Buchan Country Park Management Plan January 1st 2026 – December 31st 2030



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1. Introduction

This management plan for Buchan Country Park will run for a period of five years from 1st January 2026. It supersedes the previous plan which expired on 31st December 2025.

Since 2010 the park has held the Green Flag Award (GFA). The award is the benchmark national standard for parks in the UK. In 2011 the Friends of Buchan Park committee (FoBCP) was formed to promote the park and run events. Following a break caused by the COVID 19 pandemic lockdowns of 2020, a new committee was formed in July 2024. As well as the committee there are volunteers who undertake practical tasks under the supervision of rangers. These groups are made up of local people who enjoy the park and are keen to promote and improve the site.

A five-year work programme is included (see Appendix 8.1, not included on web version), which will be underpinned by detailed Annual Work Plans (AWP) (see glossary) produced each year.'

2. Vision

Buchan Country Park will continue to serve as a flagship site for West Sussex County Council's (WSCC) Countryside Service. Through careful and proactive management, the park will deliver on its Higher-Level Stewardship (HLS) commitments (see glossary), enhancing habitats and supporting biodiversity. These efforts align closely with the objectives of the WSCC Climate Change Strategy 2020–2030, contributing to a more resilient and sustainable natural environment.

A well-structured inspection and maintenance routine will ensure the park remains safe, clean, and accessible for all visitors, especially as footfall continues to grow. Strong community involvement, including collaboration with volunteers and partner organisations, will be central to maintaining exacting standards and fostering a sense of shared stewardship.

3. Policies and Legislation

In 1980 the site was designated a Country Park under the 1968 Countryside Act. The park was officially opened on 20th May 1982. By-laws for the park were updated and adopted in 2013 (see Appendix 8.3, see separate document on web page).

Approximately 17ha of Buchan Country Park forms part of the Buchan Hill Ponds Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (Appendix 8.4, not included on web version), which was originally designated in 1954 and the boundary extended in 1985 under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). The site is principally designated for its outstanding dragonfly assemblage (see Appendix 8.2 Map 3).

The area of park outside the SSSI is designated a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) (see Appendix 8.2 Map 3), previously known as Sites of Nature Conservation Importance. LWS status is a non-statutory designation that is administered by the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (SxBRC) (see glossary).

Most of the park lies within the High Weald National Landscape, previously known as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) (see Appendix 8.2 Map 3), the legal framework for which is provided by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000 (CRoW Act) (see glossary).

The heathland at the park is designated as open access land under the CRoW Act (see Appendix 8.2 Map 4).

The habitat management prescriptions in this plan are underpinned by a Natural England approved HLS agreement, number AG1626504. The HLS agreement includes a Forestry Commission (FC) approved 10-year Woodland Management Plan (WMP), dated 31st March 2023 to 31st March 2033, felling licence (019/222/2023).

Douster Pond is designated a Reservoir and as such is covered by Schedule 4 of the Flood and Water Management Act (2010). The Environment Agency (EA) is the enforcement authority. Under Sections 10 to 12 the supervising engineer conducts an annual inspection and report. The area panel engineer is charged with producing a 10-year inspection report. The last section 10 inspection was conducted on 10th March 2026. WSCC is responsible for the safety of the embankment, maintaining monthly records of water levels, monitoring seepage, and implementing recommendations from the annual statements and 10-year inspection. Under the Aquatic Animal Health Regulations (2009) Douster Pond is a registered fishery with the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS), Registration number EW048-D-519F.

Due to the presence of non-native Pumpkinseed fish (*Lepomis gibbosus*) WSCC holds a licence, E ILFA 753 v3, under the Import of Live Fish Act (1980). This licence is valid for an indefinite period.

WSCC Facilities Management is responsible for the condition and structure of all buildings and the car park ensuring that all works are compliant with the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and The Equality Act (2010).

Under the Highways Act (1980) WSCC Highways and Transport is responsible for the maintainable bridge over the A264 (bridge 1590).

Under the Occupiers Liability Act (1957 & 1984) WSCC is obliged to hold public liability insurance and has a duty to take reasonable steps to give warnings of known dangers or discouraging persons from incurring risks.

4. Description

4.1 General Information

4.1.1 Location and Site Boundaries

Location – Buchan Country Park is situated in the Parish of Colgate, in the District of Horsham and County of West Sussex.

Ordnance Survey National Grid reference: TQ243341 (centre of site) and TQ246348 (main entrance). Main entrance postcode: RH11 9HQ. (see Appendix 8.2 Map 1).

Boundaries - To the north, the park is bounded by the A2220 and to the north-east by a WSCC owned field. To the east, the park is bounded by Crawley Borough Council (CBC) land. This boundary is partly fenced with a post and rail fence. To the west, stone markers and a post and rail fence marks the boundary with the privately owned Holmbush Estate. Cottesmore Golf Course lies on the southern boundary delineated by a hedge and fence.

4.1.2 Land ownership / tenure (see Appendix 8.2 Map 2)

Buchan Country Park, including 55 metres of the drive leading to private houses, is owned freehold by WSCC. A small area of the park (0.138 ha) is leased to Cottesmore Golf Course and is not covered by this plan.

WSCC has a rolling annual management agreement on 4.2 hectares of CBC land at Target Hill on the eastern boundary of the park.

Crawley Angling Society (CAS) has a 10-year license with WSCC which allows its members to fish on Douster Pond SSSI. The license covers the period 19th October 2022 - 15th June 2032. Fishing is permitted daily. Night fishing is permitted Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday nights, and members must hold a CAS night fishing permit. A close season operates from 15th March to 15th June inclusive. CAS bailiffs patrol the site.

There is a permissive path licence agreement between WSCC and Holmbush Estate enabling access from the park to public bridleway 1550/1 for pedestrians and cyclists.

Cuppa-Love has a licence to sell coffee from within the Countryside Centre at the park.

WSCC has the following Easements (see glossary) in force.

- grantee BT for an underground BT cable in the car park.
- grantee Southern Water for underground water main.
- grantee UK Power for cutting of trees/hedges adjacent to installed electric lines.

4.1.3 Management / organisational infrastructure

The park is currently managed by 1 full-time Senior Countryside Ranger and 1 full-time Countryside Ranger, line managed by the Countryside Team Leader within WSCC's Countryside Service. Other ranger staff assist at BCP through the weekend rota; The service currently has an apprentice who assists with volunteers and other practical works.

A team of regular volunteers assists the rangers for practical habitat management work. Other external groups also provide practical volunteering assistance. Primarily the Sussex Wildlife Trust's Gatwick Greenspace Partnership (GGP) who provides 4-6 work parties per year and Community Payback

Service / Unpaid Work, who bring a weekly group varying in numbers. In the last year there has been an increase in volunteer groups from local firms who offer employees time to undertake volunteering activities to benefit the local community.

Specialist works are carried out by contractors.

Staff and volunteers make use of the office facilities at the visitor centre. There is also the workshop and tool store plus storage space in a fenced yard.

The Senior Countryside Ranger role includes that of Site Responsible Person (SRP) and is responsible for routine checks such as fire extinguishers, risk assessments and Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) reports, the schedules for which are detailed in the BCP Health and Safety Checklist. Inspections required under the Health & Safety Act such as quarterly emergency lighting tests, annual electrical safety check, portable appliance testing, annual fire extinguisher test, and annual water hygiene test are co-ordinated by WSCC Facilities Management and are currently carried out by a contract with Bellrock Ltd.

4.1.4 Site infrastructure

The countryside centre, car park, boiler house, workshop, vehicle yard, as well as the sewage treatment works are situated in compartment 9 (see Appendix 8.2 Map 5). The car park has spaces for up to 90 vehicles including 2 disabled bays and parking for motorbikes and is accessible to coaches on request. The potential to increase the number of car parking spaces is being considered.

The countryside centre houses the ranger's office, the Cuppa-Love coffee shop, history, and wildlife related displays, and provides a venue for meetings as well as facilities for events. On the end of the building there are public toilets. Compartments 1 and 9 are separated from the remainder of the park by the A264 Crawley bypass. A highway maintainable bridge suitable for heavy vehicles allows vehicular and public access over the bypass to the rest of the park.

The countryside centre building, workshops and yard are covered by 24-hour CCTV surveillance cameras and intruder alarms managed by a contracted security firm.

The site includes an extensive network of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and other paths. Public footpath Colgate 1545 passes through the park linking Broadfield to the northeast and Cottesmore Golf Course in the south. There is also a permissive path enabling access from the park to the Kilnwood Vale estate, and Colgate village via public bridleway 1550/1 on adjacent land owned by Holmbush Estate (see Appendix 8.2 Map 4). There is a system of surfaced paths that form 2 waymarked trails. The short blue route (1.25 km) was resurfaced in 2025 and is suitable for wheelchairs and push chairs, the longer red route (2.5 km) includes some steeper inclines making it less accessible. Numerous informal woodland paths are also available (see Appendix 8.2 Map 4).

Two earth fill embankments retain the water creating Douster and Island Ponds. A boathouse and castellated spillway are situated adjacent to Douster Pond.



Benches, picnic tables, BBQ stands, and several wooden sculptures are sited around the park. There is a combined litter and recycling bin as well as a hot ash BBQ bin located at the picnic area. There are 12 dog waste bins located strategically around the park. Thirty-four fishing swims, twelve have fishing platforms including 1 that is accessible for disabled anglers are located around Douster Pond.

4.1.5 Map coverage

1:50000 - Landranger 187 (Dorking and Reigate)

1:25000 - Explorer 134 (Crawley and Horsham)

4.1.6 Photographic coverage

Aerial photographs, held at the county records office and available to staff using WSCCs online corporate mapping system have been taken since 1947 with the most recent coverage in 2025. There is an ad-hoc collection of ground photography held at the park.

LiDAR (see glossary) records from an aerial survey of the Weald Forest ridge are held by the county archaeologist and are also available to staff using Earthlight. In 2025 rangers commissioned a Lidar survey to cover the Stop Butts and World War 2 trenches in Middle Covert.

4.1.7 Compartments

Buchan Country Park is divided into 9 management compartments based on the HLS land parcels (shown as a 4-digit number below) (see Appendix 8.2 Map 5).

- Compartment 1 – Countryside Centre Woodland, Roundabout meadow, Countryside centre meadow, Orchard, and Phil Haskell Wild Garden – 3964.
- Compartment 2 – Spruce Hill – 1234.
- Compartment 3 - Plantation – 1085.
- Compartment 4 - The Golf Course Meadow – 4079.
- Compartment 5 – The Common – 3789.
- Compartment 6 - Douster & Island Ponds including wet woodland – 4719.
- Compartment 7 – Middle Covert – 2411.
- Compartment 8 – Target Hill Heath – 6819.
- Compartment 9 – Entrance drive, yard, and car park (not included in HLS).

4.2 Environmental Information

4.2.1 Geology and Soil

The park is situated on deposits of fine Upper Tunbridge Wells Sand with small areas of coarser sands and clay. From visual assessment the soils appear to be virtually all Podsols (see glossary) except in the valley floor where alluviation (see glossary) has taken place.

4.2.2 Topography

The park is sited largely in the valley of Douster Brook, which runs south to north. The hill ridge to the west is Spruce Hill (maximum elevation 110m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD)) and to the east is Target Hill (maximum elevation 120m AOD).

4.2.3 Hydrology

The importance of the site's hydrology is reflected in the SSSI status. The park includes two ponds, Douster (2.2 hectares) and Island (1.2 hectares). Together with the adjacent privately owned Island Pond (referred to locally as Boundary Pond to prevent confusion) on the western boundary they form, according to the SSSI citation, the best example in West Sussex of ponds on acid Tunbridge Wells' sands.

The immediate catchment area for the ponds consists of Cottesmore Golf Course, Target Hill, and Spruce Hill. The soils in the catchment area are acidic and nutrient poor, and the water quality reflects this. Following water analysis, the EA have stated that the water is among the most acidic and nutrient poor in the area. All the ponds maintain a healthy mesotrophic (see glossary) condition. Douster Brook flows from Douster Pond over a castellated spillway into the River Mole and onto the River Thames.

4.3 Biological

Buchan Hill Ponds is designated a SSSI for its dragonfly assemblage and a nationally uncommon wet woodland type. The SSSI comprises three units surrounding each of the main water bodies. The SSSI are home to two nationally uncommon species, Hairy Dragonfly (*Brachytron pratense*) and Brilliant Emerald (*Somatochlora metallica*). The Downy Emerald (*Cordulia aenea*) is another notable dragonfly found at the park. The last professional Odonata survey (see glossary) in 2016 identified 20 species. Since then, 2 further species have been recorded; Lesser Emperor (*Anax parthenope*) in 2019 and 4 records of Willow Emerald Damselfly (*Chalcolestes viridis*) between 2019 and 2024. In 2023 NE revised the condition assessment of the wet woodland feature to favourable. The pond features are currently classed as favourable improving. An updated professional Odonata survey will be commissioned as part of this management plan. Other professional surveys include a 2016 aquatic macrophyte and macroinvertebrate survey of the Buchan Hills SSSI.

Habitat surveys conducted by WSCC Countryside Rangers as well as ad hoc records, are kept by WSCC and are shared with the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre via iRecord (see glossary).

Compartment 1

This block is the most diverse area in the park for native tree species and includes 2 small areas of acidic semi-natural grassland, the Phil Haskell Wild Garden, and a small orchard. Much of the woodland area is Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*). However coppiced Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) dominates close to Douster Brook through the SSSI. Due to little foot fall, there is a dense understory. Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) was regularly treated until 2023 with Asulox but is now managed manually. The semi-improved grassland of the Roundabout Meadow, although small, is the most diverse area of grassland in the park. An increasing population of Common Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) and Broad-leaved Helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*) makes it a key area for pollinators.

The woodland is relatively undisturbed. Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) and Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) are regularly recorded. The presence of these species is likely to be because this is the least disturbed area of the park.

In 2021 a Hazel Dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) nest box survey site, was set up comprising of thirty nest boxes in an area of Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice. This site has been monitored by a licensed Hazel Dormice surveyor, and in autumn 2025 three dormice nests and a single dormouse were observed for the first time.

Power lines run west to east and regular pruning of the surrounding trees has created a linear glade which is now formally managed as a ride as part of the approved woodland management plan (WMP) 2022. This sunny strip is attractive to insects. Brimstone (*Gonepteryx rhamni*) butterflies are common due to the presence of Alder Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*). To the north of the powerlines is a small wildlife pond.

The Phil Haskell Wild Garden has a diverse mix of species. There are natives such as Hazel *and* Oak (*Quercus* sp.) and exotics like Cedar (*Cedrus* sp.) and *Azalea*. Most of the *Rhododendron* has been cleared. The garden is fenced and dog free. There are four small ponds which are important for breeding Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*), Palmate Newt (*Triturus helveticus*), and Broad-bodied Chaser (*Libellula depressa*) dragonfly.

The small orchard is adjacent to the entrance drive. Snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*) are a significant feature in early spring. A project funded by the FoBCP has increased light to the orchard, brought the original trees back into a pruning regime and new trees of rare local varieties have been planted.

Compartment 2

The northern half of this compartment is a relatively open area dominated by scattered mature Silver Birch. The southern section comprises mature Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) coppice with a small amount of Silver Birch scrub and isolated *Rhododendron ponticum*. Some Sweet Chestnut coppice has died probably because of water borne *Phytophthora* fungus infection; this has created a large amount of standing deadwood which is attractive to Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*). Bluebell (*Hyacithoides non-scriptus*) are increasing each year, and this will be aided by the creation of a 660m woodland ride through the compartment as part of the woodland management plan. Several large Spruces (*Picea spp.*) have been felled to allow future veteran Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) to develop. Bracken will continue to be controlled manually by volunteers to prevent it dominating the field layer.

Compartment 3

This area, up until the 1980s, was planted with a variety of tree species. The management work in recent years has been to restore it to a more open habitat and broadleaved woodland. Located in the northwest corner is the privately owned Island (Boundary) Pond which although not part of the park, forms part of the Buchan Hill Ponds SSSI. WSCC ownership extends to the median high-water mark of the eastern shore.

Historically the Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) in this area has been thinned to create a more open habitat for hunting dragonflies.

Alder Buckthorn is common, and Brimstone abundant in the spring. Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*) has been recorded hunting over the pond.

There is a dense block of Western Hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) which has been retained for comparison to the more open habitat elsewhere in the compartment. Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*) and Fircrest (*Regulus ignicapillus*) are regularly recorded in this area during the breeding bird season.

The central section of this compartment comprises widely scattered mature Scots Pine, Oak, Silver Birch, and birch scrub. Growing on rising ground, the pines are a feature of the landscape. Wood Ants (*Formica rufa*) are abundant but are restricted to this small area. The Oaks were planted in the late 1980's, however the seed was not of local provenance, and growth has been slow on the infertile acidic soil. Thinning work will favour trees with the potential to become future veterans.

An area of just over 1ha in the middle of the compartment is now being managed as lowland heath. Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) is giving way to Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*). This area of the plantation and an area immediately adjacent holds a small amount of Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), a plant which is not found throughout the wider park.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (*Dryobates minor*) has been recorded in the wet woodland by the stream near the western boundary. The latest recording being a female observed in the spring of 2025. A woodland ride is being established within the compartment.

Two areas of established Birch and Sweet Chestnut scrub are being managed on an 8-year coppice regime and are enclosed with post and wire deer netting.



Nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*) has historically bred within this area. Recent scrub management works, combined with the creation of enclosed zones which minimize disturbance, have significantly enhanced the suitability of the habitat and improved the likelihood of successful breeding in the future.

The southern end of the compartment consists of an undisturbed area of broadleaved trees and glades; Bluebells are now flourishing, and a scrub layer of mixed species woodland is developing. A mixed species hedgerow was planted along the southern boundary in 2015; protected by temporary fencing, it is now starting to establish. In 2022 Hazel Dormice were recorded using this hedge, with a single summer nest being found in situ, during winter clearance works.

Compartment 4

Until 1985 this area of grassland was part of Cottesmore Golf Course. Appropriate management over the years has improved both flora and fauna diversity, however flowering plants have been slow to colonise. A 3-year meadow restoration plan started in 2024 when 2 areas totalling 0.25ha were prepared and seeded with Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*). In 2025 a wildflower seed mix was sown to further improve diversity.

The meadow has a good invertebrate population, including Large Skipper (*Ochlodes sylvanus*), Small Skipper (*Thymelicus sylvestris*), Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina*), and Ringlet (Aphantopus hyperantus) butterflies. Also noteworthy are Roesel's Bush-cricket (*Metrioptera roeselii*) and Long-winged Conehead (*Conocephalus discolor*). Edge area is left uncut each year to ensure the invertebrates can continue to thrive.

Adder (*Vipera berus*) use Bramble (*Rubus fruiticosus* agg.) patches within the grassland as hibernacula.

To the south and west, the meadow is bounded by an over mature hedge which contains a range of native woody species. Aspen (*Populus tremula*) and Oak are present as standards and there is a developing thicket of Aspen suckers.

Compartment 5

This area is dominated by Silver Birch scrub with scattered mature Oak. Self-sown Silver Birch is regularly coppiced on an 8-year rotation, and a large part of this compartment is now fenced with post and wire netting to encourage dense regrowth and reduce disturbance to wildlife. The varied structure is attractive to a variety of wildlife especially birds and reptiles. The area contains 2 small ponds and the only specimen of Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*) in the park.

Compartment 6

This compartment forms part of the Buchan Hill Ponds SSSI. Douster Pond is fringed by an Alder, Oak, Scots Pine, and Silver Birch canopy. To the north lies the retaining earth fill embankment. This area is

the busiest in the park. Ground vegetation suppressed by compaction is slowly returning following improvements made to bank stability and path maintenance. There are several exotic conifers including Chile Pine (*Araucaria araucana*), Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), Lawson Cypress, (*Chamaecyparis Lawsoniana*), Japanese Cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*) and Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*). Three impressive Corsican Pine (*Pinus nigra*) located near the boat house were topped in 2010 for safety reasons.

An area of dry lowland heath on the north-west side includes the park's main picnic area. A mixture of Heather, young Birch and established Birch woodland surround the grassland. Evidence of the area's industrial past is shown by several mine-pits (see glossary). These shallow depressions are all that remain of a shaft that was worked for iron ore.

A 2002 EA Douster Pond fish survey found that 'the fish population appears healthy' and that 'significant stocking of fish would be inappropriate'. In view of the report conclusion, no stocking of the lake has been permitted. Although a difficult water to fish, anglers report favourably on the water. Several Carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) weighing more than 30lb, Bream (*Abramis brama*) and Pike (*Esox lucius*) are often caught.

There is a colony of Common Toad (*Bufo bufo*). Numbers of this decreasing amphibian dropped in the late 1990's but appear to have recovered with good numbers of toadlets being seen in the park each year.

A good variety of dragonfly and damselfly species can be seen particularly on Island Pond and the southern end of Douster Pond, including Downy Emerald, Brown Hawker (*Aeshna grandis*) and Black-tailed Skimmer (*Orthetrum cancellatum*), though none in the quantities seen at Island (Boundary) Pond.

Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*) breed annually and Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) are regularly seen.

Compartment 7

Middle Covert predominantly comprises of even-aged Silver Birch and Scots Pine woodland with scattered Oaks. Glades are dominated by Bracken, Bramble, and smaller amounts of Bilberry (*Vaccinum myrtilis*), Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), and Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*). Several of the pines that are of a considerable age are being retained, with younger ones being thinned as part of the WMP to favour a mixed broad-leaved canopy. A veteran Beech located towards the centre of the compartment has been fenced off to protect its root system. Whilst the tree is in decline on its north side, retrenchment and tip pruning carried out in 2019 has ensured the remaining crown has good leaf growth.



This compartment also has a rich assemblage of fungi.

Compartment 8

This compartment is mostly restored dry, lowland heath dominated by Heather and Silver Birch saplings. A strip of recently coppiced Silver Birch and Sallow (*Salix caprea*) along the top of the ridge will be managed as low scrub. Along with an established dead hedge this will help separate the heath from the path. A very few lingering *Rhododendron* confined to isolated shrubs are regularly treated and removed. Scattered clumps of Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and Bramble are also present. Mature specimens of Silver Birch, Scots Pine, Beech, Sweet Chestnut, and Oak are being gradually thinned but remain widely spaced throughout.

The northern area is Sweet Chestnut coppice. Where Chestnuts have died due to *Phytophthora* the more open conditions led to the establishment of Birch. In 2023 a significant amount of Birch was felled to create an open ride along the surfaced path, and this has led to a healthy ground layer made up Bluebell, Bramble, Wood Sage, and Honeysuckle.

Target Hill provides the most important reptile habitat in the park. Adder (*Vipera berus*), Grass Snake (*Natrix helvetica*), Slow Worm (*Anguis fragilis*), and Common Lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*) are regularly

seen. Known hibernacula are regularly monitored and the area around them maintained to keep them suitable for basking reptiles.

Flowering Heather attracts large numbers of insects including Honeybee (*Apis mellifera*).

Compartment 9

This compartment comprises the entrance, car park, vehicle yard, tool shed and Klargester (see glossary). The car park and driveway have mature Oak, Alder, Scots Pine and Sallow. There is also 3 mature Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) which are closely monitored but so far have shown no sign of Ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*).

Variegated Yellow Archangel (*Lamiastrum galeobdolon argentatum*), a non-native invasive garden plant, is kept under control by staff and volunteers.

4.4 Cultural

4.4.1 Archaeology

The Park contains archaeological features identified as heritage assets and recorded on the WSCC Heritage Environment Record (HER). In the centre of compartment 7, a cluster of iron-ore mine pits (see glossary) HER 6399 running in a Southwest -Northeast direction near Spruce Hill. These workings were part of a wider pattern of medieval iron ore extraction from the area of the Tunbridge Wells Sand and collectively they would have supplied not only the nearby Bewbush furnace but other furnaces in the wider area such as Tilgate, St Leonard's and Warnham.

In the south of compartment 3 a linear pillow mound (see glossary) HER 4431 with a surrounding ditch runs east-west over seventy-five metres. Also, in this compartment, is a recorded Neolithic arrowhead find HER 4062.

In compartment 8 the crescent shaped earthwork forming the Stop Butts (Rifle Butts) HER 978003 are visible. The site was used by the 14th Sussex Rifle Volunteers between 1860 and 1863, as well as for training and competitions up until 1866, being described as disused by 1868. An archaeological investigation of the Stop Butts was conducted in 2025, during which bullets from this period, earlier, and the Second World War were also found. As part of this investigation a detailed LIDAR survey of the earthworks was commissioned. A full archaeological report is to follow.

Other historical features in the park, include the brickwork and remains of a pumping house on the south-east corner of Douster Pond. A series of trenches in Middle Covert, are thought to be associated with Canadian Troops present during the Second World War. In 2025 a bespoke LIDAR survey of this area, has resulted in a proposal to conduct further archaeological investigation to confirm these features.

4.4.2 Historical including past land use.

The past finds of Neolithic barbed and tanged flint arrowheads demonstrate that in prehistory the area was used for hunting animals.

The park was once part of the larger St Leonard's Forest which consisted of woodland and heath. In the 16th and 17th centuries the area was part of a larger iron ore extraction industry providing water to power and timber to the industry. The nearest furnace was situated in Bewbush on the Mole to the north of Buchan and was working from the second half of the 16th century.

Due to the number of warrens, Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) had begun to multiply in the parish in the 17th century, and the pillow mound indicates that the open heath was a productive source of meat. This hindered regeneration of woodland, as did the practice of burning heathland to increase food supply.

The timber exploitation for coppice products and sheep grazing continued until Victorian times.

In 1882 the Saillard family turned part of the area now occupied by the park into landscaped gardens for Buchan Hill House. At the end of the 19th century a larger house was built (now Cottesmore School). The valley was dammed to form two ponds, and the boathouse and castellated waterfall were built. The Saillard family moved from the house in 1925. A section of the original drive to Cottesmore House now forms part of the park trail.

4.5 People

4.5.1 Community



There are 3 regular volunteer work parties – a monthly Sunday "Get Grubby" group, the Thursday group with up to 12 regular volunteers and the Tuesday group, which comprises of 2 volunteers who carry out workshop and other more specific tasks. The newly reformed FoBCP committee and team of events volunteers put on an Easter event and a Fun Dog Show in 2025, both of which were well attended by the public. As the group grows in numbers and experience, they hope to build on this event programme.

Money raised by the FoBCP at events and by other fundraising activities have previously funded the orchard restoration project and sculptures around the park as well as birdfeeders and feed, wildlife cameras, and tools.

In addition to WSCC volunteers, a range of other volunteer and community groups help on the site as the opportunity arises. They include Unpaid Work (formally Community Payback) and Sussex Wildlife Trust via GGP, and increasingly corporate groups from local businesses providing work parties as part of their corporate community responsibilities have helped us to achieve our HLS habitat management commitments.

Volunteers contributed 761 days' work in 2025. This equates to a value of £38,050.00 using the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) scale.

The recruitment and on-going support for volunteers is managed as part of the WSCC Volunteer Policy.

WSCC also collaborate with local providers under licence to provide opportunities for communities to use the park in other ways, providing this does not compromise the wildlife value of the park, or adversely affect regular users' enjoyment of the site. In 2025 Phoenix Running Sussex held 2 successful events, providing an opportunity for local people to take part in events promoting health and wellbeing, and reaching a new demographic of park users. Similarly, a programme of "Forest Bathing" events provide structured meditation and mindfulness in a natural environment for local people.

4.5.2 Stakeholders

WSCC is the main stakeholder. Other organisations with an interest in the park include.

- Crawley Angling Society.
- Crawley Borough Council - neighbouring landowner.
- Cottesmore Golf Club - neighbouring landowner.
- Environment Agency - Reservoirs Act 1975 and Flood and Water Management Act 2010 enforcing authority.
- Friends of Buchan Country Park.
- Holmbush Estate - neighbouring SSSI landowner.
- Keep Britain Tidy - Green Flag Award.
- Mole Valley Orienteering Club.
- Horsham District Archaeological Group.
- Natural England - SSSI status and HLS Agreement.
- High Weald National Landscape.
- Cuppa-Love – Barista.

There are also a range of user groups stakeholders including dog walkers, walkers, orienteers, photographers and cyclists, schools, and other providers of environmental education.

4.5.3 Access

The park has 1 vehicular entrance, 4 pedestrian entrances including 2 public footpaths, and a permissive footpath/cycle path via the Holmbush Estate. (see Appendix 8.2 Map 4).

Visitor numbers

The current visitor counters at the park were installed in June 2017. One is at the entrance to the countryside centre with a second on the main entrance to the park from the car park. The first full year of data was 2018, and it recorded 145,443 visitors to the park on the main track. In 2020/21 visitor numbers spiked during the Covid lockdowns recording 176,326. In 2025 a total of 156,802 visitors were recorded, showing a net increase of 11,466. Since the Cuppa-Love barista opened in the Countryside Centre there has been a significant increase of visitors using this facility from 17,048 in 2018 to 45,075 in 2025.

This clearly shows the increasing popularity of the park. It should be noted that this does not represent the full figure as the counters do not capture pedestrians who enter the park via the other access points.

Data also shows significant spikes on weekends, bank holidays, and FoBCP event days, resulting in the car park to regularly reaching capacity.

Access by road

The main car park is adjacent to the A2220 and road access to the park is good. The entrance gates include drop bollards set at 2.4m wide, to prevent access by caravans. The bollards can be opened by prior arrangement to allow coach and minibus entry.

Access by bus

To access the park by bus, visitors can catch the 3, 23, or 200 and get off at Dorsten Square in Bewbush. There a well signposted pedestrian route via a footbridge that crosses the A2220, it takes about 10 minutes to walk to the main entrance of the park from Dorsten square. Alternatively, visitors can reach the park by catching the 1 or Fastway 10 to Pelham Drive in Broadfield and then walking for 10 minutes along a signposted PRoW. Both routes were newly signposted and improved in 2025 as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in partnership between WSCC and local bus companies who now announce the stops to alight for Buchan Country Park on their buses. These were the last works proposed by the 2016 access audit to be implemented.

Access by rail

The nearest train station to the park is Ifield, a 2.5km walk.

Access by foot and bicycle

All entrances are suitable for pedestrians and are available 24 hours a day (see Appendix 8.2 Map 4). Cyclists can access the park using the main entrance and via the recently improved permissive path which links to the nearby Kilnwood Vale estate via a Pegasus crossing. Cyclists can use the park provided they remain on surfaced paths and give way to pedestrians. Bicycle racks are located outside the Countryside Centre.

There is an extensive network of surfaced paths, which are mostly suitable for wheelchair and pushchair use, though there are some steep slopes particularly around Target Hill. In addition, there is a public footpath and a permissive path linking Broadfield and the village of Colgate and the wider PRoW network.

Emergency vehicle access

The main body of the park is split in two by Douster Brook and the ponds. Vehicular access to the western side is available via a 2.5m wide concrete bridge over the brook which does not have a specified loading capacity. Heavy vehicles such as fire pumps can only gain access to the western side by crossing Cottesmore Golf Course, or via the permissive path across the Holmbush Estate, both can access the park via a 3m field gate (see Appendix 8.2 Map 4).

4.5.4 Recreational use

Our aim is to promote quiet enjoyment of the countryside for local communities, recognising Buchan Country Park's role as a well-used public space with over 155,000 annual visitors, many of whom are dog walkers. A key management priority is to balance the protection of the park's wildlife, habitats, and other features of importance with the pressures and impacts associated with increasingly high visitor numbers. In 2010, the park achieved the Green Flag Award in recognition of the work that has been undertaken to try and achieve this. The park has retained the annual award ever since.

The park is a valuable resource for informal recreation for local people and has amongst other things -

- FoBCP events.
- A novice orienteering trail.
- Two picnic areas, benches and 3 BBQ stands.
- A designated dog dip on Island Pond provides a space for dogs to swim minimising disturbance to wildlife and anglers.
- A dog free, fully fenced wild garden area suitable for families with young children and schools.
- Several geocaches (See glossary).
- Fishing.
- Barista coffee available in the Countryside Centre.
- Running events.
- Forest bathing events.

Current wildlife sightings and habitat management news are regularly updated on social media posts, giving visitors an insight into the natural history of the park.

4.5.5 Interpretation and promotional material

A range of interpretation is used and is constantly being developed on the site. A comprehensive range of signs and notices are located around the park, including ladder boards, static information boards, and sculptures. Other interpretation includes a site "Trail Guide" leaflet which is periodically reviewed and updated, as well as a "Buchan Country Park through the ages" history timeline display within the Countryside Centre.

The webpage and social media are used to promote events, volunteering opportunities, and wildlife highlights. Follow the link for the Buchan Country Park website. You can also view our recently produced code of conduct for dogs in the countryside.

The popular Facebook page has over 5000 followers at the time of writing and is used as a virtual visitor centre to promote the park and keep visitors updated in real time.

Countryside Services also have an Instagram account, providing updates on all WSCCs countryside sites, Buchan Country Park included.

4.5.6 Education

Angling for Education have a license with WSCC to run ad hoc Forest School activities in a designated area of the park for small groups of students, usually with Special Educational Needs (SEND).

Rangers annually work with Plumpton College, providing an opportunity for BTEC level 2 and 3 countryside management students to learn about and gain experience of managing lowland heath. Students along with course tutors provide an afternoon work party in exchange for a guided tour led by rangers, looking at the various management requirements and challenges involved with the habitat.

Although WSCC do not offer formal environmental education at the park, local schools are able to book and undertake self-led visits. In the past 2 years, take up has been low with 2 schools booking in 2024 and none in 2025.

4.5.7 Income

In recent years, several income streams have been identified and used to support conservation work and visitor experience at Buchan Country Park. These include:

- **Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Income** – Funding received through environmental land management schemes supporting biodiversity and habitat improvement.
- **High Weald Grant Income** – Financial support from the High Weald AONB Unit for landscape and conservation projects.
- **Other Capital Funding** – Additional support from WSCC Capital funding.
- **Licences and Leases** – Barista and angling etc.
- **Room and Venue Hire** – Revenue from hiring out indoor and outdoor spaces for meetings, educational sessions, and community events.
- **Events** – Income from FoBCP events.
- **Firewood Sales** – Sustainable firewood harvested and sold to the public.
- **Donations** – Voluntary contributions from visitors and supporters.

A voluntary car parking contribution scheme was trialled at Buchan Country Park and generated additional income for a while. However, the cost of repairing and maintaining the machines proved to be uneconomical, and the scheme was eventually discontinued. While short-lived, the trial provided valuable insight into visitor behaviour and the feasibility of future contribution-based models.

4.6 Landscape

Most of the park is in the High Weald National Landscape (see glossary).

The entire site lies within the WSCC High Weald Forests (HW2) Landscape Character Area.

Although the park is not included in the English Heritage Register of historic parks and gardens, the WSCC HER identifies part of compartments 6 and 8 as a historic parkscape/designed landscape formerly associated with Buchan Hill House. Visual reminders of this can be seen in the number of mature tall pines and other exotics which are believed to have been a result of large-scale tree planting by the Buchan Estate during the early 19th century.

4.7 Features of Interest

See Appendix 8.2 Map 5 for compartments.

4.7.1 Archaeological (compartments 4, 6 and 8)

There are designed features from the 19th century around Douster Pond. Mine pits, a pillow mound and the rifle butts on Target Hill are from an earlier era.

4.7.2 Lowland heathland (compartments 3, 6 and 8)

Purple with flowering Heather at the height of summer, heathland is an internationally important habitat. It provides a key habitat for nationally scarce/locally significant species such as nightjar and reptiles. In addition, the maintenance of heathland strengthens the vegetation mosaic characteristics of the High Weald National Landscape.

4.7.3 Scrub (compartment 3, 5 and 7)

Scrub provides a valuable habitat supporting a range of associated species and its management is included within the HLS Agreement. Successional scrub is maintained for the benefit of bats, uncommon birds such as nightjar, and reptiles. It also enhances the woodland edge environment and contributes to the mosaic of habitats.

4.7.4 Species rich semi-natural grassland (compartments 1 and 4)

The grassland in compartment 4 was sown with a wildflower seed mix in 2025 as part of a Natural England approved meadow restoration plan under the current HLS agreement. The small area of semi-improved grassland in compartment 1 (Roundabout Meadow) is the most botanically rich area of grassland in the park.

4.7.5 Hedgerows (compartment 1, 3, 4 and 8)

Hedgerows are a distinctive feature of the High Weald National Landscape. At the park there are only two mature hedges, nearby blackthorn scrub supports the scarce Brown Hairstreak (*Thecla betulae*) butterfly. As part of the HLS work programme, the hedge on the southern boundary in compartment 4 will be laid over two winters in 2026 with the aim of improving its structure in the long-term.

A hedge planted in 2015 along the southern boundary with the golf course in compartment 3 has been slow to establish but is now reaching maturity and links to the west of the mature hedge in compartment 4. More recently in 2021 a further 345m of mixed species hedge was planted along the southeast boundary with the golf course. This, like the 2015 hedge, is slowly establishing possibly due to canopy cover restricting growth. The 2021 section completed the hedge line along the whole southern boundary with the golf course.

4.7.6 Historic parkscape/designed landscape (compartment 6 and 8)

The mature pines that form a distinctive avenue close to Island Pond are a legacy of the designed landscape, as are the ponds themselves, in particular the castellated spillway and boathouse on Douster Pond.

4.7.7 Ponds (compartment 6)



Douster and Island Ponds are the dominant feature of the park. In the SSSI citation the ponds are incorrectly described as hammer ponds (see glossary) when they were in fact built for leisure as part of the historic parkscape. The ponds are an ideal location for walking and relaxing and offer anglers the opportunity to catch large carp. Frequently cloaked in mist on spring and autumn mornings they are a popular subject for photographers.

4.7.8 Woodland (compartments 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8)

Native and exotic tree species grow side by side in the area east of Douster Pond. Veteran Scot's pines in Plantation Wood are a significant feature in the landscape. Mature Beeches with wide, open grown canopies are dotted around the park. There are number of impressive Oaks found mainly around the ponds.

The Alder wet woodland within the SSSI is described as nationally uncommon in the citation.

A programme of woodland ride creation started in 2024 as part of the WMP is already improving ground flora where rides have been cleared, allowing Bluebells and other characteristic woodland flora to flourish.

Bracken and Bramble dominate the field layer in many areas. Where conditions allow, Heather and Bilberry, a locally scarce plant, are a feature.

4.7.9 Access and recreation

The network of surfaced paths and proximity to Crawley means the park provides access to nature and the countryside year-round for a wide variety of people. An increase in recreational runners has been noticed since the Phoenix Running Sussex events have been held here.

The designated picnic area and BBQ stands at the park provide a welcoming space for groups wishing to socialise and enjoy the outdoors. These facilities are particularly popular with minority ethnic communities, offering an inclusive environment that encourages a broader demographic to engage with the park. By supporting diverse cultural practices and group gatherings, the area plays a significant role in promoting accessibility, community cohesion, and enjoyment of the natural surroundings.

The "Dog Dip" provides an opportunity for dog walkers to allow their dogs to swim in the specified location, reducing the impact of erosion at other locations around the ponds.

The Phil Haskell Wild Garden provides a dog free, fully fenced area for families and groups to use, including picnic benches, play sculptures and brass rubbing plaques.

Proximity to residential areas in Crawley means easy access to the park by those without transport. The 2025 BSIP project has improved access and awareness of public transport links. The availability of free parking means the park is an affordable and convenient destination for families.

5. Management Objectives

- **Biodiversity Conservation**
  To maintain and enhance the park's rich biodiversity by implementing the management prescriptions outlined in the Woodland Management Plan and the Higher-Level Stewardship agreement. This includes sustaining the diverse mosaic of habitats and working towards achieving favourable conservation status for the WSCC-owned area of the Buchan Hill Ponds SSSI by the end of the current plan period.
- **Public Access and Engagement**
  Maintain the park's pathways and promote access through sustainable transport options. Provide opportunities for recreation and informal education, while encouraging responsible behaviour to benefit all visitors and protect the park's wildlife.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation**
  To assess the effectiveness of management practices by comparing past, present, and future assemblages of key flora and fauna species.

- **Cultural and Historical Preservation**
  To conserve and enhance the archaeological and historical features within the park, ensuring their protection and integration into the wider landscape management.
- **Community and Stakeholder Relations**
  To foster effective communication and collaborative relationships with the local community, stakeholders, and all park users.
- **Legal Compliance and Safety**
  To ensure all legal, health, and safety obligations are met and conducted in accordance with relevant agreements, legislation, and best practice standards.

6. Management Prescriptions

Note: HLS codes within work prescriptions. Numbers preceded by P refer to prescriptions within HLS management options. Other codes e.g. SB refer to HLS capital works.

6.1 Biodiversity Conservation

6.1.1 Control areas of invasive or undesirable native and non-native species

6.1.1.1 Remove all remaining pockets of Rhododendron.

Remove Rhododendron from all areas of the park using a mix of mechanical and chemical controls, as appropriate, in line with HLS P2014 and SB6A.

6.1.1.2 Manage Bracken in open habitats using mechanical means.

Prioritizing areas of lowland heath, woodland rides and glades, and historic archaeological features, manage dense Bracken stands / deep Bracken litter layers rotationally in years 1 to 5 by hand cutting / bruising, in line with HLS P455 and P135.

6.1.1.3 Control Holly seedlings to 5% cover.

Control Holly seedlings rotationally in years 1 to 5, in areas of woodland where it threatens to dominate, use volunteer groups to uproot holly seedlings, in line with WMP.

6.1.1.4 Control other non-native plant species.

Excluding semi formal areas such as the wild garden and Douster dam crest, identify and control non-native species, including Variegated Yellow Archangel and Bamboo (*Poaceae*) spp. in line with HLS P10 & P135 and WMP.

6.1.1.5 Observe and record negative impacts of native and non-native fauna.

Monitor effects of Deer browsing, Rabbit grazing, and Grey Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) damage on development of understory in line with HLS P2015 and P4006.

Conduct annual pheromone trapping, as an early warning system of an increased Oak Processionary Moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) (OPM) population in the area. Refer to WSCC OPM action plan in the event of an infestation.

6.1.2 Management of woodland and areas of successional scrub

6.1.2.1 Selectively remove conifers.

By year 3 reduce the percentage of coniferous species to

a. 5% (compartment 2).
b. 25% (compartment 3) including and retaining the Western Hemlock stand.
c. 25% (compartment 7).

In line with HLS P2018.

6.1.2.2 Coppice successional scrub on an 8-year rotation.

Coppice scrub in line with HLS P2009 and WMP prescription (compartments 3, 5, and 7). Coppice one 0.5ha area per year (see Appendix 8.2 Map 6). Maintain Deer proof fencing around coppice areas to protect and promote regrowth.

6.1.2.3 Coppice Alder to improve wet woodland structure.
Coppice mature Alder (compartments 1, and 6). No more than 5% of total in any one year. Alternate areas, 2 areas per year, North of A264 (compartment 1), South of A264, South of Douster Pond, and South of Island Pond (all compartment 6), in line with HLS P2009 and WMP prescription.

6.1.2.4 Carry out thinning, selective, and regenerative felling.
Carry out thinning and selective felling to create new woodland rides and glades, and improve ground flora, as well as regenerative felling to promote crown development and regeneration, in line with HLS P2011 & P2013 and WMP (compartments 2, 3, 7 and 8).

6.1.2.5 Release existing and/or recruitment veteran trees from competing tree growth.
Identify existing and recruitment trees in line with HLS P2010 and carry out halo thinning (compartments 2, 3, 5, and 7).

6.1.2.6 Manage ride edges through a zone cutting regime.
Maintain 2 zoned rides using BCS mower and strimmer ensuring that at least 65% of rides are mown annually in late summer, in line with HLS P2006 and WMP (compartments 1, 2, 3, 5, and 7).

6.1.2.7 Create and maintain appropriate levels of deadwood habitat.
Where it is appropriate and safe to do so, maintain standing and fallen deadwood of >15cm diameter, to approx. 5-10% of total woodland volume across all compartments in line with HLS P2002 and WMP.

6.1.3 Management of lowland heathland

6.1.3.1 Control and manage scrub.
Control/manage scrub including Birch and Pine saplings within all lowland heathland areas (compartments 3, 6, and 8) using manual cutting methods so that scrub and trees cover no more than 10%. Remove all cut material to dead hedges. In line with HLS P42.

6.1.3.2 Maintain a wide range of Heather age classes.
Maintain a wide range of dwarf shrub age classes by cutting and removing material. This should include between 10% and 40% cover of pioneer stage, between 20% and 80% cover of building/mature stage, no more than 30% cover of degenerate stage and no more than 10% of dead dwarf shrubs. In line with HLS P105.

6.1.3.3 Maintain full range of European Gorse age classes.
Maintain full range of Gorse species by cutting and removing and ensuring cover is no more than 25-50%, in line with HLS P109.

6.1.3.4 Provide bare ground.
Provide between 2-10% bare ground by manual or mechanical methods across the option areas. Do not create bare ground on historic or archaeological features, in line with HLS P107.

6.1.4 Restoration and management of species rich grassland

6.1.4.1 Manage scrub.
In line with HLS P138.

a. Control invasive scrub to no more than 5% by cutting and removing arisings from the Roundabout Meadow (compartment 1).
b. At the Golf Course Meadow and Countryside Centre Meadow (compartments 1 and 4) retain established scrub to between 5-10% of the areas, not cutting more than 50% in either area in any one year.

6.1.4.2 Cut and remove hay annually.
a. In the Roundabout Meadow (Compartment 1), cut and remove hay each year not before 15th July and by the end of November, to a sward height of between 5-10cm, leaving at least 10% uncut on rotation. In line with HLS P428.
b. In the visitor centre meadow (compartment 1), cut and remove hay by the end of November, to a sward height of 5-10cm, leaving small, selected areas of scattered longer grass at 10-30cm around the perimeter as invertebrate refuge. In line with HLS P667.
c. In the Golf Course Meadow. (compartment 4) cut and remove hay on rotation by the end of November, to a sward height of 5-10cm, leaving small, selected areas of scattered longer grass

at 10-30cm around the perimeter as invertebrate refuge. Refer to Golf Course Meadow cutting plan.

6.1.5 Management of hedgerows

6.1.5.1 Restore over stood hedgerows.

a. In year 1, complete golf course meadow hedge laying, (compartment 4), to HLS BN5 and 10 specifications.
b. In year 3, coppice 75m predominantly Hazel hedge alongside footpath west of the Golf Course Meadow, to re-establish hedgerow, leaving standard trees in situ. Protect coppice stumps from browsing.

6.1.5.2 Maintain hedgerows to optimum height and width.

Maintain HLS (compartments 3 & 5) hedges to a height of no more than 2m and a minimum width of 1.5m, excluding sections that have been gapped up, laid, or coppiced during the HLS agreement.

6.1.5.3 Gap up hedges

Monitor newer hedges for gaps (compartments 3, 6, and 8). Replant with native hedgerow mix whips as required.

6.1.5.4 Manage Blackthorn for Brown Hairstreak butterflies.

Ensure a varied age structure of Blackthorn with young growth for egg laying and larvae, by coppicing on rotation. Survey Blackthorn areas for eggs and mark host trees to exclude them prior to cutting.

6.1.5.5 Manage other hedges.

Keep hedges at entrances to the park and alongside the toilets cut back as required, to maintain access and sight lines.

6.1.6 Management of ponds

6.1.6.1 Manage Island Pond in line with HLS option WT5.

Between May to September maintain a combined cover of submerged and floating aquatic plants excluding undesirable plants of at least 15% and cover of marginal and emergent vegetation of between 15-40% in line with HLS P352. Retain all overhanging trees and submerged and partially submerged deadwood, in line with HLS P355. Manage margins to control scrub to maintain shade to no more than 25% of the southern side of the pond and no more than 30% of total, in line with HLS P361.

6.1.6.2 Maintain conditions in ponds and surrounding habitat for dragonflies.

Maintain reefs on Douster and Island ponds, by adding birch faggots annually as needed. continue small scale macrophyte translocations using Boundary Pond as a donor site, recording and monitoring progress. Where possible in Douster Pond, maintain submerged or partially submerged deadwood, except in marked fishing swims where deadwood causes snags to fishing lines.

6.1.6.3 Maintain Island Pond dog dip.

Conduct repairs to revetment, ramp and surface of Dog Dip as required.

6.1.6.4 Maintain 6 small wildlife ponds (compartment 1).

Annually, in December and January, clear no more than 10% emergent and marginal vegetation, as required, to maintain open clear water. Retain at least 25% edge vegetation, but control Bramble so it does not damage pond liners. Remove invasive plant species.

6.1.6.5 Maintain fishing swims and platforms to suitable standard.

Monitor fishing swim and platform conditions as part of monthly routine checks. Remove snags as necessary, conduct repairs to fishing swims and platforms as required. Manage surrounding vegetation sensitively to maintain open swims. Use coir rolls and back fill with Fittleworth stone to reestablish banks where erosion is occurring at fishing swims.

6.1.6.6 Maintain water level regime.

Keep palisade weir on Island Pond and the spillway on Douster Pond clear, as part of monthly routine checks, to allow natural drawdown of water to occur.

6.1.7 Manage historic orchard.

6.1.7.1 Maintain orchard trees.

Carry out annual pruning of the mature apple trees, to maintain structure and productivity. Prune young trees to encourage good form and future fruit production. Mulch within fenced areas around young trees to suppress ground vegetation and promote healthy growth.

6.1.7.2 Harvest fruit

Annually harvest fruit from the orchard that can be reached using fruit pickers and ladders. Fruit can be either used for apple events to be juiced or put out to be taken by visitors to the park.

6.1.7.3 Encourage diverse ground flora.

Cut ground vegetation annually in late September. Remove cuttings to suppress Bramble and rough species growth and encourage a diverse wood pasture flora. Cut/pull Bracken in July - August to suppress growth.

6.1.8 Phil Haskell Wild Garden

6.1.8.1 Develop plan for garden area.

Explore options to improve wild garden for biodiversity and educational purposes.

6.2 Public access and engagement

6.2.1 Access

6.2.1.1 Ensure maintenance of PRoW to WSCC Corporate Standard.

Consult with Area 6 access ranger and PRoW team to ensure footpath signage and surface are maintained.

6.2.1.2 Monitor and maintain sustainable access routes into the park.

Manage the permissive path across Holmbush Estate, in line with the path agreement. Regularly monitor promoted pedestrian routes from Broadfield and Bewbush and action any issues as appropriate.

6.2.1.3 Maintain path network within the park.

Keep all other defined paths open, safe, and accessible. Complete regular checks. Identify and conduct works as required, ensure paths are regularly cut back in summer and leaves blown to maintain surfaced paths in autumn. Continue a programme of path improvements.

6.2.1.4 Maintain a safe and accessible car park and driveway.

Conduct regular informal observation of trees during routine checks and litter picks. Undertake maintenance to tarmac surfaces and gravel bays as required. Explore options to fund resurfacing of the WSCC owned tarmac private drive. Monitor progress of capital bid to expand car park.

6.2.2 Recreation, interpretation, and education

6.2.2.1 Conduct checks and maintenance of recreation infrastructure.

Use and update the "day job checklist" to ensure recreation infrastructure, such as benches, bins, and signs are well maintained. Carry out maintenance in a timely manner, for the benefit of public safety and to maintain a well maintained and cared for park.

6.2.2.2 Preserve Green Flag status.

Annually apply for the Green Flag award. Review judge's recommendations and implement as appropriate.

6.2.2.3 Support FoBCP and 3rd party event organisers

Consult with FoBCP events committee to ensure they have the support needed, to run a successful programme of events. Maintain effective communication with 3rd party event organisers to ensure events run smoothly for their attendees, whilst not adversely impacting other park visitors or wildlife and park infrastructure.

6.2.2.4 Support formal education providers

Coordinate bookings for the fire pit area and Phil Haskell Wild Garden by maintaining a calendar and BCP bookings file.

6.2.2.5 Promote appropriate behaviours for visitors to the Country Park

Use clear and consistent messaging via a wide variety of mediums, including social media, website, signage, and face to face interactions. Promote and share WSCC's Dogs in the Countryside Code of Conduct BBQ policy, WSCC's Think, Share, Be Aware, and the Countryside Code.

6.2.2.6 Support the barista franchise in running a welcoming, informative countryside centre.

Keep leaflets stocked up, check and update displays, ensure a supply of bird food and regularly clean bird feeders. Consult with barista to ensure they are supported with issues relating to the property or to visitor management within the centre.

6.2.2.7 Review visitor numbers

Check and record visitor counter numbers from the main path and countryside centre for use in reports and to inform management decisions.

6.2.2.8 Review promotional material

Check and update all publicly available promotional material at least annually, including, trail guide leaflet, web pages, social media page information, google and trip advisor. Ensure information such as car park opening hours and coffee shop opening hours are updated across all sites whenever there are changes.

6.2.2.9 Maintain and develop social media presence.

Use the BCP Facebook and Countryside Services Instagram pages as a "virtual visitor centre". Keep the pages active with regular pictures and posts about the conservation management of the park and use the platform to deliver important messages regarding contracts, or other works, and to promote messages and events.

6.2.2.10 Develop partnerships with other WSCC services to promote messages.

Build on established relationships with WSCC waste reduction team and WSCC Fire and Rescue Service, to promote messages about recycling and waste reduction as well as fire safety and responsible BBQ use. Explore options for other partnerships within WSCC.

6.2.3 Income

6.2.3.1 Manage sales and donations income.

Maintain a stock of seasoned logs from the park for sale. Comply with Ready to Burn criteria and maintain certification. Monitor and record sales and donations.

6.2.3.2 Provide space for mobile barista.

Continue to accommodate a barista in the countryside centre. License fee applicable.

6.2.3.3 Maintain HLS or equivalent.

Re-apply for HLS revenue options / payments that end in 2028 and explore options for further capital projects.

6.2.2.4 Find and use external grant funding.

Explore options for grant funded projects through external organisations such as the High Weald National Landscape.

6.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

6.3.1 Conduct monitoring and recording as required by HLS.

6.3.1.1 Collect evidence for capital and revenue works.

Take before and after photos and store with relevant naming protocols, to evidence capital works claims. Photograph revenue works as required by HLS.

6.3.1.2 Record species on grasslands for options GS6 and GS7

a. In year 1, record indicator species and wildflower cover on the Roundabout Meadow GS6 grassland in line with P470, IOS27 and IOS97.
b. In year 1, record indicator species and wildflower cover on the Golf Course and Countryside Centre Meadows GS7 grassland in line with P470 and IOS97.

6.3.1.3 Record species and composition of lowland heath options LH1

In year 2, record indicator species and composition in line with IOS28, 3, 35, 36, 57, 85, and 94.

6.3.1.4 Record species and condition of Island Pond option WT5

In year 2 record cover of submerged and floating aquatic plants in line with P352.

Record ad-hoc dragonfly species in line with IOS27.

6.3.1.5 Conduct monitoring and recording of woodland areas option WD2.

Record evidence of other woodland activities, using before and after photos in line with P2008.

6.3.2 Conduct surveys to compare past, current, and future assemblages of key flora and fauna.

6.3.2.1 Commission Odonata survey

Commission a professional Odonata survey of the 3 ponds within Buchan Hills SSSI to update the 2016 survey. Share the results with NE. This will be a key indicator for the ponds being reclassified as in favourable condition.

6.3.2.2 Butterfly Transects

Conduct UK Butterfly Monitoring Survey (UKBMS) transects weekly between 1st April and September 30th following the UKBMS recording methodology. Submit all transect records via the UKBMS portal. Recruit additional recorders, to support sustainable surveying.

6.3.2.3 National Dormouse Monitoring Programme (NDMP)

Expand the existing Hazel Dormice nest box survey site from 30 up to 50 boxes, as suitable habitat allows. Register the site with NDMP. Conduct survey monitoring in accordance with NDMP protocol. Undertake a minimum of two surveys per year: May or June (pre-breeding) and either September or October (post breeding). Box checks should be conducted between the 15th and 25th of the month. Report all survey results through the NDMP portal.

Surveyor must hold a current Hazel Dormice: survey or research – level 1 licence (CL10a).

Annually submit all survey data to Natural England, and Peoples Trust for Endangered Species, as per the Licence requirements.

Review other areas of the park, where Dormice monitoring may provide useful information on the local population; and set up and monitor next boxes, when resources allow.

6.3.2.4 Conduct ad hoc monitoring and recording.

When out on site take note of sightings and be conduct ad hoc recording of species such as basking reptiles or Dragonflies. Use mobile technology to assist with identification and record notable species to iRecord. Update internal survey data such as reptile and amphibian and orchids.

6.4 Cultural and historical preservation

6.4.1 Protect archaeological and historic features.

6.4.1.1 Ensure no ground disturbance on or near HER features.

Control bracken and scrub on the pillow mound by brush cutting in early spring/autumn to reduce cover for rabbits and burrowing animals.

6.4.1.2 Prevent small trees establishing on HER features.

Where birch and other small tree species start to establish, cut and treat stumps to prevent regrowth. Do not uproot or disturb ground.

6.4.1.3 Consult with County Archaeologist where the potential impact of specified works in the Archaeological Notification Area would require consideration.

6.4.2 Develop a Heritage Management Plan

Using knowledge on file and acquired from partnership working with HDAG, and independent archaeologists. Produce a plan that aims to understand and the archaeological potential of the park better, based on sources such as desk-based research, walkover survey, and Lidar data. It would map known monuments and archaeological features, as well as zones of higher and lower archaeological potential. Send to County Archaeologist for comment.

6.4.3 Retain features of historic interest.

Regularly check historic features such as the boat house and Douster dam turrets. carry out maintenance and repairs as required.

6.5 Community and stakeholder relations

6.5.1 Community and stakeholders

6.5.1.1 Build and maintain trust with dog walking community.

Engage with dog walking community to promote and maintain effective communication about issues relating to the County Park. Use walkers as eyes and ears on the ground, whilst promoting responsible dog ownership in line with the WSCC Dogs in the Countryside Code of Conduct.

6.5.1.2 Maintain relationships with neighbouring landowners.

Keep neighbouring landowners informed of works on or near boundaries. Consult with Cottesmore Golf Course regarding ongoing hedge management. Work with Holmbush Estate and CBC to ensure good access is maintained on paths accessing the Country Park that cross their land.

6.5.1.3 Monitor local community notice boards and forums on social media

Review posts relating to the Country Park and respond appropriately if necessary. Share relevant information to community groups.

6.5.1.4 Maintain relationships with key stakeholders.

Keep stakeholders such as FoBCP and CAS up to date with relevant and key information regarding the Country Park and respond to requests for information in a timely manner.

6.5.1.5 Maintain open communication with professional bodies.

Consult with bodies such as EA and NE as appropriate and ensure all statutory requirements are met.

6.5.2 Volunteers

6.5.2.1 Ensure compliance with WSCC volunteer policy and maintain volunteer numbers in accordance with need.

Maintain all paperwork and records in line with the policy and ensure compliance with UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Proactively recruit new volunteers as required. Respond to volunteer enquiries in a timely manner.

6.5.2.2 Produce and deliver a varied practical volunteer work programme.

Produce and support a varied volunteer work programme including for the Thursday volunteers, Get Grubby, Tuesday volunteers, and corporate groups. Ensure all volunteers are properly equipped with necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and uniform, provide instruction on how to carry out tasks and use tools safely and competently.

6.5.2.3 Support FoBCP

Maintain effective communication with FoBCP committee. Senior ranger to attend meetings when they coincide with weekend working duties.

6.5.2.4 Reward and value volunteers

Host a volunteer Christmas get together and summer BBQ annually to thank volunteers for their contributions.

6.5.2.5 Maintain good working relationship with probation service, unpaid work.

Consult with Crawley probation service to provide an appropriate year-round work programme within the Country Park.

6.5.2.6 Work with external volunteer groups

Maintain a good working relationship with GGP and provide tasks within the Country Park to suit their work programmes. Host corporate work parties when contacted by firms, within the parameters of staff availability.

6.6 Legal compliance and safety

6.6.1 Legal and other responsibilities

6.6.1.1 Deliver the management plan in accordance with agreements and designations.

Ensure all activities are compliant with HLS agreement 1626504, Felling licence 019/222/2023 and that any activities within the SSSI not covered by these documents have the relevant NE consents.

6.6.1.2 Review management plan annually

Review plan to ensure it is still relevant and compliant. Produce AWP to guide and resource annual works.

6.6.1.3 Ensure compliance with Reservoir Act (1975)

Complete monthly water level and seepage records. Implement recommendations from 2026 10-year inspection. Carry out all works requested following annual supervising engineer visits and report.

6.6.2 Health and Safety requirements

6.6.2.1 Carry out all building health and safety responsibilities required as SRP.

Maintain a Depot Management Checklist and conduct and record all scheduled checks. Maintain equipment lists as required. Ensure CoSHH records are kept up to date and substances are stored and used in accordance with CoSHH requirements. Ensure all training relevant to role as SRP is up to date. Work with WSCC Facilities Management (FM) for support with matters beyond SRP remit.

6.6.2.2 Ensure compliance with WSCC Public Rights of Way and Countryside Services Health and Safety Handbook.

Keep copies of guidelines in office, workshop, and all works vehicles. Ensure all tasks conducted are risk assessed, and a written copy of the risk assessment is on hand. Generic risk assessments must be accompanied by a site-specific risk assessment and emergency action plan. Review all risk assessments annually.

6.6.2.3 Maintain handwritten day log, and report accidents and incidents via WSCC online reporting form.

Keep a record of incidents in the park, including interactions with the public when enforcing rules and Byelaws. Minor and simple incidents should be handwritten in the log, for more complex incidents write and file a report in the relevant online file. For accidents, near misses and incidents of aggression, gather as much information as possible and report review via WSCCs online reporting form.

6.6.2.4 Record completion of routine check and duties

Use the "day job checklist" spreadsheet to ensure all regular checks are made and recorded, including actions taken.

6.6.2.5 Conduct tree safety inspections.

Complete tree inspection surveys in accordance with the 2025 WSCC Countryside Services Tree Safety Inspection Programme. This includes an annual visual tree assessment in late summer; ad hoc surveys as part of routine site checks and advise from the WSCC Arb as required. Complete tree safety works as required.

Conduct visual tree assessments after severe weather incidents and arrange for any remedial works to be done promptly. Obtain advice from WSCC arboriculture officers as required.

6.6.2.6 Annually review emergency flood plan.

Review flood plan and ensure all details of relevant agencies and key professionals are up to date.

6.6.2.7 Annually review wildfire risk assessment and emergency access plan.

Annually review emergency access plan and risk assessment, update as necessary. Ensure WSCC FRS are kept up to date with any amendments.

7. Glossary

Annual Work Programme (AWP) Spread sheet detailing the works relating to each prescription of the management plan. As well as the "day job checklist." Updated each year, it also resources staff time and budgets for the works.

Alluviation - The process that results in deposits of clay, silt, sand, or gravel at places in rivers or estuaries, or along the shores of lakes or seas, where stream velocity is decreased.

Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act - The act provided a new right of public access on foot to areas of open land comprising mountain, moor, heath, down, and registered common land, and contains provisions for extending the right to coastal land. The Act also provides safeguards which consider the needs of landowners and occupiers, and of other interests, including wildlife.

Easements - A right of use over the property of another. Traditionally the permitted kinds of uses were limited, the most important being rights of way and rights concerning flowing waters.

Geocaches - A real-world, outdoor treasure-hunting game where players use GPS-enabled devices (like smartphones) to find hidden containers, called "geocaches," at specific coordinates around the world.

Hammer ponds - Ponds built to supply a head of water to a water powered hammer mill that processed smelted iron.

Higher-Level Stewardship - An agri-environment scheme that provides funding to farmers and other land managers in England in return for delivering environmental management on their land. The scheme is managed by the Rural Payments Agency in partnership with Natural England and the Forestry commission.

High Weald National Landscape – An area of countryside considered to have significant landscape value that has been specially designated by Natural England on behalf of the UK government. The High Weald National Landscape covers 1461 square kilometers covering parts of Kent, Sussex and Surrey. Formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

iRecord - A website for sharing wildlife observations, including associated photos. Automatic checks are applied to observations to help spot potential errors, and experts review sightings. All wildlife sightings for non-sensitive species are shared with other users and will be made available to national recording schemes, local biodiversity records centres and Vice County Recorders (VCRs).

Klargester - A popular brand name for sewage treatment plants and septic tanks, a mini wastewater treatment facility for properties not connected to the main sewer system, processing sewage on-site to safely discharge treated effluent into the ground or a watercourse.

LiDAR - A remote sensing technology that measures distance by illuminating a target with a laser and analyzing the reflected light. The term "LiDAR" comes from Light Detection and Ranging.

Mesotrophic - A body of water (like a lake or pond) that has a moderate, or intermediate, level of nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus), leading to a healthy but not excessive amount of plant and algae growth, balancing the low-nutrient oligotrophic state and the high-nutrient eutrophic state, supporting diverse aquatic life but showing early signs of nutrient enrichment.

Mine pits - A Sussex dialect word referring to the shafts dug to excavate "mine," the Sussex Weald term for iron ore. There are many "minepit" place names in Sussex, e.g. minepit wood, minepit copse.

Odonata - A biological classification term. The division of insects that includes dragonflies and damselflies.

Pillow mound - A linear, medieval earthwork, made as an artificial rabbit warren. The mound at the park can be clearly seen and is around 2m high, 3m wide and 100m long. It is now generally accepted that pillow mounds were artificial rabbit warrens, to aid the cultivation and farming of rabbits.

Podsols – An infertile acidic soil

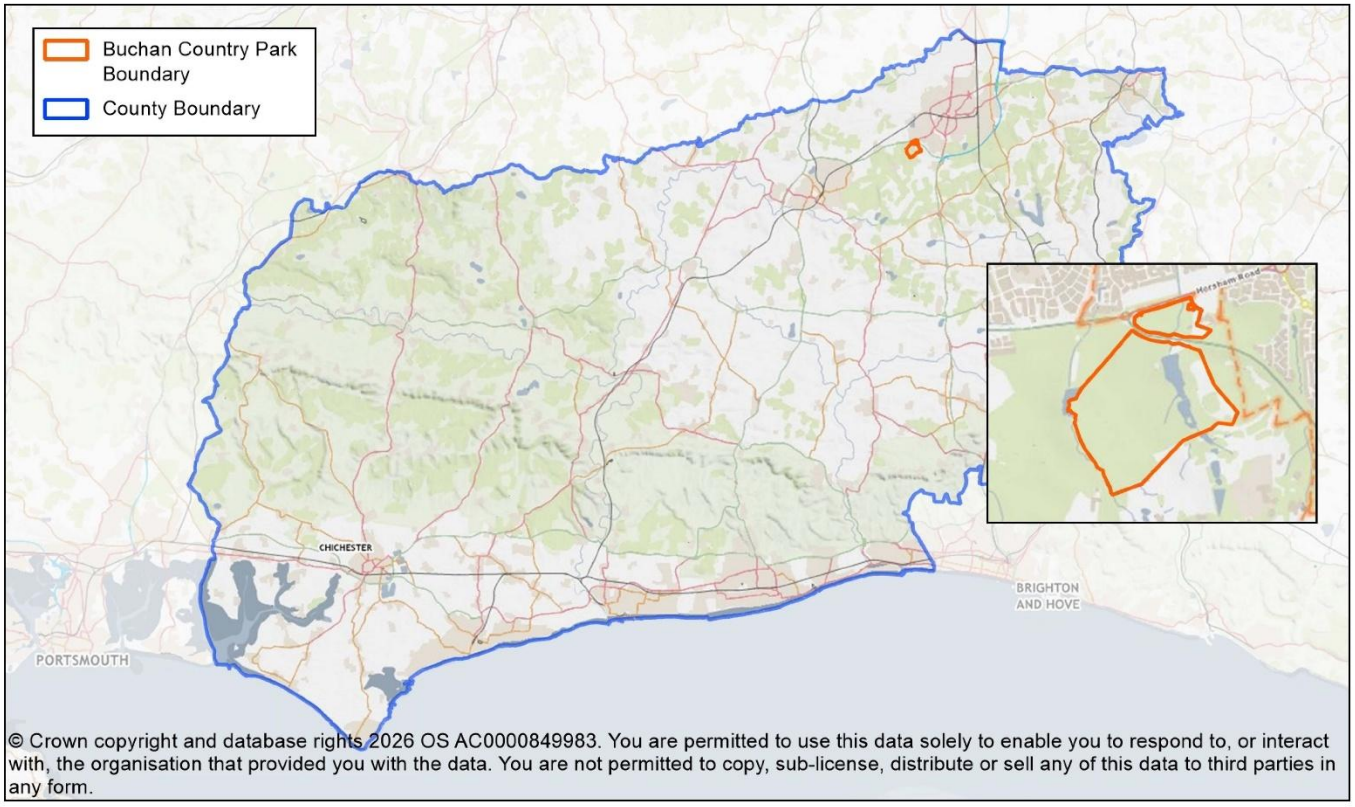
Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre - One of the many environmental record centres situated around the UK. It is a repository, custodian, manager and analyst of high-quality biodiversity, natural history, and environmental information. Covering the two counties of East and West Sussex, including Brighton & Hove.

8. Appendices

Map 1 Location

Buchan Country Park
Management Plan 2026 - 2030

Appendix 8.2
Map 1 - Location



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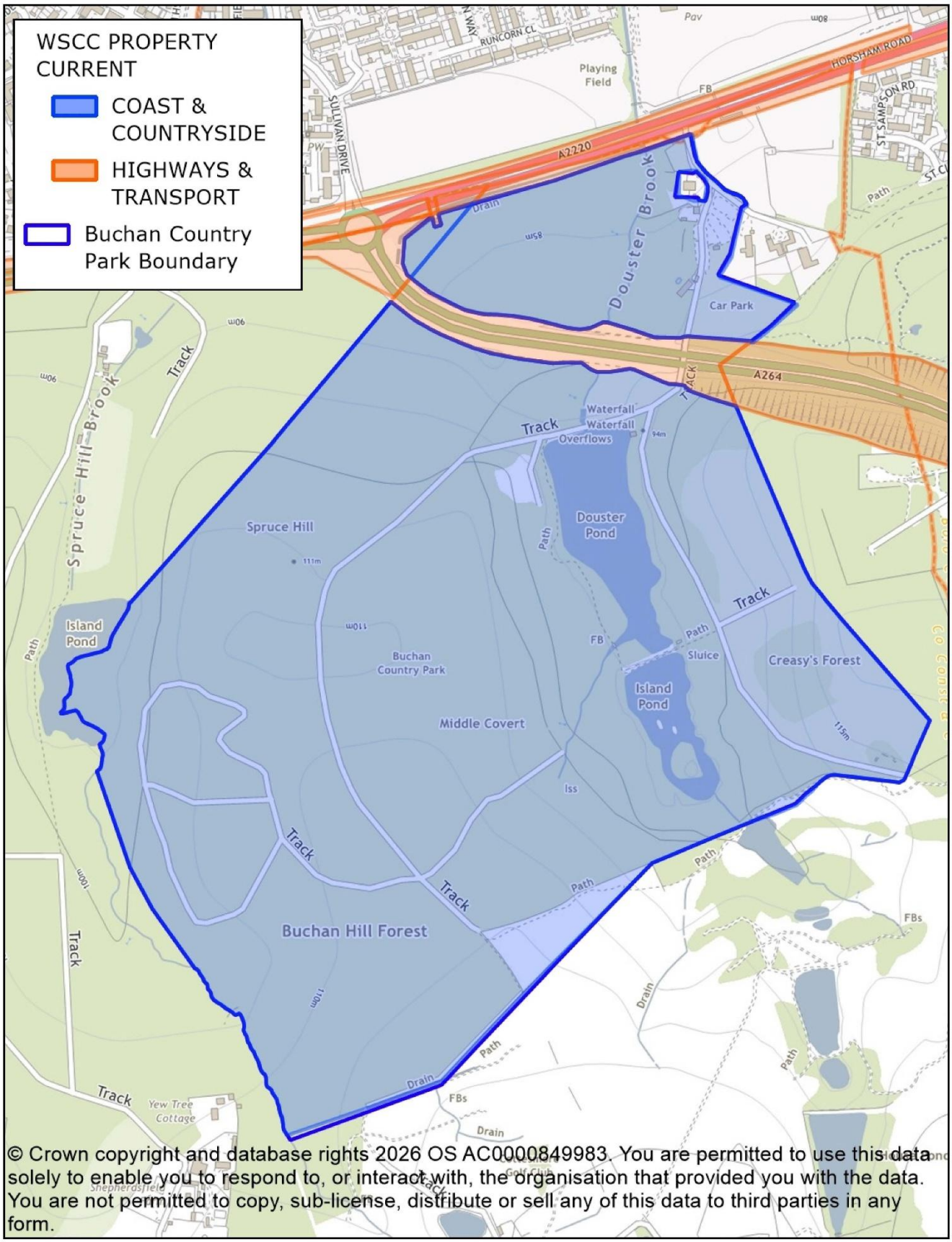
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Map 2 Land ownership

Buchan Country Park
Management Plan 2026 - 2030

Appendix 8.2
Map 2 - Land Ownership



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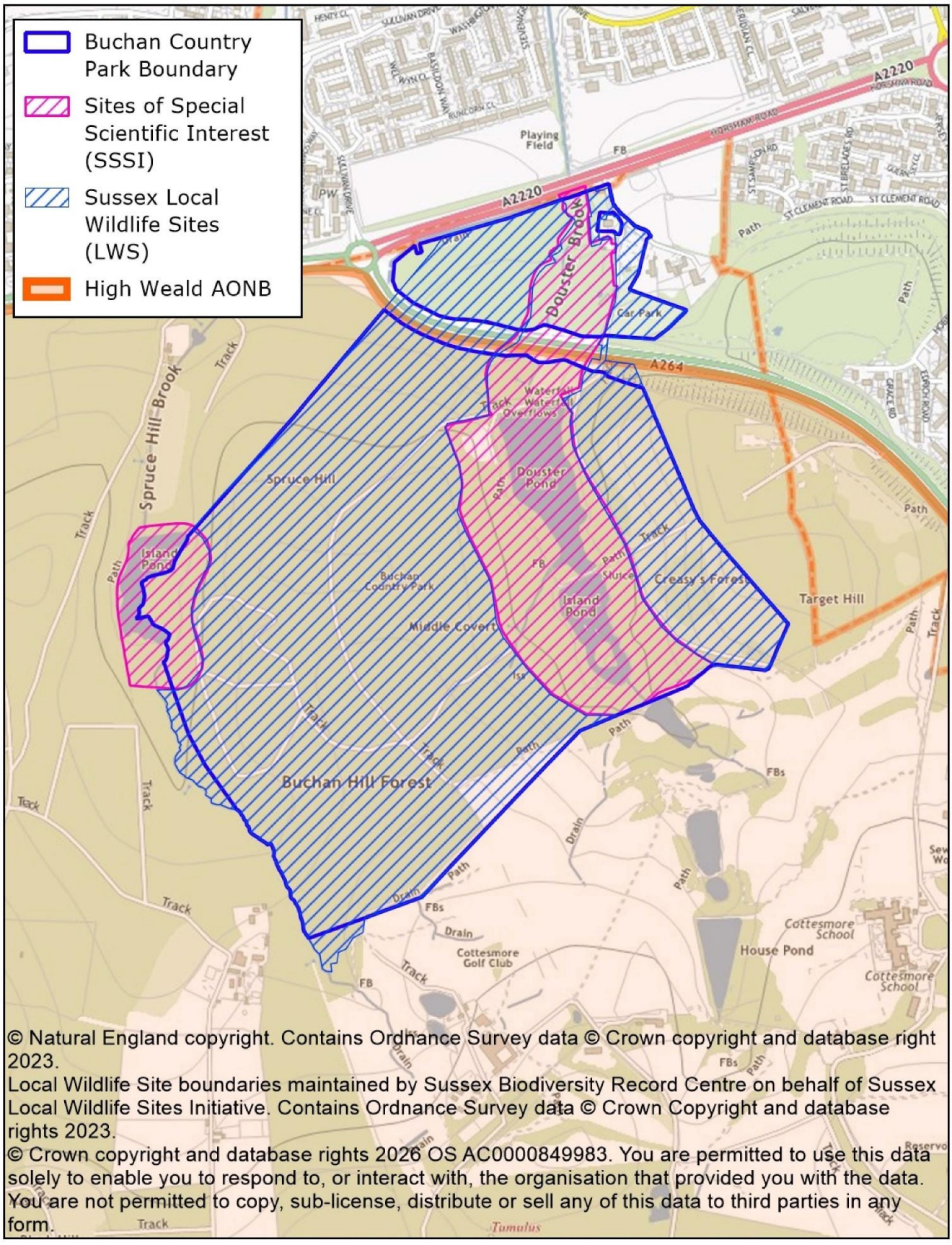
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Map 3 Designations

Buchan Country Park
Management Plan 2026 - 2030

Appendix 8.2
Map 3 - Designations



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Local Wildlife Site boundaries maintained by Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre on behalf of Sussex Local Wildlife Sites Initiative. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database rights 2023.
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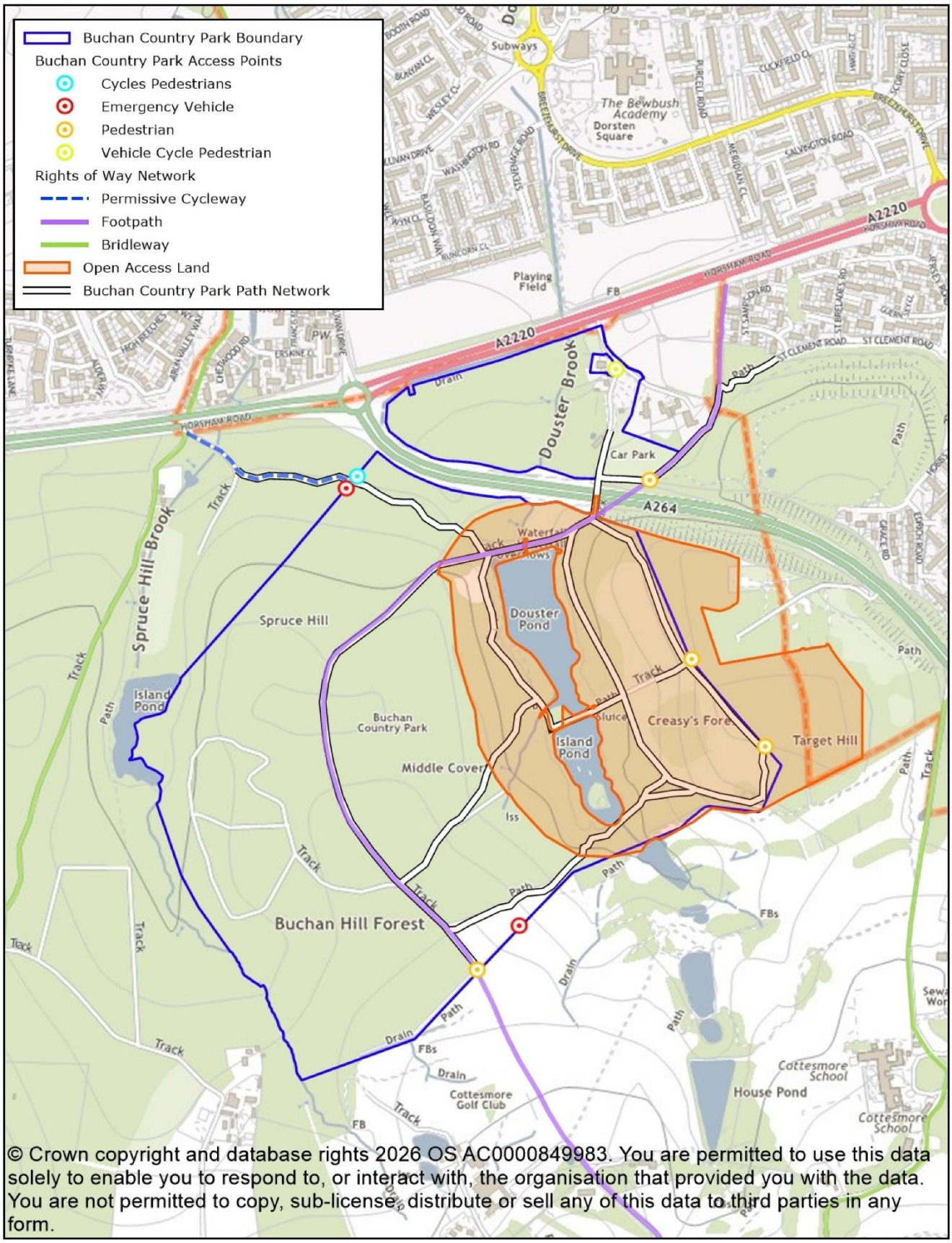
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Map 4 Access

Buchan Country Park
Management Plan 2026 - 2030

Appendix 8.2
Map 4 - Access

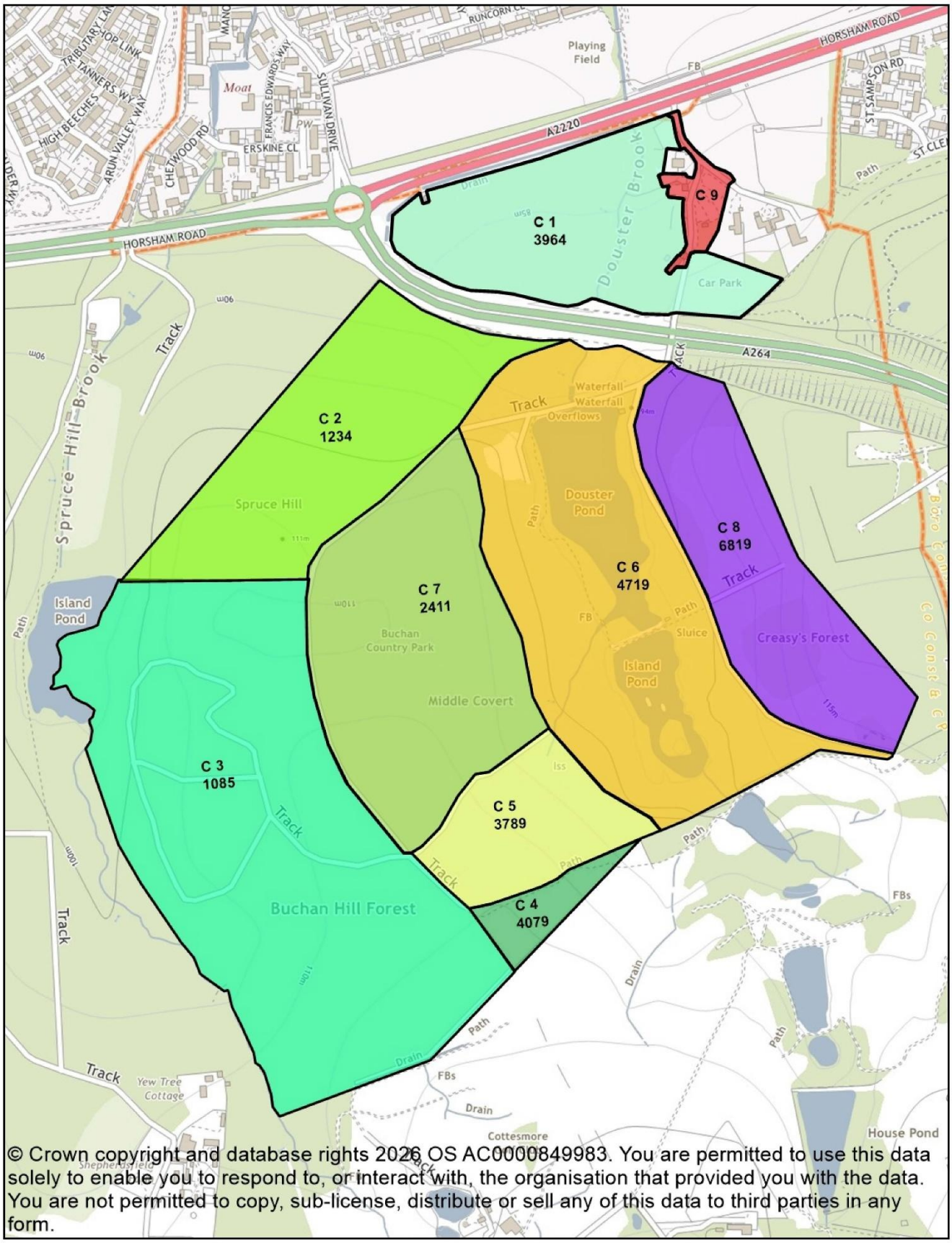


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Map 5 Compartments

Buchan Country Park
Management Plan 2026 - 2030

Appendix 8.2
Map 5 - Compartments



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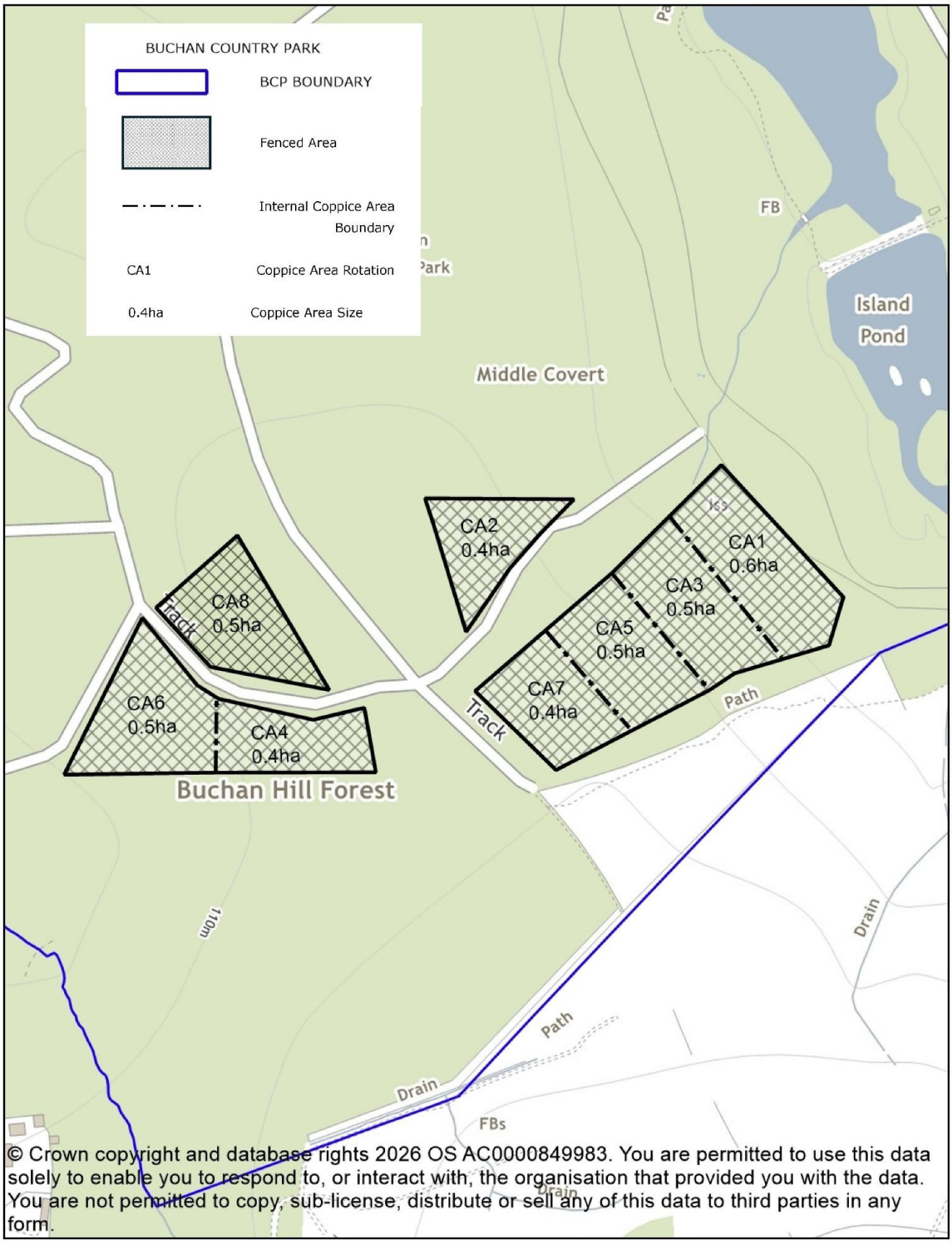
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Map 6 Coppice Areas

Buchan Country Park
Management Plan 2026 - 2030

Appendix 8.2
Map 6 - Coppice Areas



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