

**Kingsmead Marsh
Management Plan
2021 - 2026**

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Executive Summary

Kingsmead Marsh LNR is 6ha of marshland in the centre of Stafford. The site consists of two areas, divided by the Queensway road. The marsh habitat has many typical species of wetland plants. In order to maintain the open marsh, a lot of vegetation control is required. A detailed appraisal of the work can be found in the text but in summary, approximately £3000 is needed annually in order to:

- Control reed-grasses
- Coppice willow
- Tree works

Additionally, further funding is required to maintain the drainage network within the Marsh, by controlling vegetation and providing open water.

By managing the Borough's natural assets the Council is following national and local policy set out in:

NERC Act 2006 - Section 40 and 41

SBC Corporate Plan

SBC Climate Change and Green Recovery Strategy

1 Introduction

Kingsmead Marsh is made up of two main sections of marshland, which are dissected by a busy stretch of dual carriageway called the Queensway. The top half of the marsh is currently under private ownership in order to facilitate new road building to the St Georges development. Although this area of the marsh will feature in the management plan, management aims will now concentrate on just the main marsh area. When the land is transferred back to Stafford Borough Council, the plan will be updated accordingly.

Name: Kingsmead Marsh **Area:** 6.0 ha

Grid reference: SJ 925 234

OS Map: Explorer 244 (6) 1:25,000

Ownership: Stafford Borough Council

Local Planning Authority: Stafford Borough Council

District: Stafford Borough

Conservation Status: Staffordshire Site of Biological Importance, Local Nature Reserve.

Management History: This document updates the original Management Plan, which has directed management at the site since its formal declaration as an LNR in 2003.

Access: The site is open however access should be carefully considered due to the number of drains, the marshy conditions and the sensitivity of the site. The lack of any paths also means access is difficult. The one formal access is the boardwalk installed in 2014.

2 Site Description

Kingsmead Marsh is a large wetland area close to the centre of Stafford town. The majority of the site is marshland, with areas of willow scrub and woodland. There are a number of ditches running through the marsh and scrub and scattered trees are common, particularly around the site's perimeter. The marsh supports a variety flora and fauna. In 1997 Staffordshire Wildlife Trust carried out a detailed ecological survey on the site. On the basis of the information that was gathered Kingsmead Marsh was designated as a Grade 1 Site of Biological Importance (SBI). The overall site provides an excellent wildlife haven at the centre of a large town and at a size of approximately 6.0 ha it is more extensive than many of the remaining marshes in Staffordshire.

3 Management Objectives

Local Nature Reserves are an important part of our heritage and it is important that we treat them as such. We want to encourage and enhance biodiversity within our Borough and encourage as many of our residents to visit and to enjoy our LNR's.

- To maintain and enhance the marshland habitat.
- To maintain and enhance selected areas of woodland and scrub to provide a 'buffer' around the main site.
- To maintain and enhance the populations of notable species.
- To contribute towards achieving the aims, objectives and targets identified in the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan and the Stafford Borough Biodiversity Strategy.

3.1 Table of Main Management Tasks

Work	Date
Site Surveys	Spring/Summer
Reed Cutting	Aug - Oct
Willow/scrub control	Aug - Oct
Other tree works	Winter
Litter picks	All year

4 Main Management Operations

4.1 Wetland Management

Kingsmead Marsh is made up of two main sections of marshland, which are dissected by a busy stretch of dual carriageway called the Queensway. The Lamascote Drain runs diagonally from NW to SE across the site and the Pearl Brook forms the northern perimeter of the site. There are also a series of small drainage ditches that cut across the marsh.

The northern section of the LNR is not owned by the Council and therefore is not currently being managed.

4.1.1 Marshland/Marshy Grassland

- In 2009 a section of reed-grass was cut to monitor subsequent regrowth. If annual cuts led to a greater floral diversity then this method could be applied across the site, perhaps on a rotational basis. This did not prove successful but rather encouraged the spread of Reed-mace (*Typha*). The possibility exists for planting of Common Reed in prepared areas – as this is dominant enough to replace the *Glyceria*.
- Self-set scrub (predominantly willow) should be coppiced in these areas to minimise drying out of the marsh. Cut material should then be removed from the centre of the marsh and either stacked in ‘habitat piles’ or chipped into the perimeter dense scrub. Alternatively the willow stems could be harvested and utilised for countryside crafts.
- Any standing deadwood or large mature trees should be left unless they pose a health and safety risk. A ‘buffer strip’ of scrub should be left around the marsh.

4.1.2 Open water

The possibility of creating two ‘scrapes’ within the marshland areas to encourage the retention of shallow areas of open water throughout the year should be investigated. These should be 30-50cm deep, with a ‘bowled’ profile and irregular scalloped edges if possible.

4.2 Woodland, Scrub and Hedgerow Management

Kingsmead Marsh is predominantly a marshland site. However, there are a number of small, wooded areas on the site. The main woodland areas are adjacent to the large Kingsmead Car Park and alongside the Queensway.

4.2.1 Woodland Areas

- All trees bordering the Queensway are managed by Staffordshire County Council’s Highways Department to ensure that their branches do not affect traffic on the road.
- All other trees on the site should be monitored, at least annually. Any dangerous trees or limbs that overhang footpaths should be removed.
- In the future it will be necessary to carry out coppicing and thinning out in the woodland areas to ensure that they contain diverse understorey vegetation (i.e. a variety of growth stages and ground flora).

- A variety of mature poplar trees can be found on this site. These were all planted over 20 years ago and none are native black poplars. Any opportunities for planting native black poplar saplings in suitable locations on this site should be investigated, ideally aiming towards the long-term replacement of all hybrid poplars on the site.

4.2.2 Patches of dense scrub and trees

- Areas of self-set scrub on the perimeter of the site should be maintained to provide a 'buffer', particularly alongside the Queensway. The scrub is itself an important habitat for nesting birds and adds diversity to the ecology of the site.
- Due to the density of trees in these areas it will be necessary to carry out some coppicing to encourage diverse structure and ground flora. Scrub encroachment should be controlled in the centre of the marsh
- Some pockets of dense scrub that have developed in the centre of the marsh will initially be retained, as the scattered scrub is a higher management priority. However, in the longer term these will be brought into the programme of coppicing too.

4.2.3 Other Tree Management Tasks

The potential for installing bird boxes and bat boxes in some of the mature trees should be investigated. Some bat boxes have already been installed along the main path along Pearl Brook.

4.3 Grassland Management

Management of marshy grassland areas have been included in the wetland management section. Most of the remaining areas of grass on this site are mown regularly and are of little botanical interest, although a strip of more diverse vegetation can be found alongside the Pearl Brook.

4.4 Other Site Management Tasks

There are numerous general site management tasks that need to be undertaken. Some of these are suitable to be undertaken by volunteer work-parties, whilst others will require the use of specialist contractors. In addition, members of the Council's staff or approved Voluntary Wardens should carry out regular site patrols to monitor the following:

4.4.1 Boardwalk

The boardwalk requires vegetation control along its edge to prevent encroachment and to maintain a well-managed appearance. Areas of wildflower planting should be exempt from this – if strimming occurs during the summer. An autumn cut is preferable to manage the wildflower areas.

4.4.2 Signage

An interpretative sign is installed by the entrance to the boardwalk. It should be kept clean and free from weeds.

4.4.3 Fencing

All fences and other site security features should be regularly monitored. Any necessary repairs should be arranged promptly.

4.4.4 Litter

Any fly-tipping should be promptly reported so that removal can be arranged.

4.4.5 Invasive Species Control

Japanese Knotweed (JKW): Several stands of JKW have been identified on Kingsmead Marsh. It is important that the control of this highly invasive species is maintained and monitored. At the present chemical control is the advised method for treating JKW.

Contact Officer for Further Information:

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Appendix - Map

Kingsmead LNR



