

# **Church Common Wenhaston Management Plan 2023 – 33**

To be reviewed in 2028

**Wenhaston  
Commons  
Group**



## **Church Common**

### **Factual summary**

<b>Map reference</b>	TM426755
<b>Area</b>	2.4ha / 5.9 acres approximately
<b>Land tenure</b>	Church Common is a registered common under the Common's Registration Act 1965. Previously managed by then Suffolk Coastal District Council (now East Suffolk Council) and now Wenhaston Parish Council under a Scheme for the Regulation and Management of Common Land
<b>Designations</b>	Lies within the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
<b>Obligations</b>	The Parish Council as managers of the Commons under the Scheme for Regulation and Management is obliged to protect the Commons, maintain them free from encroachment, guarantee that the inhabitants of the district have a free right of access to the land and may enjoy various sorts of recreation subject to the bye laws and to preserve as far as possible objects of historical and ecological interest.
<b>Legal constraints</b>	As the land is Registered Common Land management is constrained by the requirements of the Commons Act 1876 and 1899 the Law of Property Act 1925 and the Commons Registration Act 1965
<b>Commoners' rights</b>	No Commoners rights registered
<b>Access</b>	Open access managed by a series of informal footpaths

Church Common is the one of the five Wenhaston commons and is situated just off Narrow Way and overlooking the Blyth marshes

### **History**

Church Common was once the site of a fair which was staged annually up to the First World War. It is a remnant of Sandlings heath, a habitat that once stretched from Ipswich to Lowestoft. Lowland heathland is a rare habitat with the UK holding a significant proportion of the global resource but some 83% of Sandlings heaths vanished between the 1930's and 1980's. Much of this was lost through agriculture, building, forestry, air bases and golf courses and the remainder suffered through a lack of management. In the 1980's a massive effort was made to restore the remaining areas, reducing the invasive trees and bracken enabling the true heathland species to thrive. This effort was made by the Sandlings Group which consisted of Suffolk Wildlife Trust, RSPB, National Trust, local councils, Forestry Commission and some private landowners. Within ten years some 80% of the remaining

areas was under some form of management much of which became designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or County Wildlife Site (CWS).

It was at this time the Wenhaston Commons Group was formed consisting of interested villagers supported by the then Suffolk Coastal District Council (SCDC) with the intention of managing the habitat on their doorstep.

In 2012 SCDC passed the Scheme of Regulation to the parish council.

The common has had little management in recent years save for some footpath maintenance and small areas of scrub control. An enclosure was erected to encourage heather growth by restricting access by rabbits but this was removed several years ago and only a few patches of heather species remain.

The Common is well used by villagers for dog walking and in some years is used as the venue for open air theatre.

### **Ecological value**

Church Common sits within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Natural Character Area. It is one of the driest parts of the country, with local rainfall typically only two thirds of the national average. The distinctive landscape character is a product of its underlying geology, shaped by the effects of the sea and the interactions of people.

There have been no specific surveys of flora or fauna recorded since 2002.

It is principally an area of acid grassland, bracken, gorse and oak/sycamore woodland. There are several veteran oaks along its boundary.

There are 21 nest boxes monitored annually chiefly occupied by blue and great tits. Spotted flycatchers have nested in adjacent gardens sporadically over recent years.

### **Objectives**

- To continue to maintain the areas for the community for recreation and wildlife.
- To maintain and increase the areas of heathers and acid grassland
- To manage gorse in a variety of successional stages
- To ensure the veteran oaks are monitored to ensure their survival.
- To monitor the wildlife on an annual basis if possible, by carrying out breeding bird surveys, monitor nest boxes etc where volunteers are available
- To maintain the path network in a safe and usable condition.

The objectives need to be achievable given that some of the management work is to be undertaken by volunteers and so a realistic work programme is required.

## Vision

To maintain the site as an example of relict Sandlings heath with its existing flora and fauna and improve the habitat with the objective of increasing the heather area, allowing scrub to develop and attracting new or lost species. Maintaining the existing path network will ensure much of the habitat remains undisturbed to the benefit of wildlife.

## Management

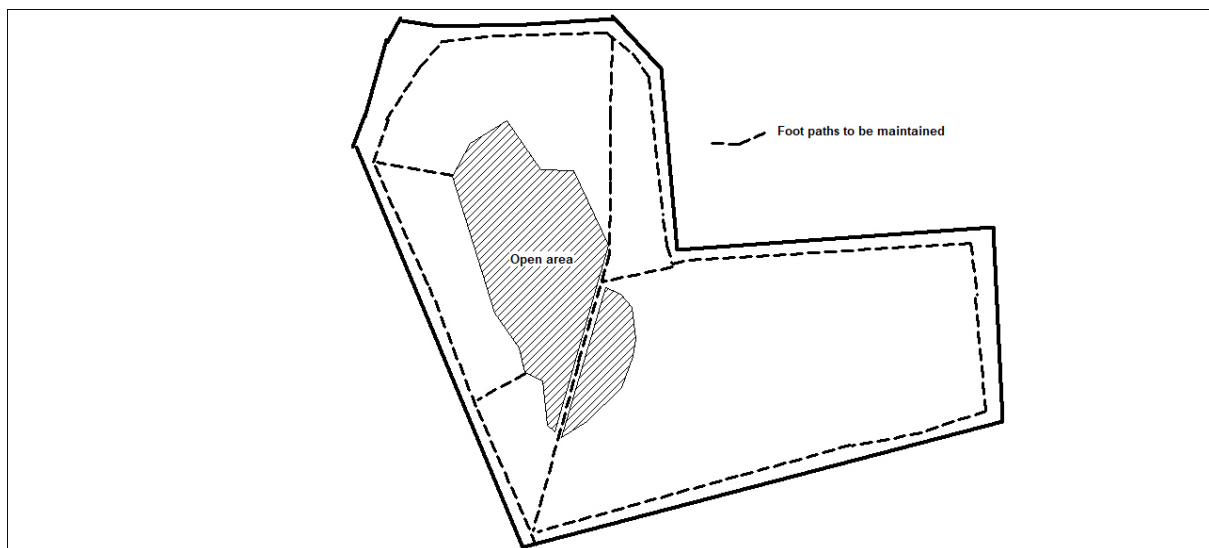
In first year erect two new exclosures around the small heather areas and remove once the heather has re-established and able to withstand rabbit pressure.

Annually maintain a good footpath network to encourage walkers to stick to main routes, reducing the threat to ground nesting birds. Map 1.

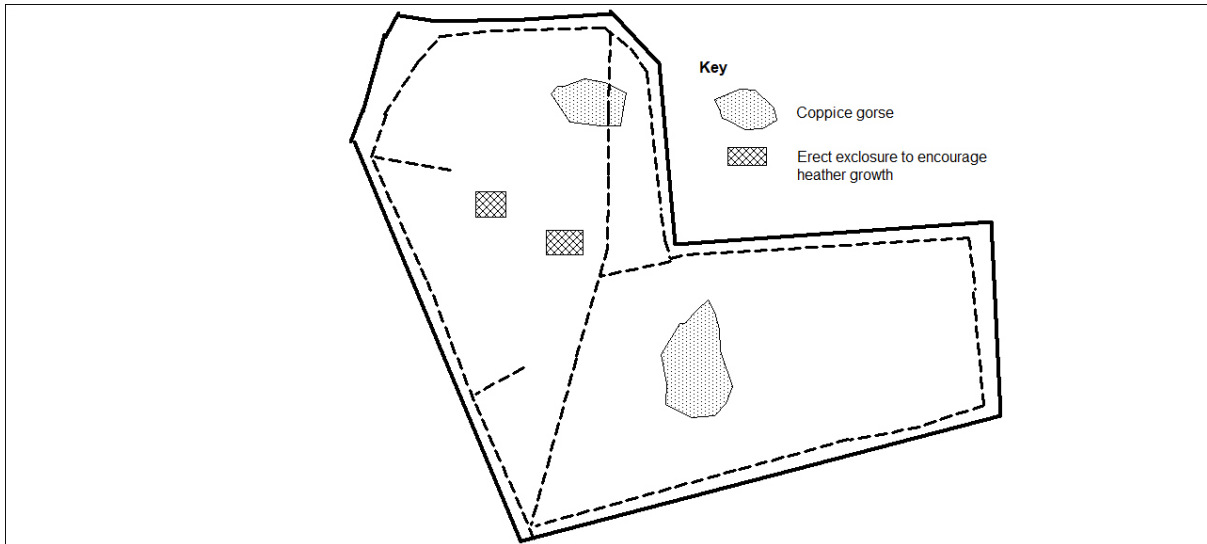
Carry out annual checks on the safety of trees adjacent to foot paths and manage as necessary

Coppice the over mature gorse and encourage a variety of scrub to establish in the two areas marked on Map 2.

Carry out wildlife surveys if volunteers are available



Map 1. Footpaths to be maintained



Map 2. Management areas

## Appendix

Church Common vegetation records				
Field Wood-rush	<i>Luzula campestris</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Sheep's Fescue agg.	<i>Festuca ovina</i> agg.	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Cock's-foot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Yorkshire-fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Creeping Bent	<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Common Nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Buck's-horn Plantain	<i>Plantago coronopus</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Wall Speedwell	<i>Veronica arvensis</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Ground-ivy	<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Broom	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Gorse	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Silver Birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Heather	<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Bell Heather	<i>Erica cinerea</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Sheep's Sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosella</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Common Chickweed	<i>Stellaria media</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Common Mouse-ear	<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Small-flowered Crane's-bill	<i>Geranium pusillum</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Broad-leaved Willowherb	<i>Epilobium montanum</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Heath Bedstraw	<i>Galium saxatile</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Spear Thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Common Ragwort	<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common

Cladonia pyxidata	Cladonia pyxidata	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Peltigera canina	Peltigera canina	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Bank Haircap	Polytrichastrum formosum	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Neat Feather-moss	Pseudoscleropodium purum	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common
Springy Turf-moss	Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus	Carrie Howard	2002	Church Common