

Rooksbury Mill Local Nature Reserve Andover

Management Plan 2014 - 2024



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A vision for Rooksbury Mill Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

Rooksbury Mill Local Nature Reserve (LNR), is a place where local residents and visitors of all ages come together with the natural environment and enjoy a first class leisure experience within an urban setting. By visiting the Reserve, residents and visitors will leave with an enhanced appreciation of Andover’s unique historic environment, a clearer understanding of the distinctiveness of the Test Valley location and become enthused by biodiversity and environmental issues.



Section 1 – Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Rooksbury Mill was designated a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) in September 2008. The first management plan uses the Ratcliffe criteria (Ratcliffe 1977) to objectively assess the nature conservation value of the site and provide the framework for the yearly management.
- 1.1.2 This is the third management plan for Rooksbury Mill LNR. The plan considers comments from Natural England, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT), the Environment Agency (EA), site users, local organisations, volunteers, The Anton River Conservation Association (TARCA), the Green Flag judges and those responsible for maintaining and managing the site employed by Test Valley Borough Council.
- 1.1.3 The plan will steer the future direction of the reserve for the period 1 January 2014 to 1 January 2024. It is important that the management plan is not viewed as a rigid document but a framework for improvement and should not limit the development of the reserve if circumstances change. An annual review of the plan will ensure that objectives are assessed, amended or removed to ensure focus is maintained.
- 1.1.4 The progress of the management plan will be monitored under Test Valley Borough Council's Green Space Strategy by Natural England (who monitor LNR's) and the Local Biodiversity Action Plan of the Test Valley Local Strategic Partnership.
- 1.1.5 The first section of the plan puts the reserve in its historical and policy context, given its characteristics and contribution to the quality of life of Andover residents. Sections 2 and 3 describe the current management arrangements and the initiatives currently underway to address challenging issues. The fourth and final section outlines a future vision, objectives and action plan for 2014 - 2024. How the management plan will be monitored and reviewed is considered in this section.



1.2 Rooksbury Mill LNR at a glance

1.2.1 Rooksbury Mill LNR is situated south of Andover town centre and adjacent to Watermills Park and immediately north of the A303. The two lakes were created by gravel extraction soon after World War II. The site includes areas of wet woodland, chalk grassland, scrub, riparian habitats, two large lakes, ponds and a stretch of the River Anton. The mill straddles the main channel of the River Anton with most of the smaller channels appearing to have been constructed to drain the floodplain or to serve the one-time watercress beds. The more recent usage of the site as a trout farm led to the development of streams and channels to provide oxygenated water to the hatchery.

Land owner	Test Valley Borough Council
Council Ward	Winton Ward
Elected members	Councillor Rebecca Meyer (Independent) Councillor Richard Rowles (Andover Alliance)
Size of the reserve	8.87 hectares
Location Map	See page 8
Site Map	See page 9
Access and car parking	The car park is accessed off of Barlows Lane. Pedestrian access is from Barlows Lane, along the cycle path from Rooksbury Road, from Watermills Park and also from Sainsbury's Close. (See Page 9).
Reserve facilities	There are wooden benches around the lakes connected by a network of Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant paths and bridges around the majority of the site. Raised boardwalks have been constructed where water levels rise and create waterlogged areas.
Natural environment	The River Anton flows through the Reserve with redundant stew ponds along either side of the main channel, with two smaller channels diverging from main river. There are small patches of chalk grassland interspaced with areas of woodland and shrubs. There is cycle and pedestrian access with a 'dogs-on-lead' policy covering the whole site.
Fishing	Fishing is permitted on Mill Lake only on a day-ticket system obtainable from Challis Tackle, Mylen Road, Andover and OJ's Fishing Tackle and Bait, Unit 103, The Commercial Centre, Picket Piece, Andover. Season tickets are available from Test Valley Borough Council, Beech Hurst, Weyhill Road, Andover.



Information boards

There are three interpretation boards on site situated at each entrance. These contain information about the reserve and contact details for the Countryside Officer / Test Valley Borough Council. There is also space on the board to insert regular posters promoting forthcoming events.

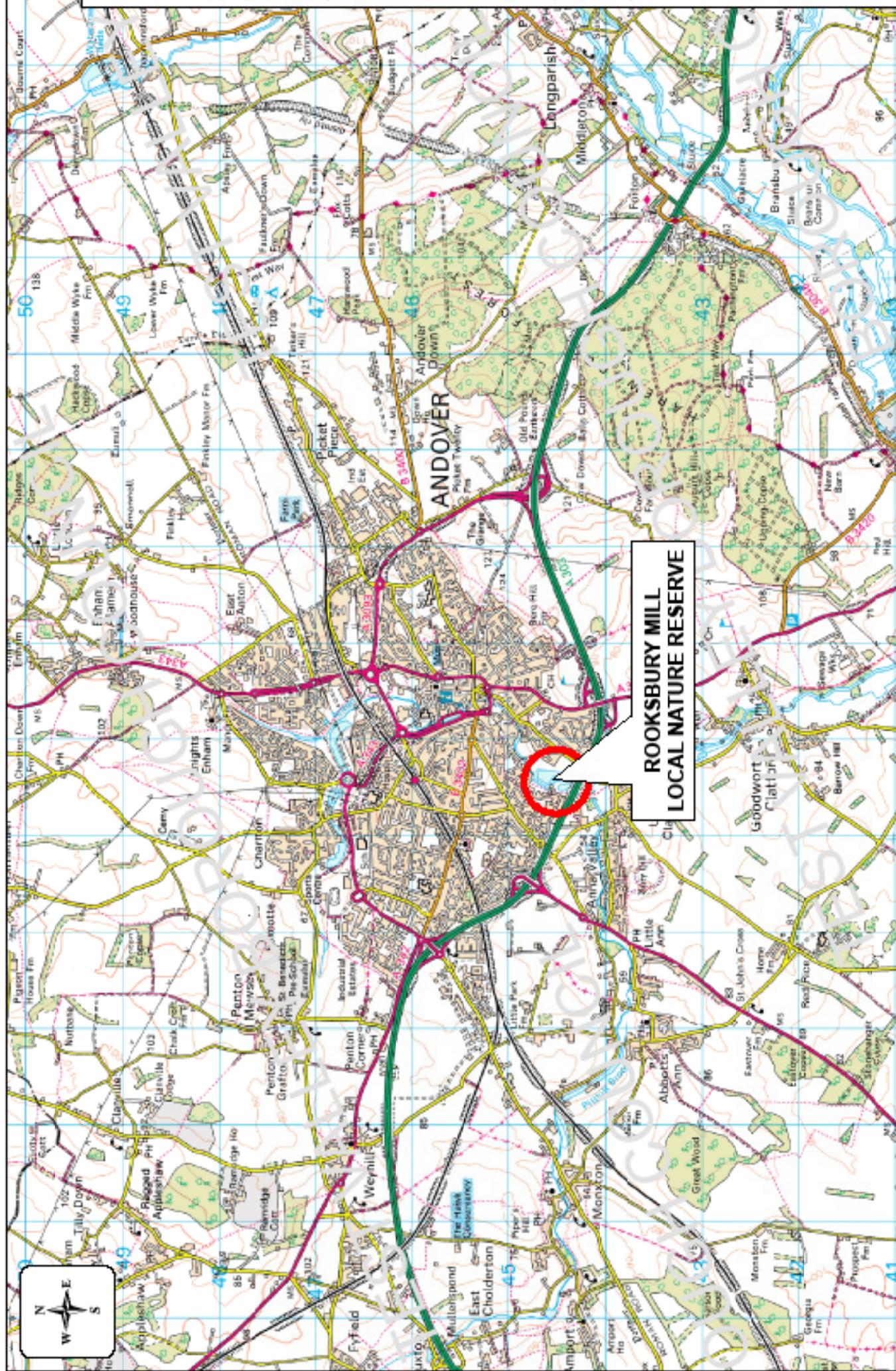
An Information Board can also be found with details of the River Anton Way which passes through the site. The route is also waymarked through the site.

1.2.2 Rooksbury Mill LNR is also part of the wider reaching River Anton Enhancement Scheme (RAES). This scheme is a partnership between Test Valley Borough Council, the EA, HIWWT, TARCA and involves local business and organisations working towards enhancing parts of the River Anton from its rising in the north of Andover to Rooksbury Mill. With further reaching opportunities within the river catchment. The strategic priorities for the RAES that include areas of Rooksbury Mill LNR can be seen in Appendix IV.

1.2.3 In addition to this Test Valley Borough Council are working in partnership with the HIWWT on the Heritage Lottery Funded Watercress and Winterbournes Project, which is working together with local communities on a landscape scale initiative across the Test and Itchen Catchments, with the Upper Anton being one of the focus areas. An application for further funding was submitted in December 2019 and if successful will carry the scheme until 2025. For more information on the project please visit:

<https://www.hiwwt.org.uk/watercress-and-winterbournes>



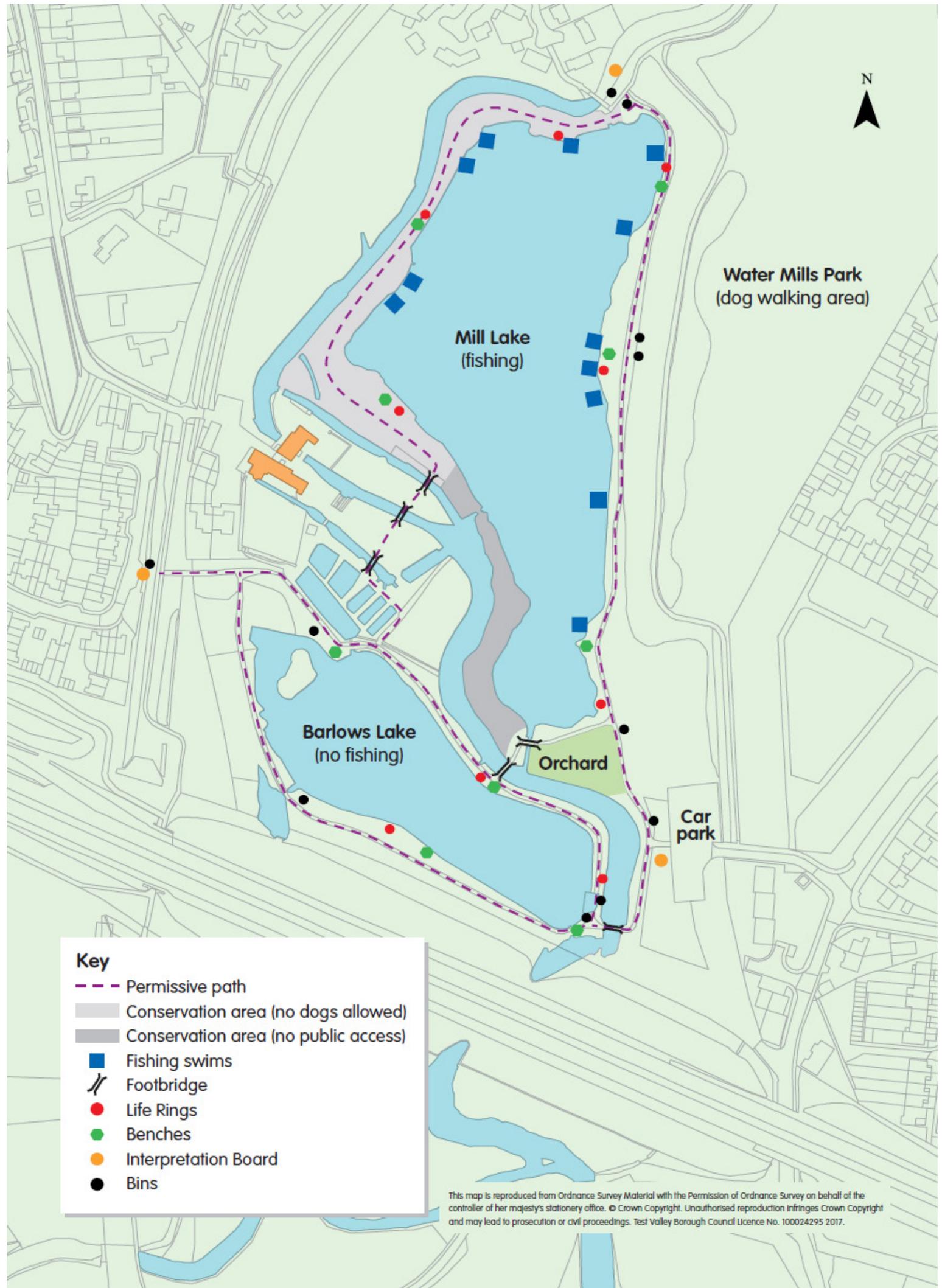


**Map showing Rooksbury Mill
Local Nature Reserve Andover**



Scale: 1:50,000 @ A4
 Date: 21st January 2010
 Drawn: Ian Moxdale
 Dept: ERS
 Doc:

Rooksbury Mill Local Nature Reserve Site Map



1.3 Summary habitat description

- 1.3.1 Mill Lake and Barlows Lake make up the majority of the site, with associated improved grass areas and amenity tree plantings. Notable habitats include the marginal and emergent riparian vegetation along the stretch of the River Anton that runs to the west of the site.

The lakes are flanked by a scrubby boundary to the east comprising of elder, hawthorn, dog rose, willow and buddleja.

The riparian woodland to the north of the mill complex contains species that include ash, aspen, alder, white poplar, willow and black poplar; many of which are Ancient Woodland Indicator species. This would indicate that it is cleared Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland.

The grass areas around the mill complex and stew ponds are areas of improved pasture with occasional large trees. To the west of Barlows Lake occurs a recent poplar plantation mixed with late-stage lime coppice.

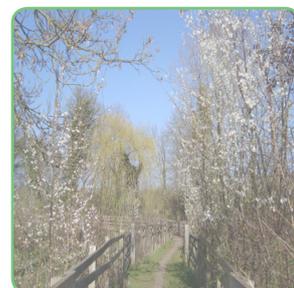
1.4 A brief history

- 1.4.1 In the vicinity of the site, settlement evidence dating from the Neolithic through to the Iron Age has been uncovered by excavations at the hill fort of Bawksbury Camp. This hill fort occupied a low promontory overlooking the confluence of two rivers and is 400 metres away from the present mill buildings.

- 1.4.2 The mill itself is a much altered post-medieval structure which was still in use at the turn of the twentieth century but is now a private residence. The present mill is likely to be standing on the site of one of the six mills recorded in Andover in the Domesday Book. The present mill first appears on Isaac Taylor's 1759 Map of Hampshire, where it is named "Rooksberry Mill". The land below the mill then appeared as water meadows whilst the nearby trout hatchery appears on the 1910 Ordnance Survey map.

- 1.4.3 The lakes were created through gravel extraction in 1969 after there was a surge in demand for gravel for the construction of the A303 bypass. In 1966 the owner of the site put forward a project to extract 32,000 tons of gravel and extraction by the contractor 'Mixconcrete' started in 1969, too late for the bypass. The two deep pits were located with non-extracted strips alongside the River Anton exactly as the Barlows and Mill lakes exist today. The processing plant and bins stood where the car park lies today.

- 1.4.4 The site has been used as a pig farm, mink farm and until 2001 when Test Valley Borough Council purchased the site, a trout fishery. The site has since been managed for nature conservation with public access. The Reserve is designated a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and in September 2008 the site was declared a Local Nature Reserve by Natural England.



1.5 Policy context

1.5.1 Rooksbury Mill LNR provides a valuable local amenity for the people of Andover, and contributes to the delivery of policy at the local, national and European level.

1.5.2 National Guidance and Policy

25 year Environment Plan 'A Green Future' : - Our 25 Year Plan to improve the Environment (2018), seeks to deal with the past negative impact of the environment and sets out ten goals to achieve over the life time of the plan. These are:

1. Clean air
2. Clean and plentiful water
3. Thriving plants and wildlife
4. A reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as drought and flooding
5. Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently
6. Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment
7. Mitigating and adapting to climate change
8. Minimising waste
9. Managing exposure to chemicals
10. Enhancing biosecurity

Four key policies from this plan directly relate to the Council's Green Space Strategy:

- Using and managing land sustainably
- Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes
- Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing
- Increasing resource efficiency and reducing pollution and waste

1.5.3 The aims and ethos of the Green Flag Award have been embraced within the Council's Green Space Strategy which sets out our vision for Test Valley's green spaces, including Rooksbury Mill LNR, for 2020 to 2030. The specific objectives of the Green Space Strategy are:

- Meeting the increasing demand for access to green space
- Meeting the needs of the community
- New housing development
- Maintaining safe spaces
- Maintenance standards
- Health and wellbeing
- A climate emergency
- Disease and invasive species
- Biodiversity and access to nature



1.6 The Green Flag Award for Rooksbury Mill LNR

A key objective within the Green Space Strategy was to achieve a Green Flag Award for Rooksbury Mill LNR. The Green Flag Award is the national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales. The award scheme began in 1996 as a means of recognising and rewarding the best green spaces in the country. It was also seen as a way of encouraging others to achieve the same high environmental standards, creating a benchmark of excellence in recreational green spaces. Rooksbury Mill LNR has retained Green Flag status since it was first awarded in 2009.



1.7 Delivering the Council's Corporate Objectives

1.7.1 The management of Rooksbury Mill LNR contributes to the aims and objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan. During the Summer of 2018, local councillors and officers attended more than 70 events across the borough and engaged with over 2,000 residents about what was important to them and would improve their quality of life. The objective of this research was to strengthen the Council's evidence led approach for developing new policy and to strengthen the Council's approach to understanding the experience people have of the services they receive.



Overall residents of Test Valley expressed their aspirations and determination to support their borough. Specifically:



- Residents are keen to take part in more leisure activities across the borough making the most of Test Valleys Green Spaces
- Being able to easily access the countryside and green spaces within Test Valley
- More accessible and well-linked cycling and walking routes.
- Support the continue investment in our green spaces and Nature Reserves



The new Test Valley Borough Council Corporate Plan 2019 to 2023 Growing Our Potential sets four key priorities.

- Providing high quality green infrastructure such as green spaces and nature reserves for our communities to access and enjoy for generations to come and the protection of biodiversity will be integral to this.
- Enhancing the quality of the public realm to improve the local environment, so that these are attractive spaces and places that people and enjoy and spend time.
- Expanding the network and usage of family friendly cycling and walking routes to make them accessible and well linked, in order to promote wellbeing and more sustainable travel.
- Making the most of the benefits from inward investment and economic growth. Promoting the borough as an outstanding place to live and work, whilst safeguarding its heritage and natural assets.



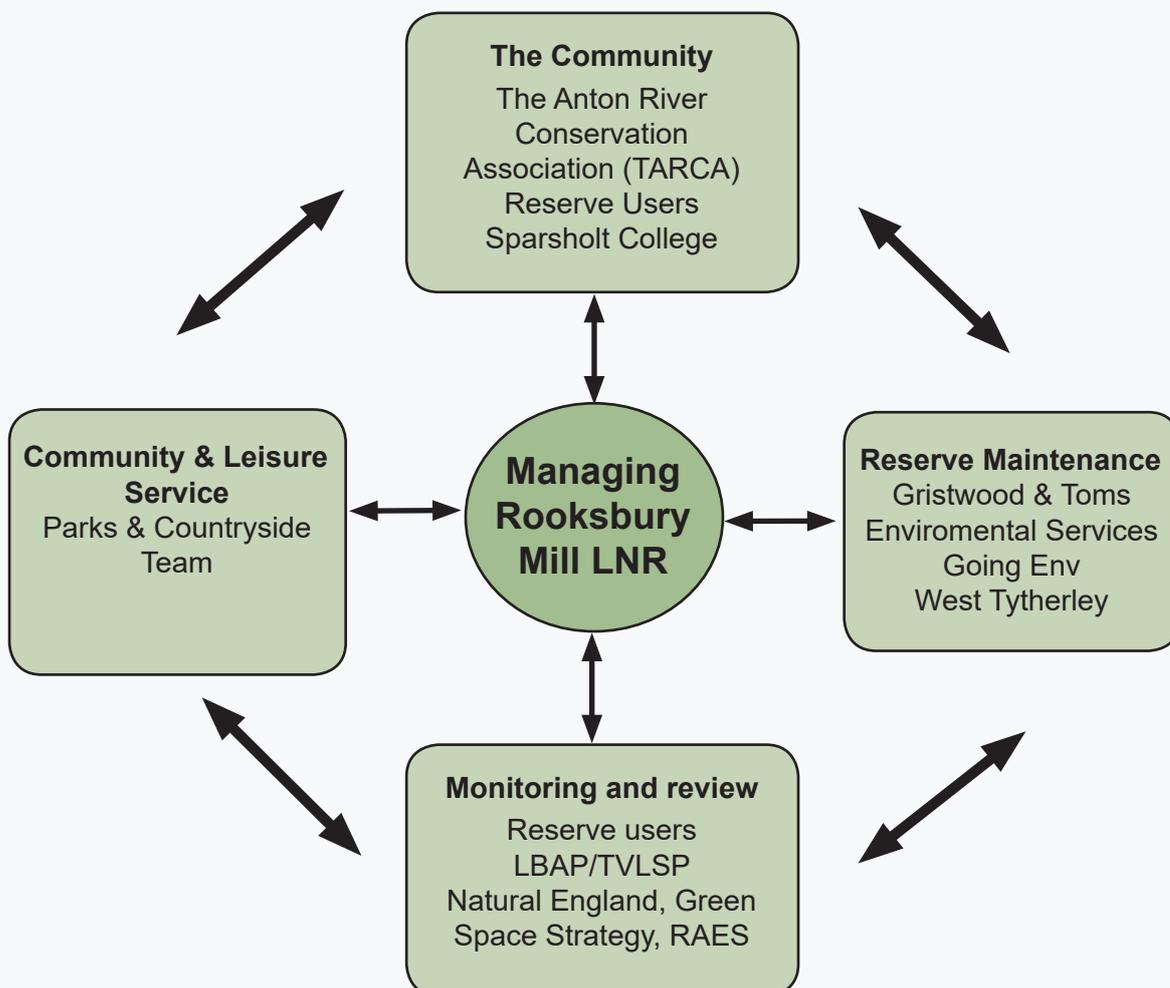
Section 2 - What happens now?

2.1 Managing the Reserve

2.1.1 Parks and open spaces are maintained by the Council's Environmental Services. However, where sites are managed primarily for nature conservation, it was seen that it would be beneficial to employ those with a sound knowledge of maintaining Nature Reserves instead of traditionally trained horticultural staff. Therefore, the Countryside Officer employs a range of ecologically trained contractors working towards specific specifications for differing habitats.

2.1.2 The benefits of this method of management is that appropriately skilled contractors manage specific habitats as highlighted in this management plan (See Appendix I). Official purchase orders will be raised at the start of the year and sent to relevant contractors to undertake the work as required for the whole year. A further benefit is that working with these contractors allows a certain amount of flexibility to overcome problems such as changing weather conditions or site specific restrictions.

Figure 1 - Management Structure.



2.2 Maintenance

2.2.1 Careful maintenance of the reserve is required as the site is of great conservation value providing habitats for:

- water voles
- native brown trout
- numerous species of dragonfly and damselfly
- bats
- birds
- otters
- butterflies

Long term aims for the site can be categorised into four Management Options:

- A - Active Conservation Management
- B - Monitoring and Research
- C - Education and Access
- D - Administration and Public Relations

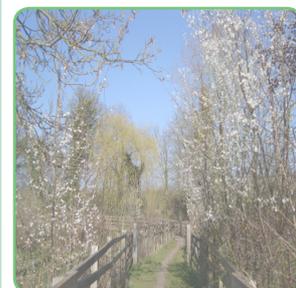


Photograph 1 - Watervole at Rooksbury Mill LNR



Table 2 – Brief management of Rooksbury Mill LNR. An in-depth work schedule can be found in Appendix I

Feature / Habitat	Management Option	Outline Prescription
Riparian woodland	A	Coppice neglected alder to prevent loss of stools - use contractors
Open grassland	A	Cut grass and remove arisings from site- cut in spring (March) and autumn (October)
Butterflies	B	Involve and support local residents with annual butterfly transects. Send results to Butterfly Conservation
Dragonflies & Damselflies	B	Compile adhoc records from local volunteers and encourage recording through living record
Birds	B	Conduct a Common Bird Census (CBC) with assistance from British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) members and local residents
Water voles	B	Detailed monitoring to continue. Conduct survey every 5 years
Mammals	B	Record and note species seen by local residents and Countryside Officer to compile database (living record)
Prevent scrub encroachment onto chalk grassland	A	Involve local volunteers to prevent shrub encroachment on chalk grassland
Other invertebrates	B	Survey area for invertebrates
Public access	C & D	Maintain permissive paths through site - circular route
School involvement	C	Involve local children in projects on site. Teachers Pack for educational use in line with national curriculum. Run annual educational schools programme
Control of invasive species	A	Control where appropriate or possible
Increase public awareness	D	Through interpretation boards, talks, local newsletters, guided walks and work parties
Control blanket weed	A	Install barley straw to reduce growing blanket weed at Mill Lake



Management options provide a broad guide for the operational management of the site if used in conjunction with appropriate objectives. They also provide a standard reference for inter-site comparisons.

- 2.2.2 Cutting of grass swards at differing heights (especially adjacent to paths), will favour many species of insects, invertebrates and birds. This will also favour native plant species as the cutting and removal of cuttings will reduce the nutrient levels maintaining a wider diversity.
- 2.2.3 The pollarding and coppicing of trees along the riverbank will allow more light into the river to encourage growth of emergent vegetation. This will be done during the winter months to encourage early growth in the spring. Pruning of the apple orchard will be done when required.
- 2.2.4 Various native hedges have been planted around the reserve to restrict public access into sensitive areas whilst providing secure transit routes for species including otters. These hedges will be laid in the South of England style so as to provide a better habitat for birds and invertebrates and to promote this form of traditional management to the public.
- 2.2.5 Faggoting and management of the River Anton is carried out when required on site under the River Anton Enhancement Scheme. This work is done in partnership with the Environment Agency and aims to increase the flow of water to clear accumulated silt from the gravel bed. This in turn increases the breeding habitat for salmonids that are a good indicator that the rest of the food chain is in good working order.

2.3 Resources

- 2.3.1 The pressure on council resources coupled with the high expectation of reserve users means that we have to constantly look for new and innovative ways to maximise our resources to ensure continuous improvement. We achieve this in the following ways:
- **Working in partnership** with organisations, local groups and people. This is the most vital resource we have to improve the site. Working with The Anton River Conservation Association (TARCA) and various individuals and groups has provided not only access to volunteer knowledge and support, but has also led to sponsorship opportunities for projects and initiatives.
 - **Section 106 contributions.** Should a development be approved within the ward which cannot feasibly include public open space, an 'off site' contribution is collected to improve a space within the vicinity / ward. Efforts have been made to collect some of these contributions to pay for projects on site.
 - **Higher Level Stewardship.** Rooksbury Mill has been included in a group designation under Natural England's Higher Level Stewardship Scheme which runs until April 2021 and provides additional funds for the site as well as setting prescriptions for management. This agreement has been extended on a rolling contract annually to 2023 until Natural England launch their new Environmental Land Management Scheme.



2.4 Finance and Budget

2.4.1 The annual budget for maintenance is approved by Council in February each year and is summarised across the broad management areas in Table 3. In order to create a balanced budget, Council services are required to find savings each year in order to bridge any gaps. Recent savings have not impacted directly on the sites management but no increase has been received either. It is anticipated that we can expect a 'stand-still' budget in 2022/23.

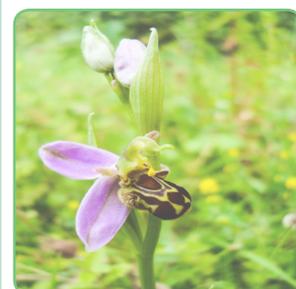
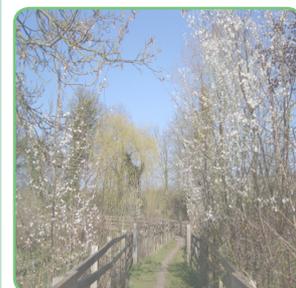
2.4.2 We do receive a small income from the fishing permits for Mill Lake.

Table 3 – Budget Expenditure for Rooksbury Mill LNR 2022/23

Management operation	Approximate expenditure
Grass Cutting	£2,660
Weed Cutting and collection	£3,000
Paths / boardwalks / bridges	£1,500
Tree management	£1,560
Equipment	£3,010
Miscellaneous (Grounds maintenance)	£380
Litter	£1,420
Total	£13,530
Projected income (fishing)	£1,500
Volunteer hours off-set*	£1,900

* based on 2021 volunteer totals and minimum wage multiplier (23years > £9.50)

2.4.3 The Council's Asset Management Plan will ensure capital programmes will be initiated for works including path repairs and the replacement of any bridges or fencing that requires capital funding.



2.5 Working with the Community

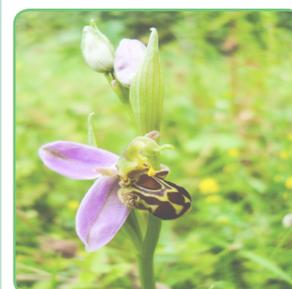
- 2.5.1 Since its opening in 2001, Rooksbury Mill LNR has hosted a variety of community events, from walks and talks to work parties and ecological surveys.
- 2.5.2 We work closely with TARCA and there are at least 6 volunteer tasks held at Rooksbury Mill LNR every year.
- 2.5.3 During 2021, volunteers have contributed 160.5 hours at Rooksbury Mill LNR. Numbers have been significantly reduced due to restrictions on group size and our ability to run volunteer activities during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 2.5.4 Throughout the year the reserve hosts a variety of events for the community – with a strong emphasis on participation and health and wellbeing as well as nature conservation. The Events Guide provides a whole host of Activities at Rooksbury Mill LNR and runs from January to December each year (See Appendix III).
- 2.5.5 The reserve is an important foraging habitat for bats and regular walks are led around the reserve by the Countryside Officer and Kate Savage from the Hampshire Bat Group. Kate Savage along with volunteers from TARCA help to carry out Bat Surveys around Rooksbury Mill LNR. These provide an important awareness and education tool where people are able to understand the importance of all aspects of the Reserve. Data is also collected using Audio moth recorders at various locations around the site. Data is currently under review.
- 2.5.6 Butterflies are an excellent indicator of the health of nature reserves since 2002, volunteers have helped collect data on species, diversity and numbers. 2019 saw seven volunteers carrying out a Butterfly Survey around the site from April to September. This information is used to flag up any possible adverse management techniques being used on site, and feeds into the Hampshire Butterfly results. (See Appendix II - F)
- 2.5.7 Local Schools and children's group's (Cub & Scouts) are vitally important to successful site management, therefore every effort is made to involve children in projects and studies. Each year all the boroughs primary schools are invited to attend educational visits at Rooksbury Mill LNR. The aim of these visits is to teach children about their local environment and the different habitats and the biodiversity at Rooksbury Mill. Aimed at Key Stage 1 and 2 the pupils have previously been assisted by Hi-Tech Wild-Trek Trailer for 13 years. All schools are encouraged to provide feedback about the visits with questionnaires given to teachers and pupils. The results help shape the following years programme. Out of the 16 schools that visited our four nature reserves in 2019, Rooksbury Mill LNR was host to five of the schools totalling 308 children. School visits have been postponed during 2020 and 2021 due to Covid-19. Visits will recommence during the spring / summer 2022.

Appendix V includes details of the sites Educational Visit Guide as well as feedback from 2019 school visits.



2.5.8 Events Programme for Rooksbury Mill LNR 2022

Event	Date	Event Co-ordinator
River clean and site maintenance	Sunday 3 April	TVBC & TARCA
Bioblitz	Saturday 25 June	TVBC & TARCA
Non native plant species removal	Sunday 7 August	TVBC & TARCA
Orchard Day	Sunday 9 October	TVBC & TARCA
Winter tasks	Saturday 19 November	TVBC & TARCA
Winter tasks	Sunday 4 December	TVBC & TARCA



2.6 Health and Safety

2.6.1 The value of keeping site visitors safe cannot be over stated. A site based assessment (See Appendix I) is carried out and reviewed annually, and includes paths, bridges, benches, boardwalks and general site furniture alongside recorded site inspections and task based risk assessments (Also Appendix I). The Countryside Officer takes responsibility for any actions which arise from these inspections. Informal inspections of the reserve are also carried out by Test Valley staff (including the Dog Warden), on an almost daily basis. These visits are not recorded but do result in immediate action.

2.6.2 Tree management - All trees within the reserve have been surveyed and condition reports logged on the Ezy Tree Management System. All works to ensure existing specimens remain healthy and safe have been carried out. A walking inspection is carried out annually as well as ad-hoc inspections by the Parks and Countryside Manager, Countryside Officers, Tree Officer and Test Valley's Approved Tree Contractor when on the reserve. These inspections are unrecorded but result in immediate action if problems are identified. It is necessary to recognise the importance of appropriate management to retain trees that may be dead or decaying but not lose sight of their value as a wildlife habitat. Tidy is not always the best option in the long term.

Information regarding Ash dieback can be found on the Council's website below:

<https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/planning-and-building/treesandlandscape/ashdieback>

Section 3 – Issues and Initiatives

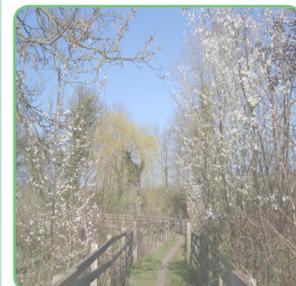
3.1 Community safety

- 3.1.1 The reserve is regularly patrolled by Countryside Officers, leading to the development of a good rapport with many of the regular visitors. Although it is not possible to maintain a presence at all times, a strong site presence is key to ensuring visitors feel safe and secure. Other staff also warden the site in the guise of the Dog Warden, the Parks and Countryside Manager, Tree Officer and Grounds Maintenance staff who visit the site on an ad-hoc basis.
- 3.1.2 Wardening of the Reserve has enabled a large number of visitors to pass on information to the Countryside Officers, helping with informal policing and the provision of details on incidents, issues and problems.
- 3.1.3 The lifebelts are checked weekly with a record kept by the Environmental Service team and ad-hoc by the Countryside Officer. These are replaced when required.
- 3.1.4 The main issues occurring at Rooksbury Mill LNR are set out in the Table 4 with recommendations on how to address them:

Table 4 - Issues and recommendations at Rooksbury Mill LNR

Problem	Likelihood	Recommendation
Loss of life belts	Green	Replace when required
Dogs off leads	Red	Encourage and educate why dogs should be on leads in LNR. Involve Dog Warden
Wet and muddy footwear	Yellow	Design boardwalks where areas of path becomes regularly flooded
Access to sensitive areas	Green	Increase signage and wardening
Fly tipping	Green	Increased wardening and education of those caught. Involve Enforcement Officers
Vandalism to furniture	Green	Maintain high standard of cleanliness and increase wardening at appropriate times.
Fishing with no licence or day ticket	Yellow	Increase wardening and education to encourage responsible angling. Season tickets are available to encourage compliance.
Parking	Green	In order to preserve parking for visitors use only, parking is now restricted to a four hour maximum stay no return within three hours, Monday to Friday 8.30 am to 6 pm except Fishing Permit Holders.

SCALE	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
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- 3.1.5 Members of TARCA do regularly use the site, for dog walking, bird spotting and relaxation. These group members have discussed the possibility of creating a Volunteer Warden Programme for the site. However, after involving our Health and Safety Officer on this subject it was decided that giving the members contact details of the Countryside Officer and local Police Officer. In this way the volunteers will not have to speak directly to those causing the disturbance and will lessen any danger of violence to themselves.



3.2 Celebrating Andover's Cultural Heritage

- 3.2.1 Poetry in Motion - Bringing art, history and exercise together became a focus of the 'Poetry in Motion' project. This competition encouraged local people to contribute their favourite poem or original work, with the best and most fitting permanently on display throughout the town including the paths leading to the site.
- 3.2.2 Memorial trees and benches – The site is loved by people of all ages for many different reasons. Trees and benches offer a means of remembering loved ones, whilst enhancing the reserve and being of benefit to others.
- 3.2.3 Welcoming dog walkers - Dogs and their owners are welcome at Rooksbury Mill LNR, but to ensure that visitors who are not so keen on canines can enjoy their visit, we operate a dogs on leads Policy. Signage to this effect is available on all entrances to the site.



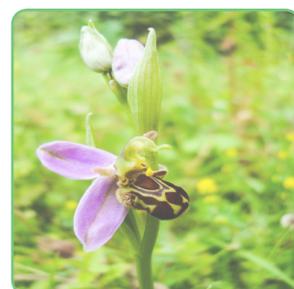
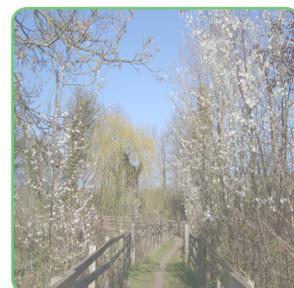
We are supported by the Councils Dog Warden who regularly patrols the reserve to encourage responsible dog ownership. There is a 'dog-on leads' policy for the entire site with a complete 'no-dog' area set out around the River Anton.

3.3 Nature Conservation

- 3.3.1 The role of urban green space in providing habitats for some of the UK's most threatened species is now being recognised and some of these species are included in the Test Valley LBAP. Well managed areas can contribute to halting the long term decline in species diversity as well as offering excellent opportunities to educate and inform the public on the part they can play in encouraging wildlife in their own gardens.
- 3.3.2 Rooksbury Mill LNR provides a variety of different habitats and species, including:
- The River Anton - As one of the best examples of a chalk river in Hampshire, the River Anton provides a home for a number of birds and fish, as well as fresh water invertebrates. Future improvements to the river environment are scoped in the action plan with a project to recreate more natural banks along the river to create suitable habitats for water voles as well as otter holts.



- Management of deadwood - Deadwood is left on the trees where it poses no risk to public health. Where wood is removed, deadwood piles are created at the base of the trees within the vicinity, to provide an additional habitat for insects and bryophytes. Standing deadwood is left where it provides an additional habitat at the edges of the reserve.
- Trees and bats - Being situated adjacent to waterways in conjunction with mature trees, the site provides important feeding and roosting habitats for bats. The site is used by several species including the daubenton, noctule, serotine, long eared, soprano and common pipistrelle bats that use the reserve for foraging and summer roosting. Roosting bats have been recorded in the reserve include pipistrelle and noctule.
- Lakes – The two lakes on site, Barlows Lake and Mill Lake, were formed by gravel extraction and are not naturally occurring. These lakes are also designated as flood alleviation for the town of Andover. They are, however, a great area for wildlife. We have a wide range of water birds using the site including cormorants, water-rails and great crested grebes with rarer species including bittern and osprey visiting the site (See Appendix II - C). We have excellent biological information on the aquatic invertebrates in the lakes and rivers. This can be found in Appendix II - A. Mill Lake has an excellent fish stock and this is the only part of the reserve where we allow fishing through a day ticket system. These are available from Challis Tackle in Mylen Road, Andover and OJ's Fishing Tackle and Bait, Unit 103, The Commercial Centre, Picket Piece, Andover. Season tickets are available from Reception, Test Valley Borough Council, Beech Hurst, Weyhill Road, Andover.
- Log piles – These are left wherever possible to create refuges for many types of invertebrates and the possibility of reptiles that need these types of habitat to thrive.
- Ponds - These are fantastic habitats, especially when off the main channel of the river, as they provide quiet areas for invertebrates and also opportunities for water voles to create burrows.
- Redundant stew ponds - The high banks within these old stews (where young fish were brought on before release into the main lakes), are excellent habitat for nesting kingfishers.
- Hedge laying – Wherever possible, the hedges that were planted over 8 years ago when the site was first managed for nature conservation will be laid in the traditional South of England style. There are many reasons for continuing to maintain our hedges in this way – they are more attractive than wire fences, provide excellent habitat for nesting birds, increase the trees longevity, create a sustainable 'barrier' and most importantly to continue using a management technique that has been used for generations. Many volunteers help in this task, serving to perpetuate this craft.
- Unimproved chalk grassland – This habitat has largely developed on shallow lime-rich soils, usually over limestone rocks. It includes a variety of vegetation types but often has a very rich flora.



The springy turf of agriculturally unimproved chalk grassland provides one of Britain's richest wildlife habitats. The area of chalk grassland has historically fluctuated in response to changes in grain prices and the demand for arable land, however, the last 50 years have seen an unprecedented level of chalk grassland destruction. An estimated 43,500 hectares (ha) of chalk grassland now remains in Britain, covering only 3.3% of the chalk outcrop. Therefore, even the small area of this habitat type at Rooksbury Mill LNR is worth protecting.

3.3.3 Water voles and otters – Rooksbury Mill LNR is home to a large population of water voles and otters. The water vole is found throughout Britain but is confined mainly to lowland areas near water. Once common and widespread this species has suffered a significant decline in numbers and distribution and are Britain's most declining mammal. Major causes of decline are:

- Loss and fragmentation of habitats.
- Disturbance of key habitats.
- Predation by mink - Mink are monitored annually on site and currently there are no records of mink present at Rooksbury Mill.
- Pollution of watercourses and poisoning.

Otters underwent a dramatic decline during the 1950's and 1960's. This was largely due to pollution and habitat loss associated with agriculture and industry. They are now making a slow, natural recovery aided by a number of habitat restoration schemes and improvements in water quality such as here at Rooksbury Mill LNR.

Both of these species are protected by law and are listed in the LBAP, and can be seen in full at:

<https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/communityandleisure/naturereserves/biodiversity-action-plan>

A list of species using and living within the reserve has been compiled and can be found in Appendix II. This list is not exhaustive and will be added to as we receive further ecological information.



3.4 A sustainable future

3.4.1 Ensuring resources are maximised and waste is minimised is a core theme within the Council's corporate plan, but translates locally to how we manage various aspects of our parks and open spaces, including Rooksbury Mill LNR. Minimising waste and considering our actions at a local level will contribute to the global movement to minimise human impact on the environment and combat climate change. The Council signed the Nottingham Declaration in 2008 to demonstrate its commitment to combating emissions which contribute to climate change. The scale of the challenge means that all sectors of the community have to be involved if we are to meet targets for reducing emissions and adapting to climate change. Our obligation to manage the reserve in a way that reduces energy consumption and waste is achieved in the following ways:

- Reduction in chemical use - Rooksbury Mill LNR is virtually chemical free with mechanical methods favoured where possible with the exception of Japanese Knotweed, where spraying is deemed the best method of control, as pulling can lead to the spread of rhizomes. Roundup bioactive is used in these situations, being chosen for its minimal impact on the environment.

Where chemicals are applied only licensed operatives who have been specially trained carry out this work. This ensures the impact on the environment is minimised. Specific safe operating procedures have been written and all staff using herbicides have received training to ensure they protect themselves as well as the environment.

- Peat free plant growing - All trees planted within the Reserve are purchased locally to avoid over long journeys, with the majority being bought from Hillier Nurseries who supply plants of local provenance. All trees and plants are grown using peat free compost. The UK's lowland raised peat bogs are amongst the most important and valuable habitats with only a fragment of near natural bog remaining. This option is more expensive but demonstrates the Council's commitment to supporting the reduction in overall UK peat usage.
- Sustainable timber - Timber products used within the site for example, benches, boardwalks and faggots have been obtained from sustainable sources and either carry FSC or grown in Britain.
- Recycling and reuse - The Council has a target to recycle 34% of household and garden waste. The obligation to reuse and recycle is not confined to the home with the initiative embraced across various site management activities.
- Recycling green waste – All woody material cut on site is chipped on site and then used as a weed suppressant on new plantings within the borough. All grass cuttings are collected and removed from site where possible in line with Natural England Higher Level Stewardship. All material which cannot be used is taken off site and is converted locally into 'Pro Grow' including weed cuttings from the lakes.
- Recycling Centre - There is a recycling centre on site, situated within the main car park off of Barlows Lane. This includes glass disposal units and a Salvation Army clothing disposal unit, both of which are heavily used and are collected weekly.



□ Accessing the Reserve – The site can be easily reached by foot but people do use cars to transport dogs and fishing kit. Rooksbury Mill LNR car park is spacious and can accommodate over 30 cars and three coaches. In order to preserve parking for visitors use only, parking is now restricted to a four hour maximum stay no return within three hours, Monday to Friday 8.30 am to 6 pm except Fishing Permit Holders.

□ However, with the Council's obligation to reduce the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere it will be important to establish reasons for car travel and work with the Council's Transport planners to reduce the number of journeys. A visitor survey was conducted in 2011 and is due to be conducted again in 2020. Information on visitors travel preferences will be collected at this time.

Link below to Visitor Survey 2022

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/rooksburymill>

□ Bike Rack – This was installed when the car park was developed in 2003 to encourage people to use bikes to journey to and from the reserve.

□ Climate change is one of the greatest challenges we face, locally, nationally and globally. It is a challenge that will continue to grow over the coming years, becoming ever more critical for future generations.

The Council declared a climate emergency in September 2019 and committed to identify steps we can take to achieve carbon-neutrality as soon as possible.

In June 2020 the Council approved its climate emergency action plan. It concentrates on what the Council can do to make a difference. More information on this can be found at:

<https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/aboutyourcouncil/corporatedirection/environmentandsustainability/climate-emergency-action-plan>



3.5 Increasing Awareness

3.5.1 Signage - There are three interpretation boards at Rooksbury Mill LNR; one at each entrance. However, there is no signage for vehicles from the town centre to the reserve. Vehicle access signage does however exist off Barlows Lane and Salisbury Road. Signage is available from the Town Centre via a walking route as part of the 'River Anton Way' which links all the sites in Andover by a riverside walk. See more information on the Council's website on the link below:

<https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/communityandleisure/naturereserves/river-anton>

3.5.2 Signage is reviewed on an ad-hoc basis to ensure it is clear and suitable for use.

3.5.3 Website - The Council website includes information about Rooksbury Mill LNR.

3.5.4 Events - Events held within the reserve attract not only local visitors but also people from outside Andover. These range from conservation volunteer tasks to school visits. People also come to fish at this accessible resource.

3.5.5 Permanent interpretation boards have been installed at each of the three main entrances to the site. These are used to provide information on how the site is managed, raise awareness on appropriate use of the site, and to advertise upcoming events. Temporary interpretation signage will also be installed around the site where appropriate to raise awareness of certain aspects of the site, for example adjacent to the wildflower meadows in the spring.

3.6 Consultation / User feedback

3.6.1 Customer feedback is encouraged all year round and is informally collected by the Countryside Officer who is on site on a regular basis. Volunteer groups and those with a vested interest in the reserve also have the Countryside Officers contact details. Contact details for Community and Leisure Service can also be found on the information boards at the entrances to the site and on the Council's website:

<https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/communityandleisure/naturereserves/rooksbury-mill-local-nature-reserve-andover>



Section 4 – Future Management of Rooksbury Mill LNR

4.1 Vision Statement

Rooksbury Mill LNR is a place where local residents and visitors of all ages come together with the natural environment and enjoy a first class leisure experience within an urban setting. By visiting the Reserve, residents and visitors will leave with an enhanced appreciation of Andover's unique historic environment, a clearer understanding of the distinctiveness of the Test Valley location and become enthused by biodiversity and environmental issues.

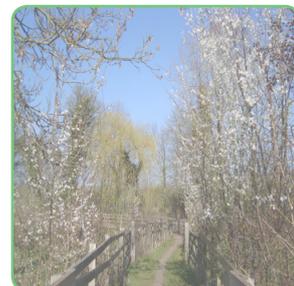
4.2 Aims

We will achieve this vision by:-

- Providing a safe and well managed Local Nature Reserve which can be accessed and enjoyed by everyone.
- Continually improving the range of activities within the Reserve to cater for everybody.
- Continue to maintain or increase the habitats on site for nature conservation.
- Maintain the availability of the site for fishing for all.
- Minimising the impact on the environment by incorporating sustainable management practices and encouraging Reserve users to adopt similar practices.

4.3 Specific Objectives for 2022

The following objectives have been developed through consultation with the volunteer groups that use the site and from user's comments. The details are specified within an action plan which follows:



4.3 Table 6 - Action Plan 2022

Objective	Prescription
Maintain and increase habitat for water voles	Cut one third of the bank, once per year (in accordance with Environment Agency regulations on flood prevention)
Control invasive ragwort	Pull by hand and remove from site. Leave 5% for LBAP species Cinnebar moth
Make safe any dangerous trees	Remove unsafe trees from site. Leave deadwood on site where possible
Conduct surveys where necessary	Survey for the following during 2022: aquatic invertebrates, butterflies and visitors
Monitor fishing in Mill Lake	Continue to bailiff fishing on Mill Lake Annual feedback questionnaire, including species list
Cut grass and remove arisings	Cut to differing sward heights twice yearly (first cut in March and second in October)
Keep permissive footpaths open	Where no formal footpath exists, cut grass twice yearly (first cut in March and second in October) or as required
Cut weed within Mill Lake	Cut and remove off site aquatic weed 3 times yearly in April, June and September or as required
Control growth of blanket weed on Mill Lake	Install barley straw minimum of two times yearly in January and June Create woody debris mattress around lake inflow points and plant with native plants characteristic of the site to trap sediment and control nutrient input into the lake
Maintain swims for fishing	Cut swim hedges and paths Carry out maintenance to reinforce retaining walls on entrances to swims
Coppice /pollard species where necessary	Pollard willow species alongside River Anton to prolong life. Work to be carried out in line with current Tree Preservation Order
Maintain hedgerow	Lay hedgerow adjacent to stew ponds using the Hampshire style
Reinstate Chalk Grassland	Maintain scrub at current extent to avoid encroachment

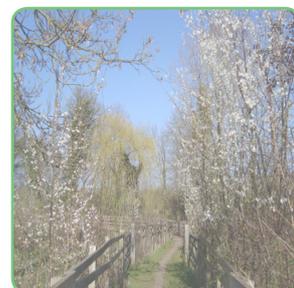


Table 6 - Action Plan 2022

Objective	Prescription
Maintain fruit trees	Practice regulated pruning to prolong life and maintain good fruit production Mulch trees



4.4 Monitoring and review

4.4.1 The management plan must be seen as a live document which can be amended or changed to reflect new opportunities or changing circumstances.

4.4.2 It will be important to share with the public where we have achieved our targets but also where things have not been achieved and why. A summary of our past year's performance against the key objectives will be included each year in the management plan to ensure progress is tracked. Appendix IV reviews targets set under the River Anton Enhancement Scheme.

4.4.3 Key ways in which our success will be measured:-

- Feedback from Customer Comment cards
- Increased attendance at events
- Local Biodiversity Action Plan measures
- Achieving and keeping the Keep Britain Tidy Green Flag Award



**APPENDICES
CAN BE FOUND
ON
THE LINK BELOW**

<https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/communityandleisure/naturereserves/rooksbury-mill-local-nature-reserve-andover>

