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Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP)

Bramber Brooks

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Contract

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This report describes work commissioned by the Environment Agency, by an instruction dated 17 May 2024. The Client's representative for the contract was Elliott Strutt of the Environment Agency. Lucy Collins and Bob Antonini of JBA Consulting carried out this work.

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Abbreviations

HDC	Horsham District Council
INNS	Invasive Non-Native Species
LEMP	Landscape and Environmental Management Plan

1 Overview

1.1 Background

The works at Bramber Brooks were undertaken by the Environment Agency to provide compensation for the loss of freshwater habitats following the implementation of the Shoreham Adur Tidal Walls flood defence scheme. Additional aims included delivering enhancements to wildlife and improving public access to the newly designated Local Wildlife Site. The works comprised the excavation of four ponds, with the arisings used to form a path to enhance year-round access to the public within the wetland. The waterbodies will be predominantly ground water fed, with additional inflows from surface water.

1.2 Site location

Bramber Brook is situated north of the village of Bramber, within the flood plain of the River Adur. The site is owned and managed by Horsham District Council (HDC) and has recently been designated as a Local Nature Reserve.

The site is located across the boundary of the Parishes of Steyning and Bramber, with the Built-Up Area Boundary of Bramber located to the west. Residential properties in Bramber village are visible from the site, and within easy walking distance. A public right of way runs in a north-south direction to the east of the site, and the Bramber Conservation Area is located approximately 150m to the south of the site. To the immediate south-west of the site is Bramber Castle (Grade 1 Listed), and around 250m to the west is the River Adur. Within, and directly adjacent to the site is a group of 'salterns' (piles of salt/mud spoil dating to the medieval period, which are Scheduled Ancient Monuments), as well as possible remains of a moat which would have been associated with Bramber Castle.

1.3 Ecological context

The site and surrounding areas at Bramber Brooks Local Nature Reserve support several habitat types, predominantly other neutral grassland but also including aquatic marginal vegetation, reedbed, other swamp vegetation, Bramble scrub, and mixed scrub. These habitats are known to support numerous protected/ notable species including breeding birds, reptiles, commuting and foraging bats, amphibians, and plant species. These include the following notable/rare species; Cetti's Warbler, a Schedule 1 species, (breeding bird), an exceptional population of Grass Snake, and Divided Sedge, a Vulnerable plant on the Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain and a Section 41 species.

1.4 Aims and objectives of management

The aim of this LEMP is to provide management guidance for the existing landscape elements and those developed as part of the scheme, including the grassland, ponds and features for protected species. Effective management to achieve successful establishment of habitat and soft landscape works, for the benefit of biodiversity and visual amenity, is an essential part of the scheme.

Key objectives of the LEMP are:

- To provide guidance for the maintenance of the site
- To comply with the Environment Agency's maintenance standards.

2 Management Plan

2.1 Responsibilities for implementation of the plan

The site will be managed by HDC. The management aims of HDC for the site are yet to be determined and, therefore, may result in changes in proposed management as set out below. This may include variations in grassland management or management of additional features, such as marginal planting. HDC are to specify roles and responsibilities for overseeing, undertaking and monitoring of the management plan.

2.2 Management actions

The management activities for the site focus primarily on the grassland, ponds and features for protected/ general wildlife species. The management activities are infrequent, to facilitate the natural establishment / regeneration of plants and desirable incoming species.

It is important that maintenance operators understand the legal and ecological sensitivities, including timings of works, regarding protected species which are or could be present on site.

2.2.1 Grassland

The grassland management regime is dependant, to an extent, on the overall site management aims of HDC. It is assumed that the site will be managed as a meadow, and cattle will not be present.

During the first few years, a higher mowing frequency will be required to prevent the establishment and over colonization of weeds such as Thistles and Docks. This is to comprise mowing to 4 inches every other month during spring and summer and include the entire site in years 1 and 2, and to exclude the footpath areas from year 1 onwards.

In year 3, the mowing regime should transition to meadow management to prevent the transition of the site into scrub and woodland. This will comprise a twice yearly cut to 4 inches, to avoid harm to reptiles. The first cut should take place in May, and the vegetation allowed subsequently to flower and set seed before an autumn cut in September.

The footpath will require management to ensure access for visitors is maintained, comprising mowing between the months of April and September from Year 1 onwards. The grass should be mown to 2 inches whenever it reaches 4 inches in height within this period. The mowing frequency will be dependent upon the weather which will impact the rate of growth. Over time, the footpath is likely to become worn,

at which point mowing requirements should be reassessed, and may potentially require re-seeding.

It is recommended that the grassland adjacent to the footpaths should be mown on an annual basis, only, to prevent the establishment of desire paths outside of the footpath.

All arisings are to be removed from the site to reduce the nutrient levels in the soils and, thereby, encourage wildflower species to establish. The cut material will be added to the reptile hibernaculum on site to ensure suitable habitat is provided for reptile egg laying.

2.2.2 Ponds

Regular inspections of ponds A1, B and C are required to determine the colonisation of reeds, as these smaller ponds are most susceptible to transitioning to reedbeds and, over time, becoming dry. Periodic management of the reeds will be required, here, to maintain a significant percentage of open water. The timeframe for this maintenance will be determined by the rate of reed growth recorded during monitoring works.

It is not considered that Pond A will require maintenance works, in the same way, since the depth of the pond profile will prevent the spread of reeds across the waterbody.

2.2.3 Features for protected species

The hanging post from the original entrance gate has been re-installed adjacent to the reptile hibernaculum and drilled with multiple holes, of varying diameters, on the north and south facing faces to create a large bug hotel. The vegetation around both habitat features will need to be regularly strimmed to retain their function. The frequency of cutting will be determined by the rate of growth in any one year but monthly will suffice in most average years.

The reptile banks require shorter grass for basking reptiles, particularly on the south facing banks. They should be mown at the same time as the vegetation around the other habitat features.

Bird boxes have been installed around the site. These should be inspected and any remaining nest material removed within the months of October or November.

2.2.4 Other maintenance

There were no Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) on site pre-, during or post construction. However, INNS could be introduced to the site. The site should be

checked annually for INNS, in June or July, by staff with experience and/or training in identifying INNS and preventing their proliferation.

Annual vegetation pruning will be required will be required for the hawthorn scrub adjacent to Bridge 4, the main access into the site, to facilitate unimpeded use by visitors. This is to be undertaken in the winter months, between November and January.

Additionally, the site should be regularly checked for litter all of which is to be removed and disposed of appropriately, recycling where possible.

A Appendix

A.1 Work schedule

Operation	Frequency	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Post construction maintenance	Mowing every other month to stop thistles and docks establishing, for 2 years.				x		x		x		x		
Grassland maintenance	Twice yearly mow from Year 3					x				x			
Grassland maintenance on footpath	Year 1 onwards (frequency dependent on weather)				x	x	x	x	x	x			
Grassland adjacent to footpath	Year 1 onwards									x			
Reptile features (banks)	Monthly from April to September				x	x	x	x	x	x			
Reptile features (hibernacula) and invertebrate features (bug hotel)	Monthly from April to September				x	x	x	x	x	x			

Operation	Frequency	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Reeds	Monthly inspections					x	x	x	x	x			
Bird Boxes	Once yearly										x	x	
INNS	Once yearly						x	x					
Bridge 4 (main access into site)	Once yearly	x										x	x

A.2 Habitat features location plan

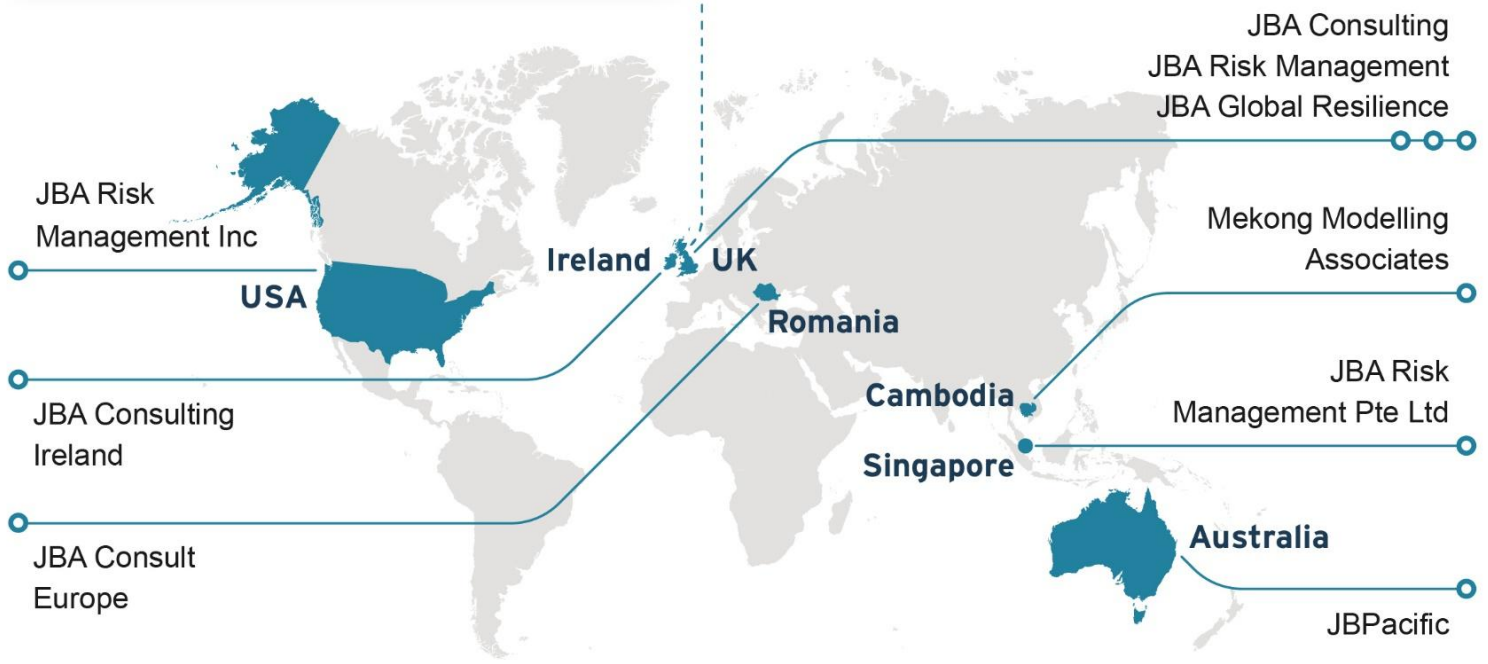




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