

Footpaths including access, views and interpretation

Photo: Capital Ring walk at
Coney Vale



While footpaths are not a ‘habitat’ as such, paths are practically a sub-community of each of the habitats through which they pass or adjoin. Indeed, footpaths present opportunities for ‘edge habitat’, the zone between one habitat and another, often providing in a small space two or more habitats or graduations between two habitats. Think of the difference between the shade of a woodland and a field-side path alongside, or the graduation between the exposed soil in the centre of the path, with short mown grass alongside, then the herbaceous vegetation of taller grasses and wildflowers.

Footpaths are of course valuable for another species too, humans. They provide for transit on foot, easy access through the habitat, the opportunity to see the habitat at its best and because people tend to keep to the path, disturbance to the wildlife of the habitat is minimised.

Being on London Clay soils, which do not drain well in winter, makes for an additional challenge.

The Country Park includes a few statutory Public Rights Of Way, and two old green lanes. The round-London Capital Ring passes through the Country Park. There are two monitored transect routes for butterflies. Several leaflets describe local guided walks within or to the park and the Park is often a venue for leader-led guided walks. A hard-surface path at Bush Farm provides access between Bush Farm and the Public Right Of Way near to St Robert Southwell and Kingsbury Green School.

This section also covers the creation of views along paths, way-marking or sign-posting, interpretation, other access needs and amenity.

Techniques

Paths style guide:

Paths vary so there is no single prescription as to how a path should look. But paths should include as many of the following as possible:

- Use existing desire line paths for the routes, unless there is a reason to amend the route.
- Wide paths help to distribute wear by enabling walkers to spread out and to avoid narrow, muddy and eroding single-file paths.
- Wider paths can also make path management easier. Walkers can spread out and their very use helps to control vegetation; and the more even wear enables grass to establish over a higher proportion of the path width.
- Wider paths increase the amount of light reaching the path vegetation and the pathside vegetation. That can make paths more attractive to some wildlife and to walkers.
- Similarly, wider paths also increase wind speeds - the increase in ventilation can make a large difference to the rate of drying of the path surface after rain.
- Overhangs: Overhanging vegetation can reduce access, sight-lines and light. Overhanging vegetation can range from ankle height bramble, to head-height branches and to over-head branches. At up to head-height the material can also impede some cutting and machinery operations.

Path intersections:

The above applies to path intersections and entrances between fields. Additionally there is potential to create mini-glades, with shrub and tree vegetation swept back (as in a 'star' pattern) and wide sight-lines.

Views

Much effort at Fryent Country Park is focused on maintaining or improving views. Examples are views along paths, views of interesting trees, and views of the wider landscape perhaps framed by branches in the foreground. Other features include the views of London and Wembley originally designed by Humphry Repton in a landscaping scheme of 1793, views of the landscaping trees, the 'grass-heath' type vegetation of acid grassland, the Lombardy Poplar avenue, the hedgerow landscape, hay meadows, orchards and ponds. Look for opportunities to create views on each project involving work with vegetation.

Invasive species control:

Some species may grow well in particular locations. Those may include species that become a problem such as Brambles alongside a path, Hemlock, Common

Ragwort and Creeping Thistles in meadows and Blackthorn in hedgerows. Even Oak as scrub on acid grassland. The other sections in this management plan describe how those are managed. Other species may be 'INNS' (invasive non-native species) which can adapt well to the temperate climate.

Japanese Knotweed is one of the more difficult to remove given the resilience of its root system. It was introduced to the Country Park in, as then, un-regulated waste at Summers Croft and for the material that forms the roadside mounds. As Fryent Country Park is certified to Organic Standards, the use herbicide is not practical. The Group is using a long-term method to weaken the plants by crushing (crushing or pulling is more effective than cutting) emergent stems and covering the rhizomes. Crushed material is left in situ on top of the rhizomes. To date the spread, from about 18 clumps has contained the spread and no growth has been observed from two of the locations.

Task: Paths	Notes
<p>Paths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barn Hill • Barn Hill: central north-south path. Widening this could also reduce erosion of the path centre. • Summers Croft • Beane Hill, Little and Great Cowlays • Eastlande • Lower Hydes woodland • Lower Hydes: former tennis courts • Preston Eastfield • At field entrances • Paths through the roadside mounds, particularly at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Brow of Fryent Way to Short Down West ○ Honey Slough West ○ Lyon field ○ Honey Slough East by Valley Drive ○ Pages ○ Opposite Fryent Way Car Park ○ Brow of Fryent Way to Short Down East ○ To Great Cowlays • Public Rights Of Way, entrances, and signage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fryent Way to Shakespeare Drive ○ Barn Hill to The Mall ○ Valley Drive to Slough Lane • Eldestrete • At park entrances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 78-81 Uxendon Hill: keep vegetation clear ○ Shakespeare Drive: keep vegetation clear (and or arrange responsibility with London Underground) 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Broadview ○ 199-219 Salmon Street (and path to, and behind the 1960s/1970s garages). Retain the Pear tree, young Mulberry and Elder. ○ Bush Farm ○ Sedum Close ○ Barn Hill ○ From Pilgrims Way 	
Field edge paths: Flail mowing of field edge, meadow and other paths. A network of paths is maintained by tractor flail cutting. Cutting is approximately three times per year commencing in mid-spring. Cutting of hedgerow edge paths also cuts Blackthorn suckers to reduce the spread of these into the meadows.	Brent
Eldestrete / Hell Lane. See the Green Lanes section of the management plan. There is also a green lane near to Masons Field.	
Butterfly transect routes: Fryent Country Park, and Beane Hill	
Capital Ring signage including finger-posts and way markers: maintain and free of graffiti. Clear encroaching vegetation from the signs to maintain sight-lines from a distance.	
Access Path: (between the Bush Farm entrance at Slough Street/slough Lane and the Public Footpath entrance between Kingsbury Green and St. Robert Southwell School - about 600m): Maintain the path, cut over-hanging branches, and clear mud if necessary.	
Lombardy Poplar avenue, Barn Hill. Maintain a wide grassland path between the rows of the avenue for visitors; to conserve the grassland flora and to reduce erosion of the centre of the path.	
Drainage:	
Drainage: improve on paths, at pinch points and elsewhere. These include: field gaps at Hedges 31, 37 and 42.	
Drainage: northern end of Access Path: Partially improved following works by Brent Drainage.	
Park entrances: Drainage has been installed on the path adjacent to the flats on the south-east side of Fryent Way.	
Drainage: South-west corner of Events Field: ditch drain needs to be kept free of eroded silt in the months before events.	
Events field: Cutting needs to commence approximately six weeks prior to an event, to enable a second or third cut.	
Seating: including programme for maintenance and replacement.	

Control vegetation growing behind and around seats, e.g. at: Summers Croft (concrete seat), Barn Hill summit (log seats by Fishpond), Little Cowlays.	
Park furniture: Make all park furniture as vandal proof as possible. Posts in the grounds should have buried horizontal struts, so that they cannot be pulled out. Security mark/stamp/paint park furniture.	
Triangulation Point: Adopt the Triangulation Point. Contact: Ordnance Survey 0703 792621. Paint once annually.	
Horse grazing licensee. Suggest: Sub-divide the horse fields to improve the efficiency of the grazing. Cross-reference to Horse Grazing Licensee Agreement.	Brent Council
Security:	
Gates and locks: check	
Road safety: Improvements were made to Fryent Way in early 2009 including the reduction of the speed limit from 50mph to 40mph, reduction of lanes from two to one in each direction; and crossing points.	
Litter collection: particularly of all litter bins, Fryent Way Car Park including the surrounding hedgerows (i.e. not just the hard standing), the park side of the mound on the east side of Fryent Way and nearby hedgerows (windblown litter), and the whole park to a standard exceeding the Environmental Protection Act 1990.	
Fly-tipping: Visit neighbouring properties from which rubbish is being dumped onto the Park and speak to the occupants.	Brent
Interpretative materials:	
'Welcome to Fryent Country Park' signs: 2 signs. Clean occasionally with water and a soft cloth.	
Interpretative boards: maintain, and clean occasionally with water and soft cloth.	
Notice boards: maintain current information	
Marketing: leaflets, articles, internet: maintain up to date	

More information

See also the Management Plan sections for each of the habitats. Barn Hill Conservation Group. www.bhcg.btck.co.uk

The Conservation Volunteers. Footpaths.