

Wildling Waterhall – The Next 5 years

This is a broad overview of management options for Wildling Waterhall

The aim is to produce a more natural system with enhanced biodiversity, recognising that this can be achieved more quickly by intervening to reverse some of the human influenced changes that have happened in the past that have made the area less “natural”. This includes reintroducing large herbivores and restoring areas of grassland that would have been much richer in species if they had not been managed for golf

Overview

Use of the recently introduced [NoFence](#) GPS invisible fencing will allow stock to be rotated around the site giving long rest periods to each area. It will mimic the effect that predators have keeping the herd together without the need for any permanent internal fencing

This approach is being used successfully on publically accessible land in [Epping Forest and other sites](#)

Containing stock in set areas will also allow Waymarked trails to be provided and managed such that there are always several walks available avoiding where cattle are grazing.

The majority of the site will be grazed grassland. Work will be done on the fairways to recreate species rich grassland while the rest of the grassland will be allowed to recover slowly under the grazing for the period of this plan and reassessed in 5 years’ time to see if further enhancement would be beneficial.

There are some areas where species rich grassland is being lost to scrub, these will be prioritised for scrub clearance to conserve the species rich grassland.

Much of the scrub on the site is an even aged hawthorn monoculture. Some of this will be allowed to revert to woodland while some may be reverted to a more open scrub/grassland mix as and when funding allows. More open scrub will be grazed which will help open it up further and increase its diversity

It is anticipated that there will be a large volunteer involvement in managing the site, from carrying out stock checks and ecological surveys to growing wildflower plugs to help diversify the fairways. The employment of an education ranger funded by a NHLF bid will allow the site to be a major educational resource to further public understanding of the Biodiversity and Climate Emergencies

Management by habitat (see maps for locations)

Grassland

Grazed Grassland

Grass areas will be grazed by a permanent mixed herd of cattle and ponies (ponies will be introduced once GPS collars have been developed for them) with the possible addition of goats/sheep on a rotation so that each area is grazed quite heavily and then rested for 10

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months of the year. This may be varied and sheep/goats used to target particular areas if it is felt necessary to target scrub/brambles invading species rich grassland.

Grazeable Scrub

This is less dense scrub with vegetation growing under it that the stock will be able to access. Grazing will open up some areas and create a more varied mix of scrub and grassland.

Grassland restoration

The old fairways are species poor grass monocultures and will be targeted for grassland restoration through a combination of scrapes, reseeding and plug planting. Seed being collected from donor sites that are part of the councils existing conservation grazing project

Scrub/Woodland

Priority Scrub Clearance

These are areas of biodiverse grassland that are being lost to invading scrub due to a historical lack of grazing which will be cleared to conserve the grassland

Scrub Clearance for stock movement

These are areas where removal of scrub is necessary to facilitate stock movement around the site. Once cleared the areas will be managed as grassland

Scrub management

Scrub diverse in species and age that will benefit from some coppicing to enhance the age and species diversity

Reptile Mitigation

Areas of even aged scrub monoculture of little wildlife value which can be converted into a much more biodiverse matrix of rough grassland and scattered scrub suitable for reptiles and other species funded by developers who need to carry out mitigation work for reptiles. This will be carried out as and when funding is available

Ungrazeable scrub

Areas of even aged scrub monoculture of little wildlife value. Management of these areas will not be prioritised within the life of this management plan but could in future be reverted to species rich grassland or allowed to succeed to woodland

Woodland Succession

Areas of even aged scrub monoculture that will be allowed to succeed to woodland. It would be beneficial to carry out some coppicing and planting to produce woodland more diverse in age and species if resources allow

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Woodland

Areas or existing mature trees, It is not anticipated that any work will be carried out here other than is necessary for safety

Hedges

Hedges

Areas of hedge should be retained and allowed to expand to 5m to 10m in width and then cut back in rotation to provide good habitat for birds such as nightingales and interconnectivity for a variety of species both within the site and with the wider countryside. This is particularly important for the dormice that are found on the site

Hedge Planting

Where there are gaps in the hedge these should be planted up to increase connectivity for dormice and other species. Species should be native hedge species to diversify what already exists

Water Features

Pond

The existing pond will continue to be managed for Wildlife. Construction of another pond would be beneficial but is not an initial priority

Water Troughs

Piped water is necessary to allow stock rotation. The golf course supply used a pumped system that is no longer in working order. Careful positioning of the troughs will allow them to be shared between adjacent grazing compartments

Bunkers, Tees and Greens

It is proposed to keep these features as part of the heritage of the site. The steep banks of the sand bunkers provide an additional habitat that adds to the biodiversity of the site

Access

Grass Paths

These will probably revert to grassland now access is no longer required for golf, but some may stay as desire lines (and new ones may be created) as the public explore the site

Path

There is no intention to remove the hard surfaced paths

Open Access

The whole site could be dedicated as statutory open access. Grasslands are quite robust when it comes to trampling but some species such as ground nesting birds and reptiles are susceptible to disturbance. Waymarked trails should be set up to direct the majority of

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footfall and it would be preferable for dogs to be required to be kept on a lead to prevent disturbance. Open access does allow some control of dogs in that “visitors using their open access rights must keep their dogs on a short lead of no more than 2 metres between 1 March and 31 July each year and at all times near livestock” but if further control is required than permissive open access may be preferable over statutory.

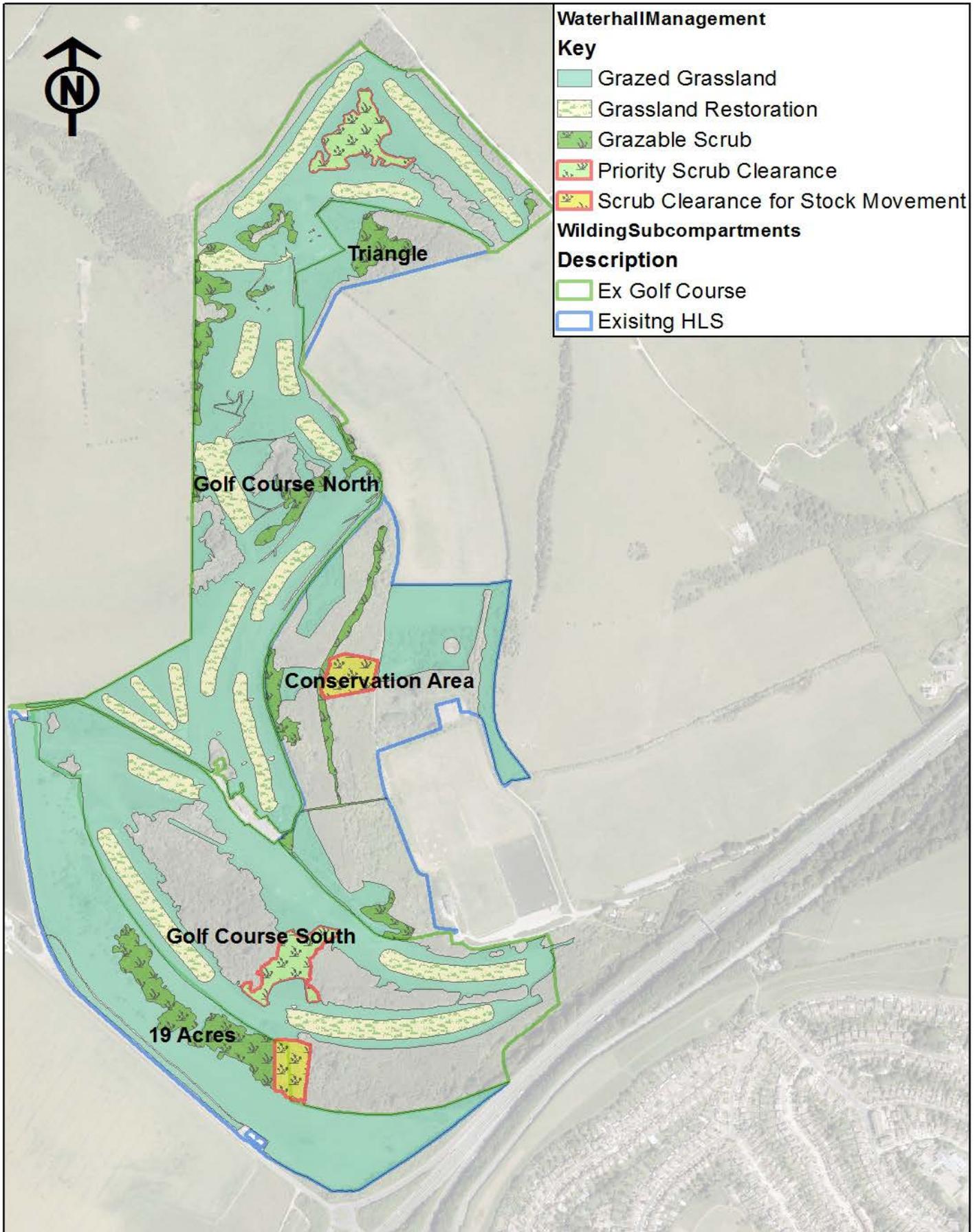
Local Nature Reserve

With the above management the site will have an importance for wildlife and biodiversity on a par with existing Local Nature Reserves and should therefore be declared as a Local Nature Reserve. This will help the public understand that the site is of primary importance for biodiversity

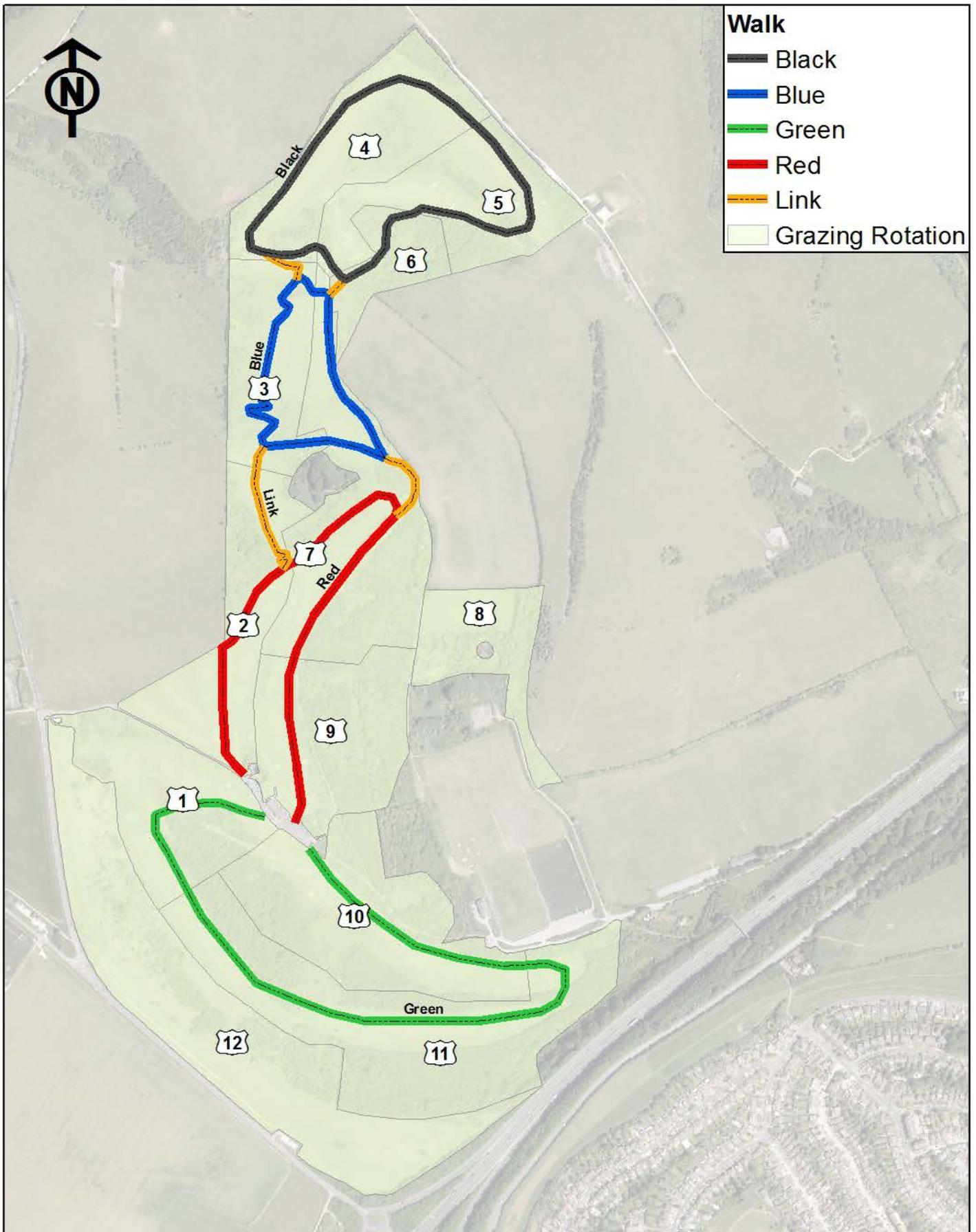
Education

An Education ranger has been included as part of the Changing Chalk Wildlife National Heritage Lottery Fund bid. This will be a vital role to reach into the city and engage with the public on the biodiversity crisis, the councils response to it and what they can do on an individual basis. The Educational Ranger will be expected to increase the range of people visiting the site and work closely with BHEE (The Brighton and Hove Environmental Educational project) to bring school children to the site

Waterhall Grassland Management



Waterhall Grazing Rotation and Paths



Waterhall Scrub Management

