 W.C's, gutters, |
| Badger room | Weekly | Check building for general condition |

| | | |
|---------------|----------------------------|---|
| | | report any damage or repairs required to AMEY. Clean if required by Ranger staff. |
| Trees | After Gales | Check for dangerous hanging branches especially over footpaths. If tree surgery required. Call the Site Ranger. After closing footpath. |
| Forest school | Daily | Check for rubbish while on litter pick, fires, Broken glass, illegal camping. Report incidents in log book. Call police if required. |
| Play area | Daily/ Annually (by ROSPA) | See play area inspection sheet |
| Lake area | weekly | Ensure 2 x lifebuoys are in place and in working order. |

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, legionella, and PAT electrical testing. These duties are the responsibility of the KCC Total facilities management contractor SKANSKA.
- An annual check by RoSPRA (The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) of the children's play area is carried out.
- Annual tree inspection by an external contractor for all trees in Red zone areas or those areas where the public have day-to-day access;
- Compliance checks and testing of the toilet block and other buildings are carried out by SKANSKA under the KCC wide Total Facilities Management contract, such tests and checks include;
 - Fire risk assessment
 - Asbestos
 - Electrical testing
 - Water Hygiene
 - Emergency lighting
 - PAT testing

TREE INSPECTION

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 three 3 years, | Rangers |
| High risk | Red | Well used assembly points, pedestrian routes, roads, footpaths, buildings, car parks and woodland boundary abutting properties and the highway | Ground based visual inspection of individual trees | Frequent - Annual | Qualified Arboriculturalist |
| 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) |

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
- COSHH
- The Fire Safety Act 2021.

In addition to this the country park considers:

- Occupational health.
- Safety in work the environment.
- Safe use of hand tools.
- Safe use of powered tools; and
- Vehicle use.
- Volunteer workers and volunteer policy.

Any accidents/incidents/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 completed online and sent to H&S team head office to be recorded and reviewed by divisional H&S lead and at divisional level H&S meetings.

The Ranger team take a lead in the health and safety at Brockhill the Country Park, associated buildings and the play area. The café operator takes responsibility for all health and safety regarding the café areas.

Standard practices

Brockhill Country Park has its own on-site 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.

Standing instructions for annual inspections including tree inspections, machinery and equipment, 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 complete a permit to work and submit risk assessments and method statements for works carried out on site. Construction design management (CDM) regulations are in place to protect the client, contractor the public when required. The environment is protected through KCC's ISO 14001 accreditation. Contract value tiers are 8k< one quote required, 8K>3 quotes. For larger contracts over the value of 50K> they go through a competitive tender process and the KCC financial Portal. Kent County Council aims to use local contractors and materials in all contracts where possible.

Risk Assessments 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 or 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 and required during any one year. All staff should undertake core training that includes:

- Lone working
- Dealing with difficult customers
- Manual handling
- Risk Assessments
- Basic Fire Awareness
- Prevention of terrorism
- GDPR
- Information Governance

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.

Site Security

All buildings are covered by an intruder alarm and includes a "redcare" system. If an alarm is activated, we have a security contractor who responds to the callout during out of hours.

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.

VISITOR MANAGEMENT

2021 Survey

Kent County Council commissioned a report into visitor use of its Country Parks in 2016. The surveys took place across parks owned and managed by KCC including Brockhill Country Park. It took the form of face to face interviews across a selection of days of the week from the end of August to the middle of September a total of 94 visitors surveys were carried out. A snapshot of the surveys is below;

- Over 50% stayed for between 1-2 hours
- 60% were in groups of 2-3
- Over 75% had been to Brockhill more than 10 times
- 95% of people came to have a walk, walk the dog, visit the café.
- 75% found on the day the park to be friendly, clean and tidy and were satisfied with their visit.
- The top 4 words used to describe Brockhill were relaxing, fun, peaceful and beautiful.

Visitor access

Walking routes and Public Rights of Way

One main public footpath runs across the western pasture to the Brockhill Stream. A second public footpath and bridleway runs along the southern edge of the site. Within the Country Park there are three internal way-marked trails. The Blue Route is a short half an hour walk around the Victorian Lake, through the mature trees. All the paths on this route are surfaced, although the walk has some steep slopes. The Red Route spurs from the Blue Route to lead through the grazed valley paths are grassed, there are some gates. This route provides an ideal opportunity to investigate wildlife families and children. The (Green Route) is the longest

Visitor services

Brockhill Country Park is managed for public recreation and nature conservation. The site opens at 9 am every day except Christmas Day and closes at dusk. Locking times are displayed in the car parks. The Country Park supports recreational facilities; Including a café, toilet block, play area, classroom and external display boards on the site history and on its nature conservation value.

The cafe provides food and drink facilities at the acclaimed Brockhill Café, established in 1997. The café serves a wide range of delicious and affordable food using local ingredients. The café has become one of the most popular vegetarian outlets in East

Kent. The café is open daily from 10 am until 5.30 pm between April and October and 10 am until 4 pm between November and March.

Car Park and season tickets

The surfaced pay-and-display car park charges £1.70 per day Monday to Friday and £2.70 at weekends and Bank Holidays. Visitors can also pay by using a mobile phone or the ‘*pay by phone*’ app. A season ticket is available the Annual Season Ticket Can be purchased anytime for £55 and will run from 1 year from the date of purchase.

Blue Badge Season Ticket

An £8 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 at Brockhill Country Park.

Site Leaflet

A site leaflet is available providing a site map showing the way-marked trails and footpaths. Recommended activities include a walk in the park to relax and provide exercise, picnicking in one of the quiet areas of the park, letting the kids let off steam in the play area.

https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/3565/Map-of-Brockhill-Country-Park.pdf

Dogs

The site welcomes responsible dog walkers. To help others enjoy their visit, the site staff ask that dogs are kept on leads in car park and when in with grazing sheep. Dogs should always be under close control at all times we expect owners ‘scoop the poop’ and use the two available dog bins.

INTERPRETATION AND MARKETING

Example of interpretation board

A Home for Wings of Lace

Stalking the rapids of these 'Cascades' is a voracious predator, the largest of its kind in Britain. Spending most of its time hunting along the water's edge, it seizes its prey and sucks out its innards!

But this is no meat-eating fish or carnivorous mammal. This is the larva of the giant lacewing, Britain's largest version of these attractive insects. In the water the larvae are hard to spot but from late spring they develop into adults and take to the wing at dusk. Their wingspan of around 5cm makes an impressive sight.

The Cascades make the perfect habitat for the Giant Lacewing. The steps in the stream, created to make an attractive feature by the Victorian gardeners, have an interesting side effect. The tumbling water is able to absorb greater amounts of oxygen, resulting in huge numbers of the lacewing's favourite prey, the larvae of midges and mayflies.

There is a drawback to being so big and impressive though. As adults the Giant Lacewing's size makes it a slow and clumsy flyer, so it might take out the tasty morsel. But the lacewing has a trick up its sleeve. Special ultrasound detectors on the wings allow it to sense the echolocation of bats. At the last moment, it is able to close its wings, drop out of the way and avoid becoming prey itself.


Giant lacewing

'Keeping Up With the Jones'

The Victorian people were lots different from ourselves. The well heeled were keen to demonstrate how successful they were. Rather than having a bigger or better car than their neighbours, one of the ways they did this was to build an impressive garden. A number of other Victorian parks nearby, such as Sandringham Park and the America Gardens, were created about the same time. It is likely that William Townley was trying to keep up with the Jones!


The cascade which you see here are one part of an extensive water system. It was created to be an impressive feature of the Victorian pleasure gardens. The whole system of sluices and weirs took several decades to finish. The lake was created between 1845 and 1860 with a 30m wide and 4m deep dam blocking the Brookhill stream.

King Alfonso of Spain designed water systems to back up water into lakes and impressive waterfalls, such as here at the cascades. William Townley was friends with the King and it may be that he adopted the idea to use here at Brookhill.



BROCKHILL COUNTRY PARK

Designed and produced by The Design Company. Call 01235 533333 or visit www.designcompany.co.uk.
Kent is a National Trust partner. www.kentnationaltrust.co.uk



The Veteran oak in this fenced area

This area has been fenced to ease pressure on the large oak tree at its centre. Trees showing signs of aging such as this one are known as a veteran. They often have hollows, splits and rips, water pockets and weaknesses within their structure, which can lead to structural failure and limb loss. Therefore we ask visitors to stay outside the fenced area. This will reduce risk, enabling site managers to retain the oak for its landscape, cultural, and ecological importance. The UK has more veteran and ancient trees than most other countries in Northern Europe. Management of them at Brockhill Country Park helps to maintain the site's status as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS), which are areas especially important for wildlife.



A haven for wildlife

Large veteran and ancient oaks staggeringly can support at least 2,300 species. Including invertebrates, fungi, birds, lichens, and mammals. They are known as 'keystone' ecological features, meaning without them the ecosystems they are in would not exist. This oak is home to roosting bats in its hollows and cavities. To halt and reverse significant declines seen in the last few decades, bats in the UK have gained legal protection from harm or disturbance. Rich complex ecosystems such as this oak's, underpin and help to regulate our planet's living system, supporting the existence of life. Creating space around the tree gives it the opportunity to grow old gracefully, and for the surrounding fenced area to become a refuge for wildlife.

Common subroute (see)

Kent Country Parks

Thank you for your understanding. Enjoy your visit today, from the Brockhill Country Park team.



Produced by: Margaret Williams - 0824 771 771



Weasel

Watch quietly

If you watch quietly you might see a wily weasel scampering across the grass looking for mice to catch. This is the weasel's picnic area too!

The Natural Stream


The Brockhill stream has now emerged from the Wilderness Garden. It has shaken off all the alterations made to it and once again follows its natural course in the valley bottom. The woodland surrounding the stream is shown on maps from centuries past and you may spot several ancient trees. Pipistrelle bats hunt along the woodland and the stream itself is brimming with wildlife including caddis flies and mayflies.



Mayfly

Kingfisher

You can't mistake our most striking bird for any other. The stunning iridescent colour is actually produced from light reflected from the surface of the feathers, in much the same way as the rainbow effect on bubbles is produced. The bird's back appears as a range of blue and green colours depending on how the light catches it, but the pigment in the feathers is actually brown. You might well see it hunting. The bird has to keep active, having to eat its own body weight in food each day.



Kingfisher

Several interpretive panels and information swing posts have been installed around the park through funding from the Rail Link Initiative Scheme. These panels contain information about the history and ecology of the park and are used by education groups on a regular basis.

Marketing

The site is advertised by roadside brown tourism signage and is marked on the Ordnance Survey map as a Country Park with trails. In addition, Brockhill Country Park has its own pages on the KCC website. Brockhill along with other Kent Country Parks has a dedicated Marketing officer. This post is responsible for the coordination of promotion and advertising events, school groups, team building as well as promoting the Country Parks locally, regionally and to staff and services within Kent County Council.

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/kent-country-parks/brockhill-country-park>

The country park also has its own Facebook and Instagram pages which are managed by site staff.

<https://m.facebook.com/BrockhillCountryPark/>

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Brockhill Volunteer Team

This team is organised by the Rangers. The volunteer team is currently numbering 7 individuals from different walks of lives and backgrounds. The volunteer team undertake works to restore historic features, conservation tasks, site infrastructure maintenance, design and construction, planting and many other activities. Generally, the team meet every Thursday. In 2022 the volunteer team contributed over 2,075 hours. We also have a long-term special needs volunteer who has been with us weekly since 2003. His input into the management of Brockhill and other sites in East Kent is enormous.



Groups

We enjoy regular visits and support local Cub, Scout, Beaver and Guide groups for all kinds of activities. Where they either meet socially for fun or to carry out self-led badge work. There is a charge for groups who choose a ranger led activity such as campfire crafts.

Brockhill Park Performing Arts College

Brockhill Performing arts College uses the country park for regular PE lessons, Cross country, and Orienteering. The school also uses the site for many science-based visits and classes. The schools farm has a long history of grazing the land that now makes up the Country Park. We work closely with the school and farm on many issues with a priority being the effective conservation grazing of the Brockhill valley.

SUSTAINABILITY

The Kent County Councils Environmental Policy and strategy.

https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/10669/KCC-Environmental-Policy.pdf

The KCC environment policy support the priorities set out in the Kent Environment Strategy – a strategy for environment, health and economy 2016, the Kent & Medway Energy & Low Emissions Strategy 2020 and the Kent Nature Partnership Biodiversity Strategy 2020.

https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/10676/KES_Final.pdf

Kent County Council recognises the Climate Emergency. The policy 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 Councils decisions and policies on their estate travel and transport, procurement, construction, workforce and role within the community, all of which are of relevant to Brockhill Country Park.