



Halesworth Millennium Green



Site Management Plan 2024

Why we need a Site Management Plan

The purpose of this Plan is to answer the following questions:

➤ *What is the Green?*

to describe the Green, its extent, history and character

➤ *Why is it managed as it is?*

to identify the management priorities arising from the opportunities and constraints in every compartment

➤ *What tasks are done when?*

to collect together and lay out management tasks whether cyclical or occasional

➤ *How is the Green managed?*

to set out policies for the protection of volunteers working, and the public visiting.

A Introduction to the Green

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A Introduction to the Green Sections A1 to A8

A1. Site Details

County.	Suffolk
District.	East Suffolk Council (was Waveney District Council)
Town.	Halesworth
Site Name.	Halesworth Millennium Green
Map Reference.	TM 390773
Area.	22 hectares [c. 55 acres]
Location.	A series of meadows in the Blyth Valley to the east of Halesworth.
Ownership	Halesworth Millennium Green Trust Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in the name of the Official Custodian for Charities [except for Two Acres owned by Sustrans]

Contact details:

Halesworth Millennium Green Trust CIO

email: thegreen@halesworth.net

website: <http://millenniumgreen.halesworth.org>

Sustrans

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College Green

Bristol BS1 5DD

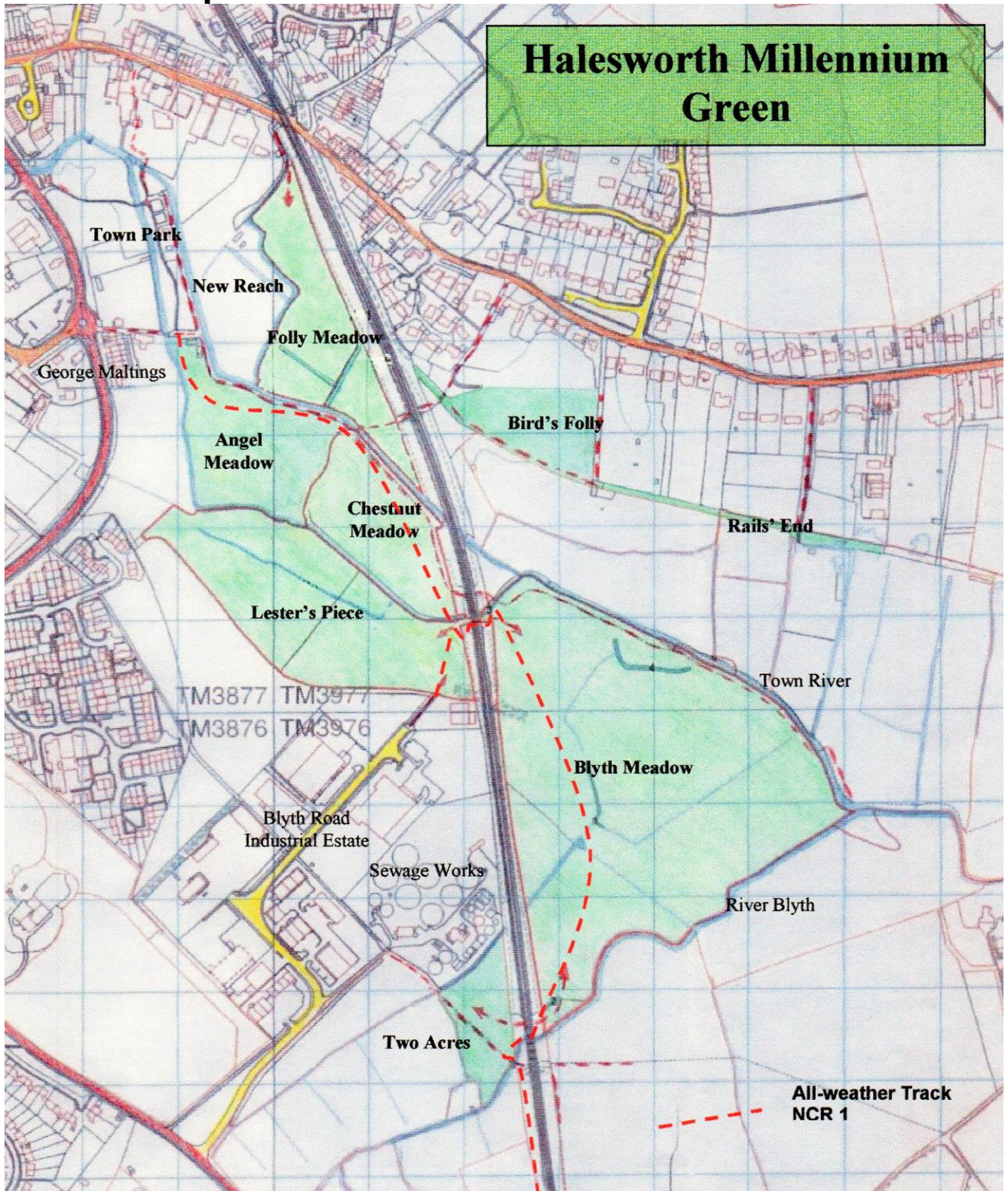
Tel: 0117 926 8893

info@sustrans.org.uk

Designations.

- Part County Wildlife Site
- Included within the Blyth Special Landscape Area [SLA]
- Several habitats are included in Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) including Flood Plain Grazing Marsh (inc dykes; ponds; rivers, hedgerows, lowland fen; lowland heath (including acid grassland); lowland meadow; reedbed.

A1. Site Map



A2. Background and Site Description

2.1 **Purpose of the Trust:** The Halesworth Millennium Green Trust was established in 1999 as a charitable trust to oversee the management of the Millennium Green.

2.2 **The Trust Deed requires that the Trustees shall hold the property to provide and maintain an open space for the benefit of the inhabitants and to be used forever as an area for informal recreation, play or other leisure time occupations, a meeting area or place for community events and for any other lawful purpose consistent with these trusts and the general benefit of the community.** It further states that the Millennium Green is to:

- *Make a substantial contribution to the life of the whole community*
- *Be able to be enjoyed by people of all ages and physical abilities*
- *Be open and evident to visitors to the locality as well as inhabitants*
- *Be an attractive place for people to take air and exercise, meet others and pursue leisure activities and pastimes consistent with shared enjoyment of the whole of the land*
- *Include an area suitable for community events and activities and celebrations*
- *Include significant “nature” areas where people can enjoy Nature and wildlife at first hand*
- *Make a positive contribution to the local environment and respect the established character of the area*
- *Remain safely and conveniently accessible from inhabitants’ homes*

2.3 **Site Description:**

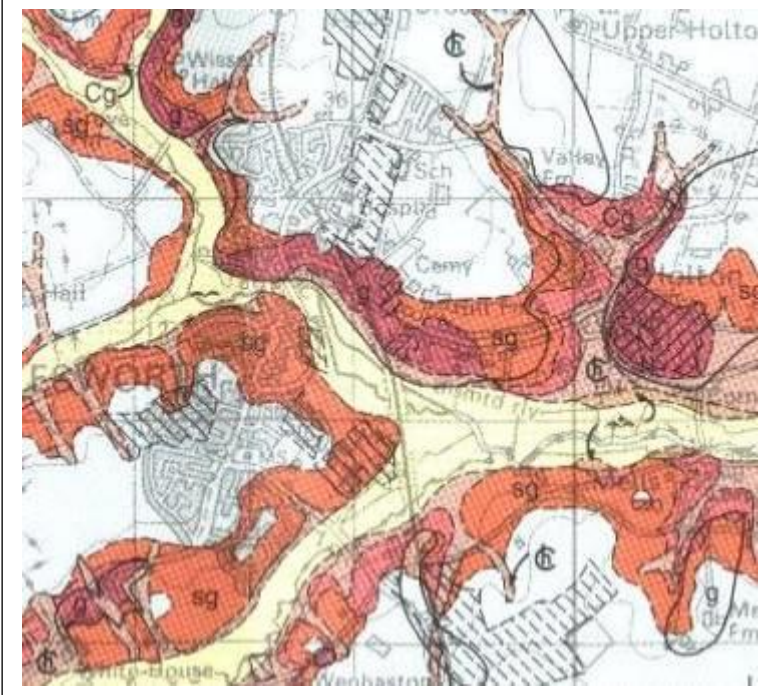
Halesworth is a small market town in the Blyth Valley (c5000 pop.) in North East Suffolk about 10 miles inland from the coast. It is on the Suffolk main line railway, 19 miles from Lowestoft and 28 from Ipswich, and on the A144 road 24 miles south of Norwich.

The Millennium Green lies immediately to the east of the Town it consists of 22 ha (55 acres) mostly in the flood plain of the Blyth Special Landscape Area (SLA). There are six flood meadows: four of the meadows are to the west of the East Coast railway line and are intersected by the Town River and the New Reach, Blyth Meadow lies on the other side of the railway from the Town, its boundaries being formed by the railway embankment, the Town River and the River Blyth. Two Acres which is owned by Sustrans the sustainable transport charity is connected to Blyth Meadow by a licensed link under the main line railway at Six Arches. The meadows are connected by footpaths that also provide quick, safe access to the Town Centre, other parts of the east and south of the Town and the only other informal open space in the Town – the Folly. Waveney District Council have recently transferred the freehold of the Folly to the Millennium Green and a private owner has transferred a length of the old Southwold Railway to the Millennium Green

Lester’s Piece and Blyth Meadow are permanent grassland with summer grazing by cattle. Angel Meadow, Chestnut Meadow, Folly Meadow and Two Acres are not now grazed, trees have been planted in some areas and there are a variety of mowing regimes in place. There are drainage ditches on the meadows and remains of the previous course of the river cut off when it was straightened in the 20th Century.

There are some fine old trees including oak, willow and alder. Trees were planted along the eastern half of the southern margin of Lester’s Piece; at the northern end of Folly Meadow, in Two Acres and Angel Meadow. Hedgerows have been planted along the railway boundary in the Triangle in Blyth Meadow and along the New Reach/Angel meadow boundary. Black poplars have been planted in Folly Meadow and Blyth Meadow and a number in Two Acres. A Community Orchard consisting of local types of apple, pear, cherry and plum has been planted in Folly Meadow. The Folly is an area of long abandoned sand and gravel pits with open areas, scrub and woodland.

A3. Geology and Landform

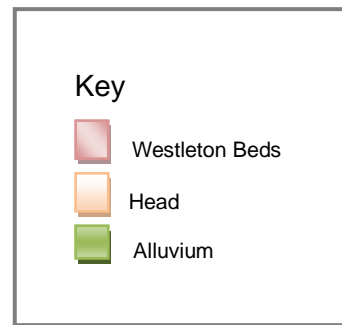


3.1 The geology is dominated by the alluvium of the flood plain. There are small peat deposits in the spring fed waterlogged areas of Folly Meadow.

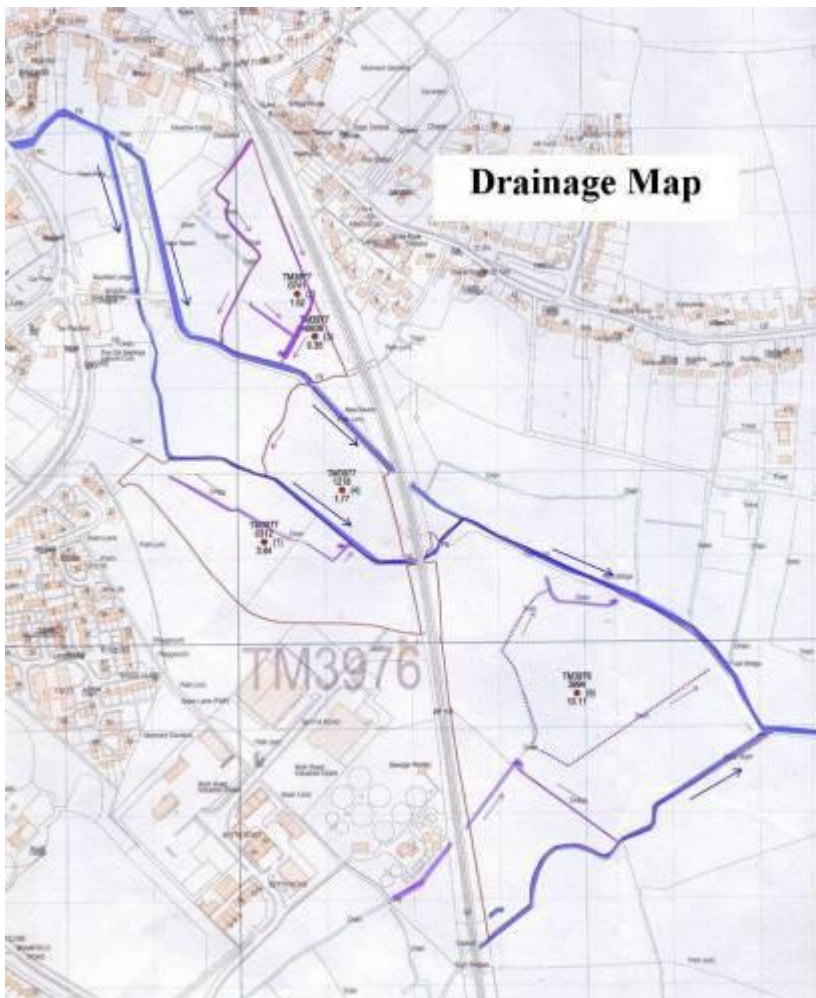
3.2 However the higher part of Folly Meadow has a strip of "Head". Head deposits are produced by the mass movement of material downslope under periglacial conditions which accelerates with reduced vegetation cover and increased run off. It is thought that much of the head in our area dates from the Devensian cold period although it is impossible to be sure that they are not more recent deposits from hillwash and soil creep. The British Geological Survey memoir entitled Geology

of the Country around Lowestoft and Saxmundham (NERC 2000 p.72) describes "gravelly head that forms an apron extending down below the Crag outcrop on the north side of the Blyth Valley ...from Holton to Blyford. It comprises loose sandy gravel derived largely from the crag gravels but with an input of loose sandy gravel from the glacial deposits. It is believed to have formed by sheet floods during a periglacial climate rather than by solifluction." It is not known whether our Head deposits form part of this description.

3.3 In the Folly is a fine outcrop of the Westleton Beds on the sides of the old quarry. A description can be found in the Geological Memoir (pp32 and 33) and they conclude that the material was deposited under beach conditions on a coastline that was "prograding towards the south east."



A4. Drainage and flooding



4.1 The Millennium Green lies in the Blyth Valley some 12km (8miles) from the sea and 4km (2.5miles) from the normal tidal limit at Blyford.

4.2 However most of the Green is drained by a tributary of the Blyth, the Town River. This is formed by the Wissett Brook and the Chediston Brook which join just above the Town and then flows under the Thoroughfare, through the Town Park before forming the boundary between Chestnut Meadow and Lester's Piece. After passing under the railway it forms the northern boundary of Blyth Meadow and meets the River Blyth itself at Lay Corner, the eastern extremity of the Green.

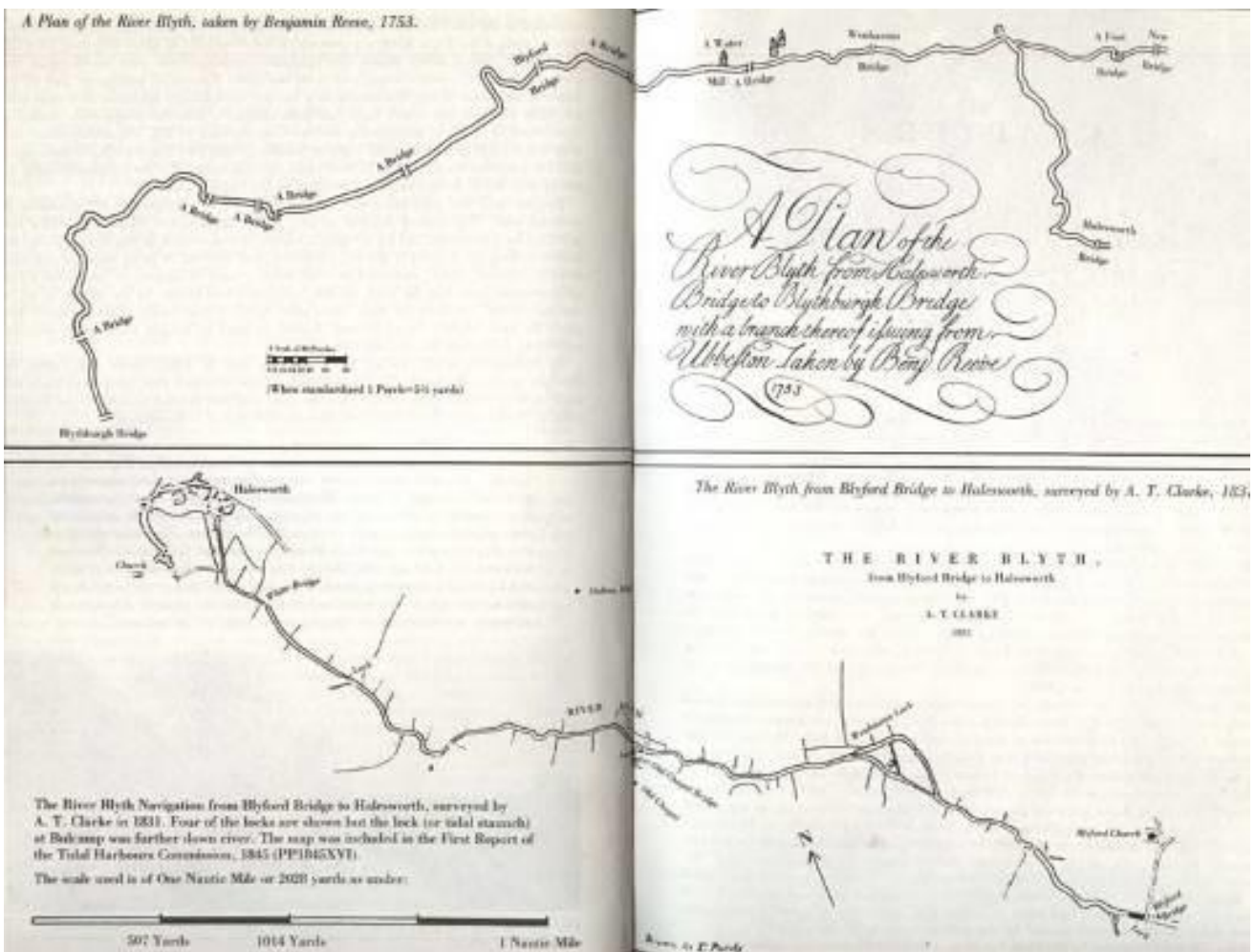
4.3 When the Blyth Navigation was created in 1761 a new section of waterway was dug known as the New Reach from Halesworth Lock right through to a basin now occupied by the new (2011) Hopkins Home development. Later in the early

part of the 19th century Patrick Stead built a new lock which connected the Navigation back into the Town River. The remains of this lock can still be seen and a raised cill prevents river water flowing into the New Reach at normal flows. At high flow levels the New Reach acts as a flood channel. There are dam boards in place under White Bridge which maintain high water levels in the upper part of the New Reach and these levels are sustained throughout the summer by spring flows from ditches from the north.



4.4 Until some time in the middle of the last century the River and the New Reach were separate until below the Lock but when the river was straightened and deepened a meandering section of the river was by passed and filled in for all but the length adjacent to the Lock. The New Reach was registered as a Village Green from Patrick Stead's Lock to the Town Lock and the register shows Halesworth UDC as the owners. Waveney District Council as the successors of the UDC are assumed to be the present owners.

4.5 The ditch that forms the western boundary of Folly Meadow takes storm water from Loam Pit Lane and is maintained by the adjacent tenant. Another spring fed drain which also receives storm water from under the railway is subject to a control mechanism just before it enters the New Reach which maintains it at a stable high level just below ground level. The fall on this ditch means that this does not affect the water levels in the ditch adjacent to the railway or where it flows under the railway. A new ditch was dug to connect to this one on the line of an old ditch shown on old maps. A spring fed ditch in Lester's Piece also has a control mechanism just before it flows into the River to maintain the water levels. The ditch in Blyth Meadow which flows onto the Green from under the railway in a north easterly direction has a control mechanism in the newly dug pond to try and retain a high water table. However the level drops throughout the summer and it often dries out completely. The ditches generally on Blyth Meadow hold little water and are only operational at times of heavy rainfall or river flooding. They have not been maintained for many years. The isolated meander near the Halesworth Lock has a control mechanism but it gradually dries out each summer but the small isolated meander in the southern corner of the meadow near Six Arches, known as Sweeney's Pond, seems to hold water for longer despite being above the level of the adjacent river.



A5. Historic Interest

5.1. In the middle of the 18th Century the River Blyth was made navigable from Southwold as far as Halesworth. For much of its route the existing river was made navigable, but a completely new canal was dug for the last kilometer up to the new basin on the eastern side of the Town. Most of this newly dug section now lies within the Millennium Green and the lock that was built where the canal left the river has much of



East view of Halesworth from Castle Hill, engraved in 1847 by W. J. Gilbert, a local painter living in Pound Street.

its brickwork substantially intact. With the straightening of the rivers that took place after the Second World War, water levels dropped. The New Reach was registered as a Village Green with ownership vested in the Halesworth Urban District Council, now Waveney District Council.

5.2. The Folly and Rails' End contain many remnants from the Southwold Railway that ran from 1879 to 1929 from Halesworth to Southwold. There is a double arched concrete bridge and the foundations of an engine shed as well as a small section of reinstated track on the bridge.



5.3 The Folly, sitting on the valley side with gravels close to the surface, was extensively quarried for the construction of both the Main Line and the Halesworth/Southwold Railway.

A6. Agriculture

6.1 Because the meadows are in the flood plain and liable to winter flooding, the traditional management for many centuries has been cattle grazing interspersed with a hay crop. Prior to the rivers being straightened in the late 1940s (see 5.1 above) and the application of herbicides, they would have been wet throughout the year and rich in wildflowers.



6.2 As a result, Folly, Chestnut, Blyth Meadows and Lester's Piece were summer grazed for decades - if not centuries - by cattle. There has been no serious break in this tradition in Blyth Meadow and Lester's Piece, and the grazing provides a particular habitat which supports many small mammals and hunting birds, such as barn owls and kestrels. The Green gets a small income from government for grazing Blyth and Lesters Piece. The grazier tolerates and co-operates with a very high level of public access. Grazing ceased on Folly Meadow and Chestnut Meadow in the early 21st century.

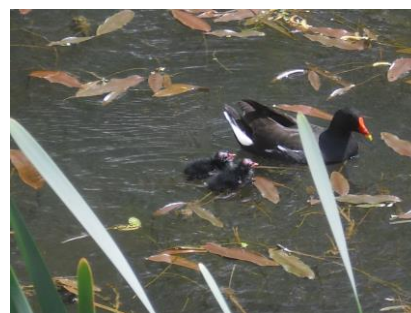
A7. Wildlife Interest

7.1 An area of spring fed marsh in Folly Meadow has been designated as a County Wildlife Site as a habitat that has suffered a dramatic decline with the drainage and application of herbicides and pesticides with the agricultural intensification following the Second World War. This area is the most herb rich area on the Green and contains three species of orchids as well as cuckoo flower and ragged robin (*fritillary* pictured).



7.2 The Folly has been designated as a County Wildlife Site for its acid grassland habitats and a population of Brown Argus butterfly has recently been recorded (from 2011). The New Reach has been designated as a County Wildlife Site for its submerged and emergent floristic interest and has a number of dragonfly species that use it at as well as Soprano Pipistrelle's hunting over it (*peacock butterfly* pictured).

7.3 Both Barn Owl and Kingfisher are on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act and cannot be recklessly or intentionally disturbed during the breeding season and are known to be present at this time on the Green. Cetti's Warbler is also on the list and has been regularly heard on the Green since 2011. Water vole and otter also receive special protection under the Act and are known to use the Green. All the bat species are also protected. Further details on the Licensing arrangements for these species can be found on the Natural England website.



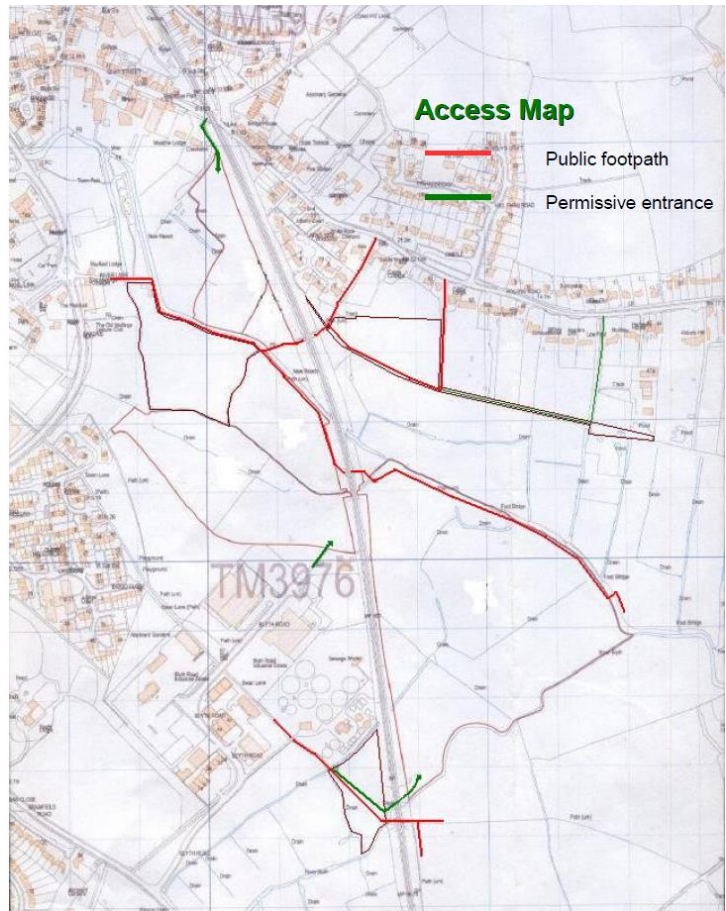
Species and Habitat Monitoring

Key species are summarised at the end of each Compartment. Further records from surveys are on the Millennium Green website under "About the Green/Wildlife".

Relevant data collected is held on the Natural History database at <http://millenniumgreen.halesworth.org>

A8. Access

8.1 All the meadows on the Green are open access for the public. There are a number of different entrances with direct access from the Town Centre via the Town Park and then the New Reach towpath which is also Halesworth Footpath 23. River Lane runs from Saxon Way into the Park as FP9 and joins FP23 at what is now the entrance to Angel Meadow. FP23 follows the New Reach to just beyond White Bridge and then becomes FP14 which continues under the railway, across the Town River and then follows the River eastwards until it reaches the bridge across the river at the near eastern end of Blyth Meadow and it becomes Holton FP10. Back at White Bridge FP11 crosses the New Reach and passes under the main line railway and the route of the Southwold Railway and then out onto Holton Road where the visibility is very poor. FP22 goes east through the Folly and then turns sharp north to the Holton Road as FP21. A path continues along Rails' End for another few hundred metres before another driftway gives access to the Holton Road.



8.2 At White Bridge the Definitive Map shows another Public Footpath FP10 on the opposite side of the New Reach to the existing Towpath but this is not available to the west of our land because according to the Highways Authority the exact line of the path is not easily defined and could be difficult to enforce. There is another access onto Folly Meadow at the northern end where a track comes off Holton Road adjacent to the main line railway bridge. Visibility is very poor at this point. This is the main

vehicular access to Folly Meadow as the one via the trackway through the Folly has not been used for some years. White Bridge has been inspected by Suffolk CC and is temporarily closed.

8.3 Access to Lester's Piece is from the Blyth Road Industrial Estate. This also gives vehicular access to Blyth Meadow via the access way under the railway. The vehicle bridge onto Chestnut Meadow is not safe to be used by vehicles. There are two informal access points that have become established across private land where the landowners have tried to block off access. A stile that we had erected to prevent damage to our stock fence was removed at the adjacent owner's request. Unfortunately, this had to be reinstated when the damage persisted. Achieving access from Saxons' Way and Swan Lane remains an ambition.

8.4 Woolnough Way, named for Richard and Judith Woolnough who were crucial to the establishment of the Green and its running for almost 20 years, is an all-weather track for walkers, cycles and all wheeled, non-motorised vehicles. It was long-planned and finally built and opened in 2013. Funded by Sustrans and local donations, it runs from the Town Park through Angel Meadow, Chestnut Meadow, Blyth Meadow, Two Acres and then along a strip of land kindly made available by the then owner Gwen Woolner, emerging onto the road to Mells near the level crossing.

It forms part of Sustrans National Cycle Route 1 which starts in Dover (Kent) and ends in Tain (N Scotland). It has proved an enormous success, giving children a safe place to learn and practise bike riding skills and giving access to everyone who uses wheels, or who doesn't want to get muddy.

8.5 There is a map board at the entrance at River Lane and an information board at White Bridge. A leaflet has been produced. An article about the Green appears in the Community News every month and the Green has a slot in the Library window. Open days have been held with a range of activities, a play has been staged, guided walks have been held.

8.5 The Green is subject to periodic flooding and some thought needs to be given to warn of the dangers when this occurs in conjunction with the Environment Agency flood warning system. Volunteer work parties are held throughout the year and they play a vital role in the maintenance of the Green.

8.7 Management objectives:

To provide better information about the Green and its place in the Town, reflecting the increased footfall since the establishment of the Track.

See Appendix 2 for Access Policies.



Judith Woolnough and family
Richard Woolnough (died 2019)



B. Management of compartments sections B9 - B16

B9. Folly Meadow (inc. Scrub Triangle) - 2.04 hectares

Description.

9.1 **Boundaries:**The eastern boundary is the main line railway, the East Suffolk Line. The western boundary is a heavily grazed pony field and its access track off Quay Street. The southern boundary is the New Reach.

9.2 Adjacent Landowners:

Railway Line -Network Rail

Pony Field – Tenant Mr Henry Cliff, Owner, Mr Gerald King, both of Halesworth.

Access Track – Peter and Sue Lock, Creekside Quay Street, Halesworth.

New Reach – East Suffolk Council (Village Green). Public Footpath – Suffolk County Council

Rights of Way Team.

Footpath 11. Footpath 10 is on the Definitive

Map but is not in use.

The Environment Agency maintain the adjacent New Reach as a flood relief channel and have access to our land and bylaws cover activities on the strip adjacent to the New Reach and activities in the flood plain.

9.3 **Altitude:**The land rises from approximately 7 metres above sea level adjacent to the New Reach to 12 metres near the access gate.

9.4 **Geology:** The northern end has been subject to tipping at some time in the past with bottles and glass frequently found when tree planting was in process. A trial hole near the gate was pure sand under the topsoil but much of the southern end had peat exposed at the surface. Near the New Reach dredgings affected the surface layers.



9.5 **Drainage:** A storm drain probably from Loam Pit Lane runs under Holton Road, the Railway and the access gate. The ditch forms the western boundary and runs into the New Reach. It is kept dredged by the tenant and the water level is nearly 1 metre below our fields for most of its length. Another storm drain enters from under the railway along the eastern boundary and runs in a deep ditch until it turns sharply south across our land. We have a water control mechanism under the footpath adjacent to the New Reach which holds the water just below ground level throughout the year. It is assumed that this ditch is spring fed as it never seems to stop flowing even after a prolonged dry spell. An east/west ditch was dug in 2005(?) on the line of a ditch shown on old maps. It was partially dredged in autumn 2021, and was separated from the dipping platform ditch by a low bund. We have no responsibility for the ditch alongside the railway as far as we know and the fall is such that our water control mechanism has no influence on the length of ditch alongside the railway. It is assumed that we have joint responsibility for the ditch on the western boundary but Mr Cliff keeps this clear and dredged to a much greater depth than we would wish. Dredging of the New Reach is carried out from our side and the material placed on our meadow. This was carried out by the Environment Agency in 2000 and winter 2009/2010.

9.6 **Habitats:** Summer grazing with cattle was the management until we bought the land in 2000. Orchids which had been present near the footpath to the Folly disappeared in the early 1980s and it is assumed that a herbicide had been applied. However this was not applied to all areas as this field is the best floristically on the Green with areas of fen vegetation and two species of orchid have been recorded in recent years.

9.7 The most northern and the highest section became dominated by nettles when grazing ceased. It was planted with a variety of deciduous trees and named Arthur's Wood in honour of our first Chairman Arthur Forrester. Planting took place in the winters of 2007/8 and 2008/9. An area immediately to the south was planted with local varieties of fruit trees in 2008/9.

9.8 Immediately following the cessation of grazing a reedbed (*Phragmites australis*) appeared and this has been left largely unmanaged since. However it is clear that it has deteriorated dramatically and the areas of most vigorous reed growth are those that have received mowing since 2000. The reedbed abuts a spring fed area to the south and this receives a variety of summer mowing with the removal of cut material. This has reduced the dominance of pond sedge and favoured such species as greater birds' foot trefoil (*Lotus uliginosus*); ragged robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*); fen bedstraw (?). Harvest mice are known in this area from their nests.

9.9 The adjacent south facing railway embankment is dominated by scrub and rank grassland. It provides for undisturbed nesting and basking areas.

9.10 A small L-shaped pond was dug in 2015 dedicated to the memory of Louise Solomon a great supporter, volunteer and artist.

9.10 **Access and public usage:** A public footpath (Halesworth 11) cuts across the S. section of the meadow from White Bridge towards the Folly. This is defined on each side by a post and rail fence (see 9.13 re. the area to the south of the footpath) but all the gates which controlled access have now been removed to assist the passage of buggies, wheelchairs and bikes. Footpath 10 which is shown on the Definitive Map runs alongside the northern bank of the New Reach but is not accessible beyond our property and uncertainty over the exact line means it will probably not be re-opened. A new pedestrian access, controlled by a kissing gate has been established at the northern end off the vehicular access track. There is a locked field gate at the same position and this is our main vehicular access. There is a locked field gate on the line of the footpath which gives access to Holton Road via the Folly. This has restricted headroom at the Southwold Railway bridge and the houseowner at Castle Cottage disputes our access. A network of informal paths is kept mown through the summer and they can get quite muddy during wet weather in the winter. Flooding can occur along the edge bordering the New Reach.

9.11 A pond dipping platform was built in 2009 on the edge of the high level ditch and pond dipping equipment is now available for groups to borrow. A wooden bench seat was installed in 2010 on the edge of the water near White Bridge.

9.12 This meadow was the main focus of activity for public events (other than walks) in 2009/2010. Willow sculpture made in 2009/2010 (wherry). Since then events have been held also in Angel Meadow.

9.13 **The Scrub Triangle**

This area at the south end is separated from the rest of Folly Meadow by public footpath 11. Various uses have been experimented with including a picnic table, sculpture, and an arable weed patch. The Triangle naturally reverts to scrub, a habitat many users would like to see maintained and increased. To enhance this, a mix of scrub tree spp were planted in 2019, and common buckthorn and alder buckthorn planted in 2021/2 to benefit butterflies. Current policy is to maintain the Triangle as scrub, ensuring a clear strip alongside the New Reach for access by the Environment Agency.

9.14 **Constraints:**

Grazing not easy because detached from other grazing units and undesirable as soil is peaty and cattle would poach the dyke edges and might reduce the floristic interest.

Environment Agency byelaws give access for their machines for maintenance and restrict planting and other activities in the strip nearest to the New Reach. There are restrictions on activities in the flood plain especially the placing of materials or anything that takes flood plain capacity or restricts the flow of water at times of flood.

Maintenance of the public footpaths.

9.15 **Management objectives:**

- **To increase and improve botanic diversity especially of the spring fed marsh species (Adder's tongue fern discovered 2014);**
- **to maintain open water habitats; (Louise's pond, managed as an almost hidden piece of open water, with fringing, tall, emergent and bankside vegetation to dissuade dogs from jumping in it.)**
- **to maintain habitat for grass snakes and harvest mice;**
- **to maintain and enhance public access;**
- **to provide environment educational opportunities (dipping platform etc)**

Key Species:

Adder's Tongue Fern (still doing well, 2023)

Alder buckthorn

Black poplar

Common lizard

Common spotted orchids

Common toad

Grass snake

Harvest mouse

Heritage fruit trees

Marsh Orchid

Norfolk Hawker

Otter

Soprano pipistrelle

Slow worm

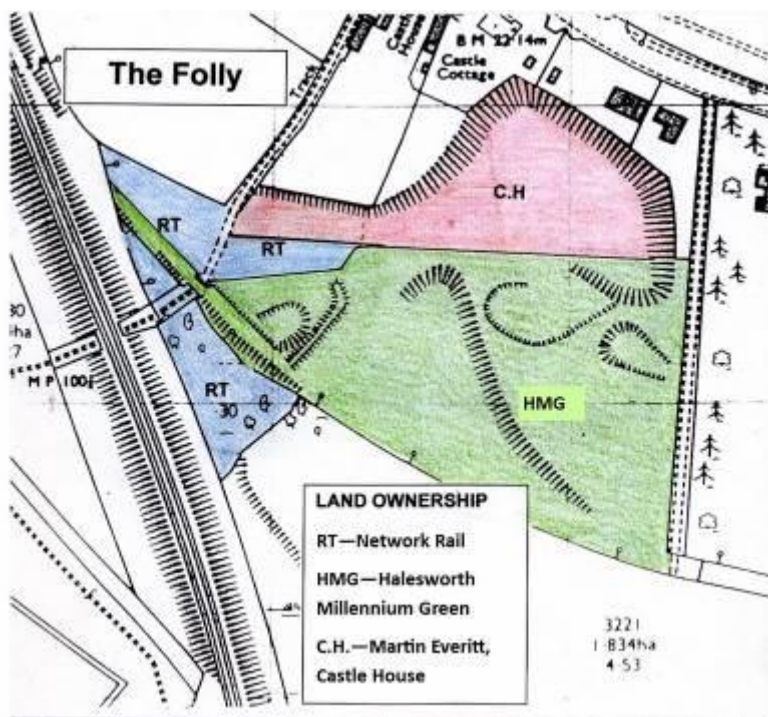
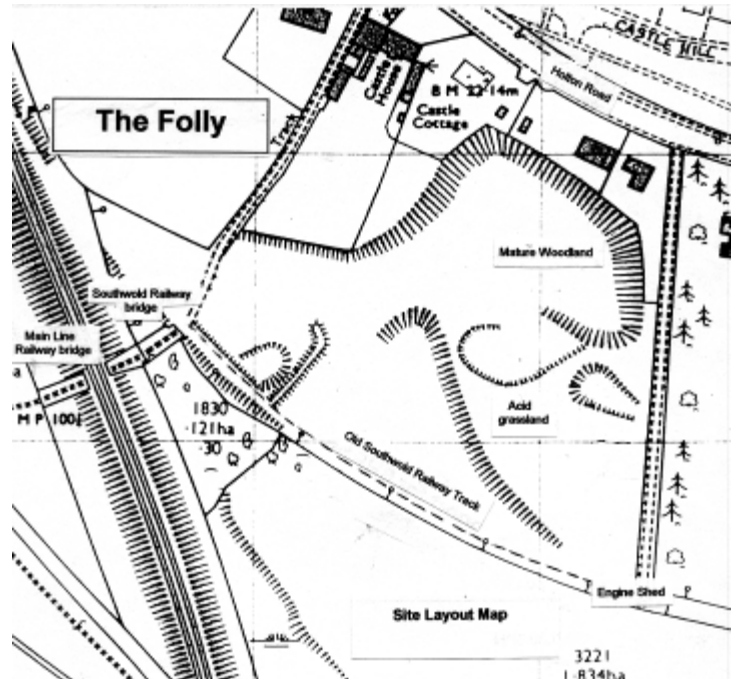
Water vole

Water soldier

B10. Bird's Folly and Rails' End - 1.8 ha. Grid Reference TM 393773

10.1 The site is on the northern side of the Blyth Valley about 0.5 km. east of Halesworth town centre.

10.2 Bird's Folly was originally two gravel pits associated with the construction of the adjacent railway lines. The northern and older pit was possibly used in the construction of the main line railway and is now dominated by mature oak and sycamore woodland and elm scrub. The southern pit is closely associated with the Southwold Light Railway that ceased operation in 1929. It contains some important remnants of the railway as well as having developed an interesting mosaic of acid grassland and scrub.



10.3 The site is in a variety of ownerships but has been available for informal public recreation as long as local people can remember

Owners:

1. Halesworth Millennium Green Trust
2. Network Rail
3. Mr and Mrs Everett
Castle House
53 Holton Road
Halesworth
Suffolk IP19 8HQ
See para. 10.16 on pg. 19 below.

10.4 Wildlife Interest:

The site has been designated as a County Wildlife Site particularly for its acid grassland but also for its variety of habitats which includes different types of scrub and secondary woodland. It is one of 104 County Wildlife Sites in Waveney District of which only 6 include acid grassland.

10.5 The woodland in the northern part of the site has developed since the pit became disused sometime in the middle of the last century. Some of the oaks are over 100 years old and would tend to support this development date. One of the most interesting aspects of this woodland is the strong population of a fern, common polypody that has developed on the north facing pit side. Male fern and buckler fern are also present. The section to the west of the woodland has

been affected by Dutch Elm Disease and is now young elm scrub. It seems to be periodically affected by the disease but then vigorously regenerates. Orpine is recorded from this area. The southern pit area consists of bare ground and moss communities on the old quarry floor with gorse, hawthorn and blackthorn scrub developing on the pit sides and spoil heaps. The sloping area to the east could be the original surface and is dominated by relatively recent scrub, possibly developing post- myxomatosis. The small area of open grassland on this slope contains Ladies Bedstraw, Changing For-get-me-not, Birdsfoot and Sheep's Sorrel and other species typical of unimproved acid grassland.

10.6 The mainline railway bridge supports black spleenwort and hart's tongue fern but unfortunately these were lost from the Southwold Railway Bridge during repair work. Twenty-nine species of bird have been recorded including Chiff-chaff, Whitethroat, Blackcap, Nightingale, Spotted flycatcher, Green woodpecker, and Great spotted woodpecker. Reptiles recorded include lizard, slowworm and grass snake.

10.7 Historic Interest:

All the known historical interest of the site relates to the Southwold Railway which provided a narrow-gauge passenger and goods service between Halesworth and Southwold from 1879 to 1929.

10.8 It contains a double arched concrete bridge originally constructed to take the trackway from Holton Road under the main line railway onto the marshes and to take a branch line from the Southwold Railway that was intended to curve through the Folly and then pass through the second arch presumably to provide rail access to the Blyth Navigation which passes through the marshes just the other side of the main line track. This branch line was never built and when the proposals to upgrade the narrow gauge to standard gauge led to the widening of the bridge one arch was filled in and the other arch was widened with brickwork. This arch is still in use as a public footpath and repair work was undertaken to the parapet brickwork and the waterproofing to the deck. The top of the second concrete arch has been exposed to allow the original form of the bridge to be viewed.

Two sections of the railway have been restored by the Halesworth to Southwold Narrow Gauge Railway Society (HSNGRS) with rails and sleepers.

10.9 At the eastern end of the Folly are the foundations of an Engine Shed built in the early part of the century. The shed consisted of a wooden frame with asbestos cladding on a concrete base. The HSNGRS have renovated and restored/constructed features within the Engine Shed enclosure, including the well and platform, the inspection pit, a section of track and a model wagon. They have also put up interpretation boards.

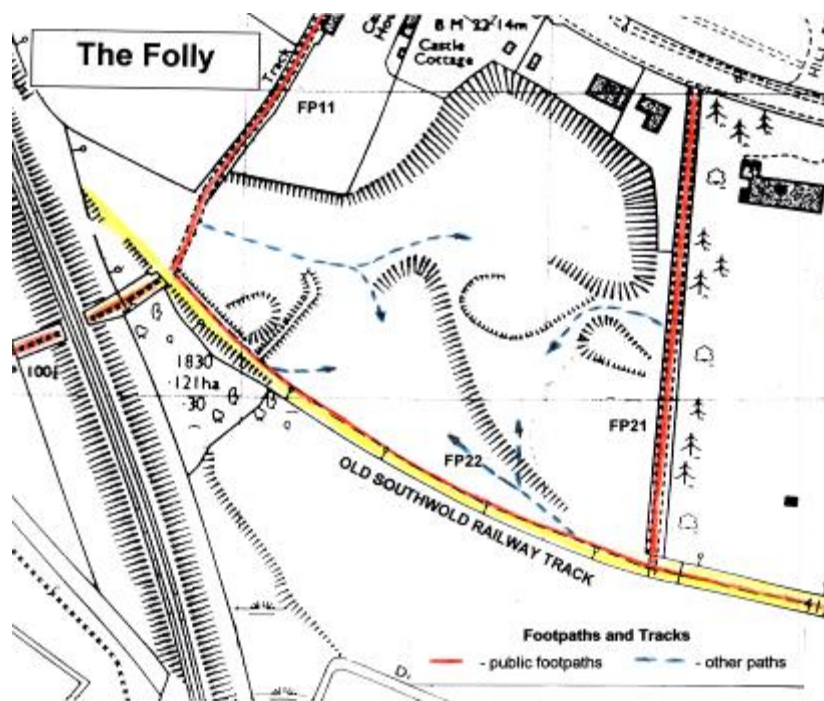
10.10 The route of the track between the engine Shed and the Bridge is now a public footpath.

10.11 Public Access:

Access to the Folly is by public footpath.

10.12 Footpath 11 runs through the Folly from Holton Road under the Southwold Railway bridge to the New Reach and then to the Town Park and Town centre. Footpath 11 also provides a vehicular track to the Folly however the access off the Holton Road is extremely dangerous for pedestrians and vehicles alike being situated on a bend and at the brow of the hill.

10.13 Footpath 22 follows the route of the Southwold Railway having been legally diverted following objections from Rail Track to the route that is still shown on the Definitive Map. This path continues



along the route of the Railway for another 500metres following the purchase by Wilfred George and its designation as a public right of way.

10.14 Footpath 21 runs along the eastern boundary of the site from the Holton Road to the line of the Railway. It is also a track providing vehicular access.

10.15 There is a network of other paths on the site well used by local people and it has long provided a playground for local children. When it snows the Folly provides one of the few sledging slopes in the Town. Youth groups use the Folly for their outdoor activities and it has been used for open-air theatre performances. The Folly is sometimes used as a site for unregulated parties which result in a noise nuisance late at night, bonfires and a serious litter problem especially broken glass.

10.16 **Ownership:**

The Folly is in three separate ownerships although on the ground the boundaries are not demarcated.

10.17 Mr and Mrs Everett, at Castle House, have expressed their intention that their section of the Folly should remain available for local people and be left as a controlled wilderness in order to allow the flora and fauna to flourish.

10.18 Railtrack have been formally approached to add their land to the Folly, either by management agreement, lease or transfer of the freehold. Unfortunately, they insist that it will be some years before they are able to consider this request in any detail.

10.20 **Management:**

Conservation management work only started in 1989 at a very low level. Following a public meeting [Aug 1989] interested people joined together to form the Folly Group with the aim of "maintaining the area for the people of Halesworth for years to come." An initial series of tasks were undertaken but then only limited annual maintenance carried out. The Suffolk Wildlife Trust on behalf of Waveney District Council produced a Management Plan in 1994. Several years ago there was increased interest with restoration work being undertaken on the Southwold Railway Bridge by Waveney District Council, clearance of the area of the old Engine Shed by the Halesworth Environment Group and access improvements on footpath 11, by Suffolk County Council.



10.21 Litter is collected on an informal basis by a number of local people and the Halesworth Millennium Green Trust trim back the paths.

10.22 **Objective:**

To maintain the Folly as a public open space for the benefit of present and future generations, whilst maintaining and enhancing its wildlife and cultural heritage.

10.23 Wildlife Conservation:

The importance of the Folly for wildlife is the variety of the habitats that exist but especially the open acid grassland. Agriculturally unimproved acid grassland is a habitat that has undergone rapid decline in the County as a result of agricultural intensification and encroachment by scrub following myxomatosis. Scrub has certainly increased in the Folly since myxomatosis even though rabbit numbers have increased in recent years. Many of the pathways are now very narrow and require annual cutting back. No mowing of the grassland seems to be necessary, a combination of low productivity and rabbit grazing proving adequate. However the open grassland needs to be protected from further encroachment from scrub and there may be some justification for increasing the amount of acid grassland where it has recently been lost to scrub. There are a number of unusual species associated with the Folly that would justify special consideration when management work is to be undertaken.

10.24 Objective: To conserve the diversity of habitats and species with particular emphasis on those associated with acid grassland or other rare or threatened habitats.

10.25 Heritage Conservation:

The Folly contains some of the most important remnants of the Southwold Light Railway that now survive. The HSNGRS place great importance on the remaining structures in the Folly and there is a lot of interest in Halesworth about the Railway.

10.26 The Engine Shed site is fenced.

10.27 The Southwold Railway Trust/ HSNGRS have considered re-opening the railway between Halesworth and Southwold.

10.28 Objective: To cooperate with HSNGRS to conserve, enhance and interpret for public interest the remnants of the Southwold Railway that survive in the Folly.

10.29 Public Access and Recreation:

It is important that as many local people as possible are able to use the Folly and are kept informed of any work that is proposed. It is also important to cooperate with all attempts to control any anti-social activities that spoil other people's enjoyment.

10.30 Management of land not in public ownership:

No restriction has been placed by the remaining private owners of the site on its continued use as a public open space except British Rail objected to the route of the public footpath crossing their land and the route was subsequently diverted along the route of the Southwold Railway. The route across British Rail [now Network Rail] land continues to be used as a footpath.

10.31 An approach has been made to Network Rail with a view to acquiring the freehold of their land to secure its future as part of the Folly, so far without success.

10.32 When Castle House was last on the market an unsuccessful attempt was made to acquire the section of the Folly that goes with this property to bring it into public ownership. The current owners seem sympathetic, but it remains a concern that at some time in the future it could be sold again and future owners fence off their land.

10.33 Objective : To secure the long term tenure of the whole of the Folly as a public open space.

Relevant to the objectives in 10.16, aims which affect land not in Green ownership:

- to work with the owners of Castle House on their part of the Folly and, if the opportunity arises in the future, seek to obtain the freehold of the site.
- to pursue the acquisition of Network Rail land including the embankment to the SW of the old railway (between the two railway lines)
- to resist any future encroachment attempts on the area behind Lark's Rise (Network Rail land).

10.34 **Policy Protection/Designations:**

The only designation so far for the Folly is its status as a County Wildlife Site (*see Appendix 2*). This establishes its importance within the County context and confers some protection under the Local Plan. One part of Network Rail's land is not included in the map showing the outline of the County Wildlife Site.

10.35 Despite the apparent importance of the remnants of the Southwold Railway they do not at present receive any official recognition. This may be that they have not yet been considered by the relevant authorities.

10.36 **Objective: To secure the strongest possible designations to provide policy protection for the Folly**

Key Species

Birdsfoot

Brown Argus butterfly

Ferns: black spleenwort, harts tongue

Orpine

Parsley piert

Polypody

Squirrel tail fescue

Thale cress

Rails' End



10.39 History:

Rails' End is part of the track bed of the Halesworth to Southwold Railway that was opened in 1879 and closed in 1929.

10.40 The following extract from a letter from Wilfred George, formerly a Chemist in the Town, dated 6th September 1989 explains how the land came into his ownership. He passed the land over to the care of the Halesworth Millennium Green Trustees in 2009.



10.41 *"About 1963 it looked to me as if all hope of the Southwold Railway ever re-opening was lost, mainly because the old bridge on Blythburgh Dam, where the A12 went up over the railway, had been levelled out. So there was a likelihood that the land would be sold up – accordingly I started making enquiries. Halesworth UDC was warned that 'someone was trying to buy up the Folly' – and I was only too pleased to let them take over my offer. But they were not interested in the 340 yards of track to the east, which I had tried to buy also, and so I made an offer for that. So I finally in 1966 purchased what I call 'Rails' End' which goes along the old railway line from Birds Folly to the property 'Abbots Hill' owned by Mr Rodwell.*

10.42 *The Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way only included the footpath across the western access to the Folly, despite the fact that the whole area, plus the old track, had been in regular use 'as of right' by the public apparently since closure of the rail service in 1929. So I submitted certain claims for additions to the Definitive Map.Another was from Holton Road down the track outside the eastern edge of the Folly to Rail's End. I do not know how this application is proceeding but since everyone has always used these routes without hindrance for fifty or sixty years there seems little chance that it can be refused.*

10.43 *This left Rail's End a bit isolated further east and I was about to tidy this up in a deal with Mr Bensly when he needed to run a surface water drain under my land at the bottom of his drift (opposite Mr Muttitt's house in Holton Road) I granted him permission for the drain in exchange for his dedication of his drift as a public footpath. This has been legally documented and so anybody can now walk the right of way from Mr Muttitt's down to the railway and along to the Folly. (Everyone was doing it anyway, before all this, but it is best to have it documented)"*

10.44 There are small remnants of fencing that look as if they are part of the original railway fencing.



10.45 Wildlife:

There are a number of significant trees growing along the fence line mostly since the track closed. In many cases it is not clear if the trees are actually on our property or on our neighbours.

10.46 In the part of the track to the east of Bensly's Drift Mr George dug a small pond. This is now completely over-shaded by sallow.



Bensly's Drift

10.47 Access:

Rails' End has been used without hindrance by the general public.

Objective: Pursue the aim to get Bensly's Drift dedicated as a public footpath.

Long term – to acquire rights for a footpath from Rails End southwards across marshes to Blyth Meadow.

B11. Angel Meadow – 2 ha. Grid Reference

11.1 This meadow was acquired in 2012 as a consequence of planning requirements associated with the Maltings development.

11.2 Boundaries:

River Lane, which is Halesworth Footpath 9, divides Angel Meadow from the Town Park. The western and southern boundary is the Town River; the northern boundary is an overgrown and gappy hedge which is adjacent to the New Reach Towpath; to the east is a shallow ditch forming the boundary with Chestnut Meadow.

11.3 Adjacent Landowners:

The Town Park is owned by East Suffolk Council.

The New Reach towpath and the New Reach itself is registered as a Village Green and it is our view that ownership is vested in East Suffolk Council. This has been acknowledged by their legal department but not in any formal way.

11.4 Features:

Town River

Cycle Track

Concrete areas where buildings were

Power wires

Massive fallen willow tree

Woodland planted Nov. 2013

Edgar Sewter School wood & Royal Oak planted March 2014

North Cove Alder Tree planted Apr 2014

Osier bed planted Nov. 2013

Birches planted by Town Council - for twinning purposes on the mound, near the entrance. 2020

Commemorative trees alongside the track planted from 2022 onwards

11.5 Geology:

Alluvium (the most recent geological layer on the Green) dominates Angel Meadow. This layer is made up of undifferentiated: mainly sand and silt deposits that were laid down during the last few thousand years of the current Holocene epoch (11, 700 years BP to present) via the flow and flooding of rivers. Angel Meadow is known to have been grazed at various points in its history, although this has not occurred in the last 15 years, and its historic name suggests it was linked to lands owned by the Angel at some point during this history.

11.6 History (map based):

1840 The Tithe map shows the meadow owned by Martin George

1880s A 'limekiln' is marked on an OS Map at the northern end. It is possible that a 'limekiln' existed on the site a hundred years before this date or earlier still.

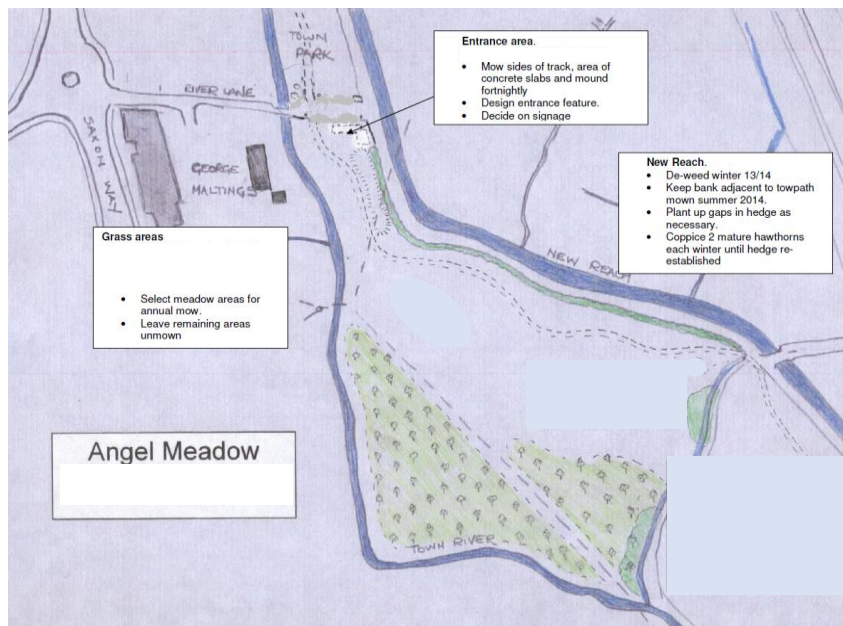
1884 A small range of agricultural/storage buildings are shown on an OS map next to the 'limekiln' site.

Early 1900s The 'limekiln' is no longer shown on OS Maps. .

1904 The range appears to have been reduced to one 'stable' building.

Post 1904 A galvanized structure was built at right angles to the 'stable'. (Removed 2012/13)

11.7 Management Objectives:



- **To maintain a mix of 'stepped' habitats including a no-people/dog zone;**
- **to maintain an area for public events;**
- **commemorative trees** - people are encouraged to donate to the concept of tree planting in memory of people but no signs will be erected. We strongly try to avoid a system of particular trees being dedicated to particular individuals.

Key Species

Cetti's Warbler can be heard singing from the hedge between the meadow and the tow path

Glow worm

Selected flora present on acquisition in 2012:

Angelica

Common Fleabane

Common Hemp-nettle

Crosswort

Hoary Ragwort

Lady's Smock (or Cuckoo Flower)

Lesser Celandine

Meadow Buttercup

Tufted Hair-grass

B12. Chestnut Meadow - 1.77ha.



12.1 Boundaries:

The southern boundary is the Town River; to the west is Maltings Meadow; to the North the New Reach and to the east the main line railway.

12.2 Adjacent landowners/organisations with an interest:

1. Network Rail
2. Environment Agency – The Town River and New Reach are designated as Main River and so subject to maintenance in the interests of flood defence.
3. The New Reach is registered Village Green. Ownership is not definitively recorded by East Suffolk Council but legal team accept that it almost certainly passed to the Council under local government reorganisation of 1974.

12.3 Altitude:

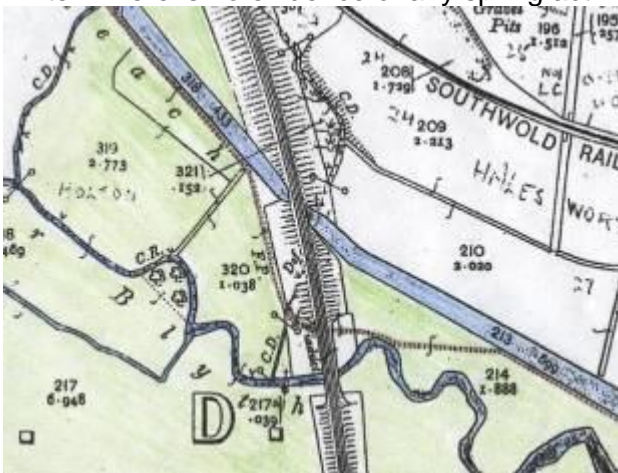
6 metres above ordnance datum

12.4 Geology:

Alluvium

12.5 Drainage:

Lying between the Town River and the New Reach the field is liable to flooding each winter. During periods of heavy rain, the River seems to overtop first and run across into the New Reach presumably because of the restricted flow under the railway. Dredgings from the river and the New Reach form slightly raised levels and cause water to lie in some areas in the winter. There is no evidence of any spring activity in this field. The ditch adjacent to Angel



Meadow drains towards the River but has received no maintenance and is dry for most of the year. The old map shows that before the straightening of the river, a meander went around the chestnut tree with a ditch running into it from the direction of the New Reach.

12.6 Habitats:

Former grazing meadow, now fen. There is a large horse chestnut tree with some old willows on the boundary with Maltings Meadow.

12.7 Access:

Footpath 23/14 forms the towpath along the New Reach. A kissing gate allows access through the railway fence where the footpath passes under the railway into Blyth Meadow.

12.8 There is a bridge over the Town River giving access to Lester's Piece with a field gate, cattle grid and kissing gate. This bridge was renewed on construction of the Track but although wide enough for vehicles is limited to 3 tonnes. There are well-used paths around the margins of the meadow used by members of the public for walking and exercising dogs.

12.9 Constraints:

Floods most winters.

Limited vehicular access

Power lines crossing the fields.

12.10 Management objectives:

- **To maintain diversity of the grassland to benefit whitethroats, kestrels and water voles, through intermittent mowing of irregular patches;**
- **To maintain access for walkers round perimeter**

Key Species

White throat

Barn owl

Horse chestnut tree

Kestrel

B13. Lester's Piece - 3.64 ha.



13.1 Boundaries:

Southern boundary is stock fenced against industrial estate (Hammonds and Agricultural Machinery) and David Mack (Norfolk farmer and developer). To the west also David Mack; to the north - Town River and to the east - main line railway.

13.2 **Access:** From the south no public right of way but access from Blyth Road Industrial Estate via a field gate and cattle grid plus kissing gate, surfaced as a spur linking to the all-weather Track.

13.3 There is access to Chestnut Meadow by kissing gate and field gate and a bridge over the Town River and there is a large access under the railway into Blyth Meadow. There is unofficial access to David Mack's land to the south by a stile, well-used by dog walkers. The Green has a private agricultural access through the land to the north-west, to Saxons Way.

13.4 Drainage:

A spring fed ditch runs from the direction of Saxons Way and through a control pipe into the Town River. It is one of the main water supplies for the cattle on the Green. Because of trampling it requires dredging at least every 5 years to retain open water. In times of flood, water flows from the Town River through the agricultural access under the railway.

13.5 Habitats:

Summer grazed by cattle with a permanently wet spring-fed ditch. There are areas of semi-improved grassland with cuckoo flower and marsh foxtail. There is an extensive raised area which is allegedly tipped material from the construction of the factory estate presumably carried out without the permission of the Environment Agency.

13.6 Constraints:

Power wires above / Storm drains under / Winter flooding

13.7 Management Objective:

- To maintain public access
- To maintain ditch for cattle drinking and for wetland wildlife

13.8 Relevant to 13.7, issues which affect land not in Green ownership:

The stile which is the access from Saxon's Way across non-Green land: no formal public right of way here but see 13.3 above re agricultural right of way. Any development proposals should address access issues.

Key Species

Lady's smock
Marsh foxtail

B14. Blyth Meadow – 10 hectares

14.1 Boundaries:

Main line railway to the west, river Blyth to the south and Town River to north

14.2 Summer-grazed meadows liable to winter flooding. There are three areas of open water: a cut off meander near Halesworth Lock; another adjacent to Six Arches and a pond on the angle of the ditch that drains Mark Woolnough's marshes to the west of the railway. In prolonged dry periods they all dry out although the one near Six Arches has some evidence of spring activity. Both the other two have water control mechanisms in an attempt to retain water. Apart from the ditch that runs through the pond the remainder of the ditch system is largely irrelevant since the deepening of the two rivers in the mid 20th century.

14.3 Footpath Halesworth 14 runs alongside the Town River until it crosses the Town River towards the eastern end of the meadow where it becomes Holton 10.

14.4 The Town River has Village Green status for as far as Halesworth Lock

14.5 Cattle drinking facilities, in addition to the pond, include 2 drinkers (which the cattle push with their noses to get water from the river) and a mains water trough installed by Stuart Whiting (grazier) at the eastern end of the meadow. (He owns the land the other side of the Town River.)

14.5 Access/public usage:

PROW along the River linking Halesworth and Mells. The Track runs through the Meadow linking the railway bridges at each end. It brings many cyclists and walkers including dogs during grazing, so public information is required to manage possible conflicts.

14.6 Constraints:

Winter flooding.

Summer drying of pond for cattle.

14.7 Objectives:

- To maintain floristic diversity;
- to maintain willows in a variety of traditional ways, including pollarding;
- to improve water level control;
- to improve historical interpretation and protect artefacts
- (long term) to link with land on other side of New Reach

Key Species

Alder

Barn owl

Kingfisher

Little owl

Otter

Pollard willows (x2)

Small teasel

Black poplar



B15. Two Acres – 1ha.

Owned by Sustrans

15.1 Boundaries: To the east is the main line railway and Six Arches where it crosses the River Blyth. The River Blyth forms the southern boundary. To the west is grazing marsh owned by Mark Woolnough and to the north the sewage works

15.2 Description: It was summer-grazed by cattle until purchased by Sustrans to facilitate a new route for National Route 1 part of the National Cycle Network. This is a low-lying meadow liable to flood, the north-west side was planted in 2005 with a copse of poplar and willow to screen sewage works. Two native black poplars (given by the Woodland Trust through Alan Witherby of Wissett) were planted in December 2023.

15.3 It is crossed by public footpath Halesworth 3 running from the centre of Halesworth and known as Swan Lane. This path crosses the River Blyth and then splits into Wenhaston Footpaths 8 and 9.

We mow the route of the public footpath (no 3), and another one that goes from the bridge (NW corner) and passes under Six Arches.

Access onto Blyth Meadow is via the northern arch of Six Arches and is subject to a Licence between Sustrans and Network Rail.

15.4 Six Arches is considered an iconic local landmark and our tree planting was originally restricted to ensure that the view from the Bramfield Road was maintained. Other trees have now largely obscured that view.

15.5 A bridge over the Blyth and a strip of land which runs up the western side of the railway to the Mells/Walpole Road was acquired from Gwen Woolner by Sustrans and forms part of the route of National Cycle Route 1.

15.6 Access and current usage:

Two Acres connects the Industrial Estate to the Track via Swan Lane.

15.7 Constraints:

There are two sewage outfall pipes under the surface that flow into the river. No planting was carried out over these pipes.

We have no vehicular access although we could get in via the adjacent grazing marshes.

Network Rail sometimes require access to Six Arches and the Track.

We do not own Two Acres and have no formal agreement with Sustrans about management or public access but the course of dealing over many years is sufficient to establish a relationship and usage which can be relied on.

15.8 Management objectives:

- To maintain if possible the view of Six Arches bridge;
- to maintain field as rank grass for barn owls;
- to pollard willows as necessary;



Key Species

Barn owl

Black poplar

Harvest mouse

Meadow rue

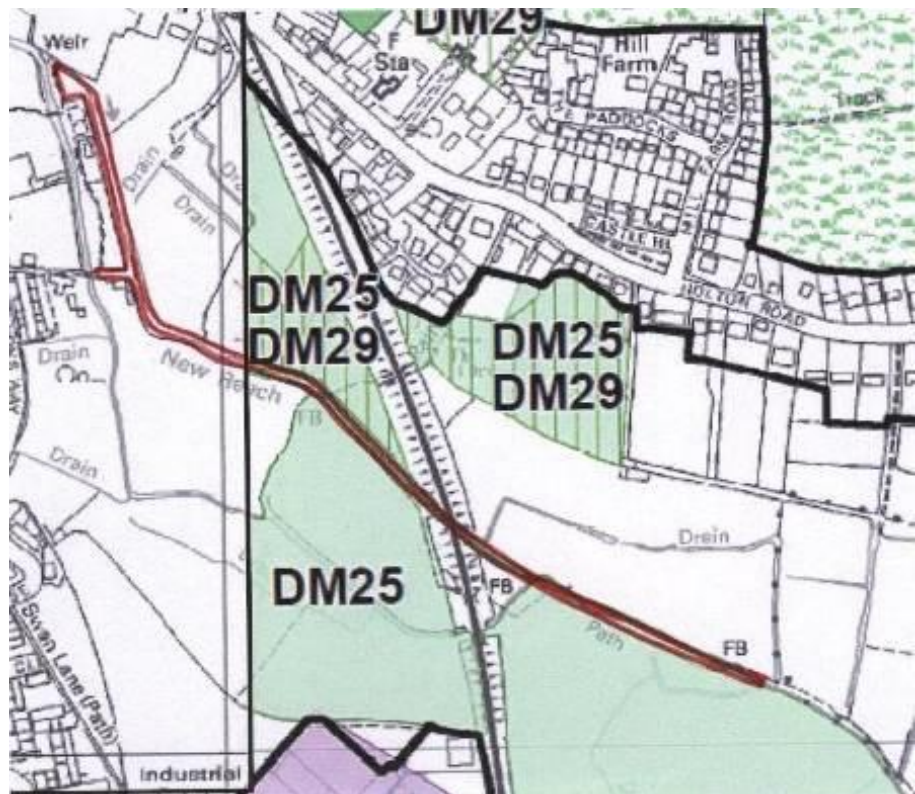
Slow worm

Grass snake

Common lizard

B16. The New Reach - Registered as a Village Green

16.1 Ownership: The New Reach from the junction with the Town River to Halesworth Lock was registered as a Village Green on 4th February 1974 with Halesworth Urban District Council as the registered owner. Many assets were automatically transferred to Waveney District Council on local government re-organisation in 1974 and their legal team has accepted that it is more likely than not that WDC (now East Suffolk Council) own the New Reach.



16.2 Flood alleviation: The Environment Agency treats the New Reach as an important element of the flood alleviation for Halesworth and used to dredge it approximately every 7 years. In most cases they assumed that the adjacent landowners own to the centre of the watercourse but because of the Village Green registration this is not the case of the New Reach.

In 2002 we applied to the Environment Agency for, and were granted, Land Drainage Consent to raise the water level by 18” in the New Reach upstream of White Bridge, between April and September each year. The boards stayed in place ever since and were replaced with the active assistance of the EA. (They provided the boards). (**Update 2024** – to be replaced by a riffle autumn 2024 – as part of White Bridge replacement works.)

16.3 Water supply: During the summer the water level in the New Reach is maintained by spring water from ditches that feed into it from the north. It has been stated that the condition of the New Reach would be improved if river water was fed into it to maintain a flow. However the quality of the water in the river generally is inferior to the water coming in from the spring fed ditches and should be kept out of the New Reach whenever possible.

16.4 History:

The New Reach was an important link in the development of the town. Opened in 1761 as part of the Blyth Navigation it allowed keels and wherries to travel backwards and forwards between Halesworth and Southwold and thence a direct sea link to London.

16.5 Part of the New Reach is registered as a County Wildlife Site

16.6 Access:

Public footpath 23 runs along the western and southern side of the New Reach as far as the railway where it meets footpath 14 which seems to cross the New Reach from Folly Meadow on the Definitive Map but there is no bridge and it is not used. White Bridge, shown on the old maps as a swing bridge gives access to Folly Meadow and the Folly itself. It is well used by people going into Town from Holton Road. Ownership of the bridge is uncertain but as a default the County Council maintain it as a public footpath bridge.

16.7 Management Objectives:

- **To maintain the present water level above White Bridge;**
- **to monitor Halesworth Lock with a view to protection and preservation;**
- **to address bankside maintenance and water quality;**

See *“New Reach: Aims & Objectives and Action Plan from 2016”* and *“New Reach Review and Update”* for further details.

All management objectives and actions are subject to discussion and agreement with East Suffolk Council who own and are responsible for the New Reach.

Key Species

Bats

Glow worm

Grass snake

Otter

Pike

Eel

Rudd

Toad

Water vole

White lilies

Willow Emerald Damselfly

Appendix 1

The Cycle of Tasks

Most of the work undertaken on Halesworth Millennium Green is done on a regular basis by volunteers.

Tasks include

- ✚ planting/pollarding and pruning trees including fruit trees;
- ✚ cutting back vegetation from meadows, footpaths and the Track, river banks;
- ✚ mowing and raking summer grass;
- ✚ checking tree guards;
- ✚ checking fences and gates;
- ✚ clearing litter;
- ✚ checking bird boxes;
- ✚ monitoring key species.

Other heavy-duty work that is needed is carried out using private contractors. The Environment Agency is responsible for its cycle of mandatory work.

Appendix 2

Copies of documents available on request from thegreen@halesworth.net

Policies and governing documents, constantly revised and updated

Access: Strategy for the Green
Appendix 1 Access Barriers, general
Appendix 2 Accessibility Chart, format
Access Audit of the Green Feb-Mar 2012
Complaints Policy and Procedure
Conflict of Interest Policy
Criteria and citation of Halesworth County Wildlife Sites
Data Protection & Confidentiality Policy
Equal Opportunities Policy
Financial Reserve Policy
Health & Safety Policy
Introductions Policy
Management Support Group Terms of Reference
Monitoring Spreadsheet: Key Species
New Reach Aims and Objectives
New Reach Review
Orchard Group Terms of Reference
Orchard Plant List and Map
Risk Management Policy
Safeguarding Policy
Trust Deed

Operational Codes of Practice

Cutting, raking & mowing
Emergency Access Procedure
Emergency Access Points with Map
Public Events
Visiting Groups
Volunteer Briefing on H&S
Volunteers Working Alone
Work Parties: Code of Practice and Practical Tips

Risk Assessments and Checklists

Generic Work RA
Brushcutting & Strimming RA
Hedgecutting (powered) RA
Cutting, Raking & Mowing RA
Orchard RA
Public Event RA
School Visit RA
Tree planting RA
Facilities checklist
Facilities checklist map