

# Truleigh Hill Live Action Management Plan

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## 1. Introduction

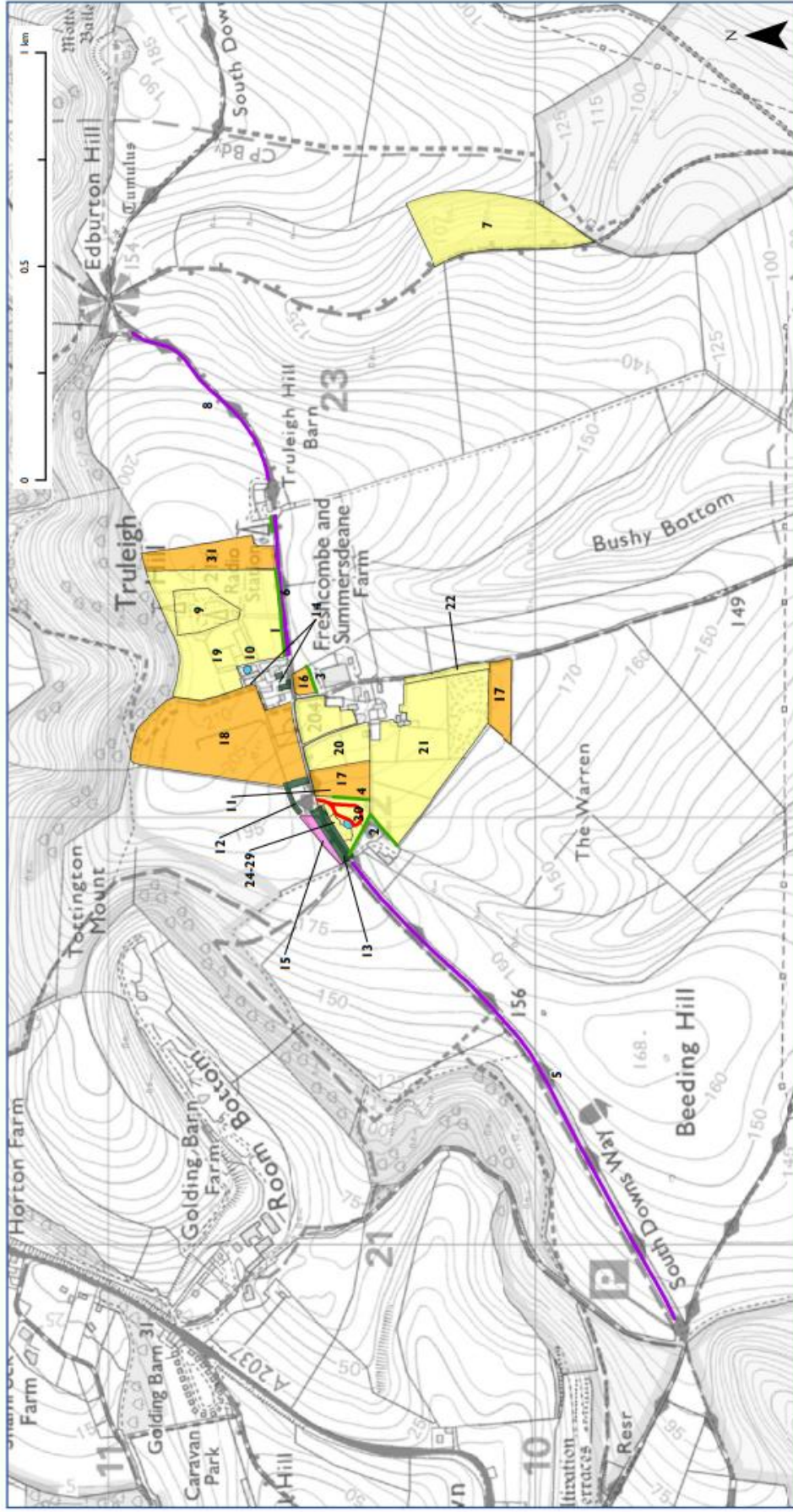
This document is the practical action plan for Truleigh Hill that has been developed alongside the Local Landscape Plan. It identifies areas where the South Downs National Park Authority can engage with landowners to carry out potential practical tasks or even provide advice going forward. The plan will be 'live' meaning it will change as time goes on to reflect what is going on around Truleigh Hill. A number of the projects also align with the [SDNP Partnership Management Plan](#). The SDNA want to work with the community up at Truleigh Hill and where possible work together to benefit mutual outcomes.

Many of the opportunities/potential projects have come about from feedback through the local community, advice from specialists in both flora and fauna, and looking landscape level habitat connections. Much of the work will include biological monitoring i.e. surveys before and after to see if the work is having a positive impact. These surveys will also help to inform the SDNPA of where and how projects could be carried out in the future. The SDNPA wants to involve landowners to be part of the monitoring process because it gives people sense of ownership and pride plus able to promote the positive outcomes. It is a great way to engage to residents and users of the area.

## 2. Intervention Opportunity Map

The map below labels the actions that the SDNPA have identified as potential opportunities. It is numbered and these numbers will be used through the plan so each area can be identified. To see a larger version of the map then please follow this [link](#).

# Truleigh Hill Opportunity Areas



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- Conservation Verges Management
- Easy Access Trail
- Scattered scrub and maintenance
- Tree Removal and Planting
- Grazing Opportunities
- Habitat Enhancement
- Pond
- Car Parking

### 3. Opportunity Area – scattered scrub planting and maintenance

What is the project?

Planting –

- Along South Downs Way (SDW) in front of the Truleigh Hill Stables paddocks and BT mast (1)
  - Already planted two years ago
  - Will replant where necessary

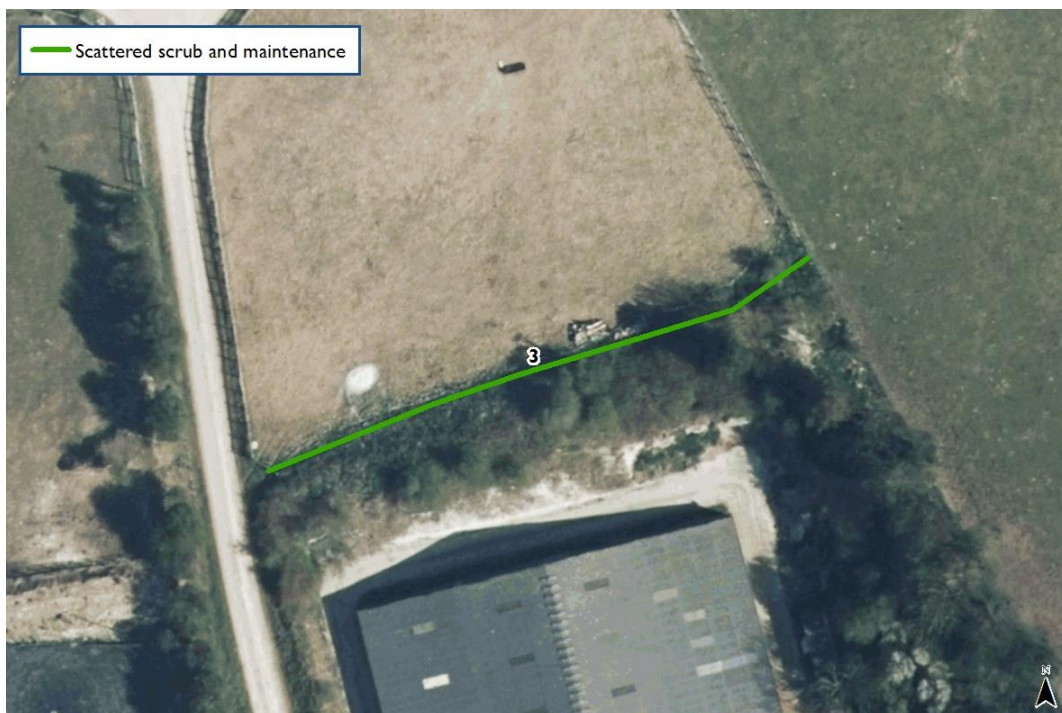




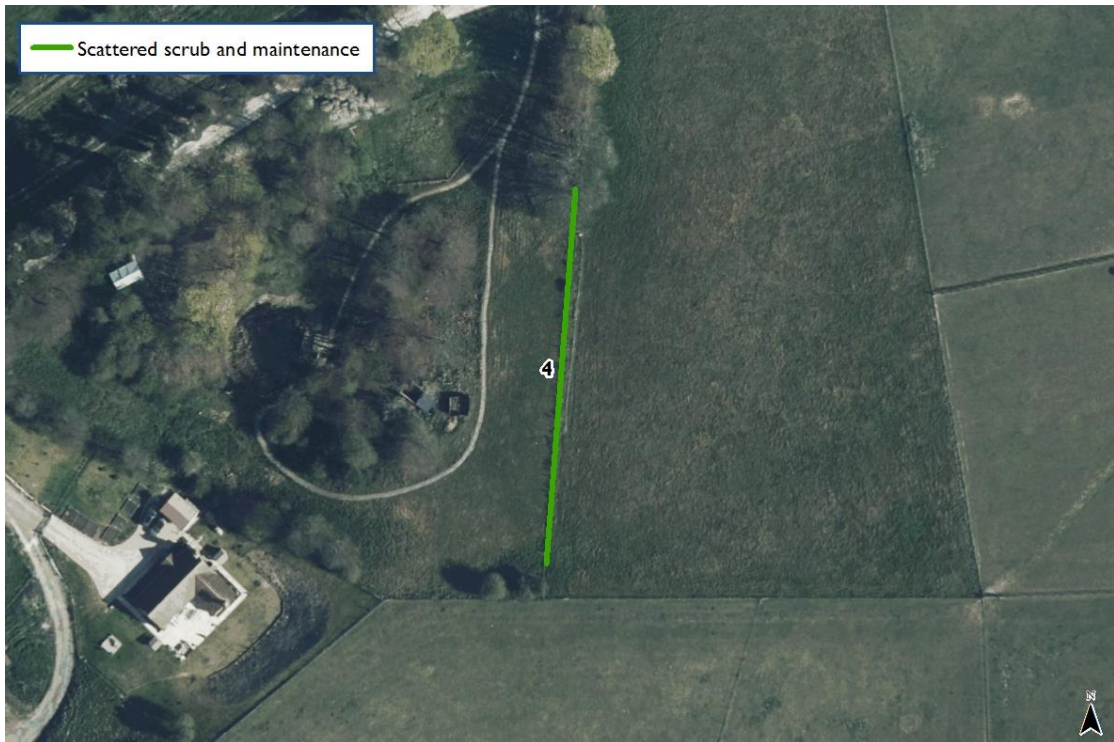
- Around Warren Valley Farm Bungalow (2)
  - Plant around boundary
  - Was planted two years ago but none survived



- Paddock A (3)
  - Plant along southern boundary



- Paddock B (4)
  - Plant where necessary between field and Youth Hostel Association (YHA) field



- YHA field
  - See Opportunity Area YHA Field Compartments 3, 4 and 5
- Around YHA building and track
  - Dependent on whether conifer trees are removed
  - See Opportunity Area Tree Removal and Planting

The plan is to plant these areas with a mixture of tree and shrub species including hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple, guelder rose, privet and disease resistant elms (where appropriate).

We do not want to plant these areas up as linear features or blocks. We are looking for a more 'naturalistic' planting that will grow up to form scattered scrub. That is because this is a typical feature within the eastern downs landscape.

Maintenance –

This will include cutting around the saplings to help keep the dominant grass species and brambles/nettles down to give the saplings the best chance of survival. If the removal of the conifer trees were to go ahead, then we would use the wood chippings as a mulch around the hedgerow saplings.

When will it be carried out?

Planting: Autumn/winter

Maintenance: Spring and summer.

How will it be carried out?

Ad-hoc volunteering sessions working with the charities/groups, volunteer ranger service and the local community.

#### 4. Opportunity Area – Conservation Verge Management

What is the project?

Locations:

- Beeding Hill car park to Truleigh Hill (end of tarmac) 1300 metres (5)





- Truleigh Hill Stables paddocks to the red brick barn 250 metres (North SDW) and 340 metres (South of SDW) (6)



- Red brick barn down to Fulking escarpment (North of SDW) 470 metres (8) - Beelines



Currently these verges are unimproved grassland running alongside the SDW and consist of coarse grass species, bramble, nettle and wildflower species. The project is about cutting and collecting the surface vegetation from the verges to help enhance the quality of the verge and overtime increase wildflower species diversity. Removing the cuttings can help to reduce soil fertility overtime. This can then help create a better environment for wildflowers because they prefer less fertile soils and hopefully reduce the amount of competitive species. There is an opportunity to create a corridor of nectar rich verges through Truleigh Hill. There is a huge opportunity for verges to be managed more sympathetically to help compensate for the 97% reduction in UK wildflower meadows since the 1930s. If you are interested in finding out more then please refer to the Plantlife document [Managing grassland road verges 2020.pdf \(plantlife.org.uk\)](https://www.plantlife.org.uk/document/Managing_grassland_road_verges_2020.pdf)

When will it be carried out?

September/October as many wildflowers will have completed their life cycles uninterrupted before cutting.

How will it be carried out?

Short term - SDNPA contractor with a cut and collect machine. Local farmer to provide location for arisings. Two sections will be carried out slightly differently:

- Section 6 (South of SDW) which will be cut and collected by a mixture between contractor and volunteers. Contractor will do the flat section and the volunteers will complete the sloped section down to the fence line
- Section 8 which will cut by local farmer and then raked off using volunteers.

Long term – farmer (landowner) to take on cut and collect.



## 5. Opportunity Area - Beelines

### Local Wildlife Site Biodiversity Enhancement (7)



#### What is the project?

The project is aimed at increasing the chalk grassland flora biodiversity for this site. The project is being part-funded through the Bee Lines project under the South Downs Trust. The iconic chalk grassland of the South Downs attracts a multitude of bees and butterflies with its array of stunning wildflowers. However, with a continuing deterioration in chalk grassland these key pollinating species are on the decline and in need of our support.

The landowner has been working with the Trust, the Lead Ranger for the Eastern Downs, Plantlife and Natural England to help develop and carry out this project. It has involved giving advice and financial help:

- Advice around grazing management of the site
- Financial support to purchase fencing and gates along the bridleway
- Scrub clearance
- Looking to sow some yellow rattle to compete with the competitive grass species

#### When will it be carried out?

The key people involved will discuss the management going forward annually because each year will be different and will have to be reviewed. The fencing and scrub clearance have taken place and there will be a grazing management plan involving both sheep and cattle.

How will it be carried out?

The farming team will monitor the grazing levels on the site and help move stock when necessary. They will also look to flail scrub/regrowth where necessary to help encourage chalk grassland species to colonise.

## 6. Opportunity Area – WW2 Bunker/Tunnels

What is the project?

Work with the relevant owners/authorities to gain access to the bunker/tunnels (9) so we can get a bat survey carried out for the site. There is concern about the bats that hibernate in the WW2 tunnels. The Sussex Bat Group used to be allowed to monitor bats but have not been able to gain permission for a quite a few years now. Look to work landowners above ground (telecommunications area) to whether there is any habitat management we can carry out to help improve the biodiversity/bat population.

Work with landowners to explore if there is any opportunities to open up the bunkers/tunnels to engage with the public for events. Maintain as a cultural heritage asset.



When will it be carried out?

Communication will be made as soon as possible to relevant people to find out more information bat surveys and using the area for engagement/education reasons. Survey

work would be carried out in winter to see if they use this area to hibernate and further studies in the spring.

How will it be carried out?

Communication will be made to the Sussex Bat Group to identify if they have a contact. Contact via email to relevant authorities/owners and to see if any progress can be made. If successful then the plan would be for the bat group to survey the site and make any practical suggestions to help increase the population.

With regards to potential access for engagement, communication to the relevant authorities/landowner will be made and will take things from there.

## 7. Opportunity Area – Ponds

What is the project?

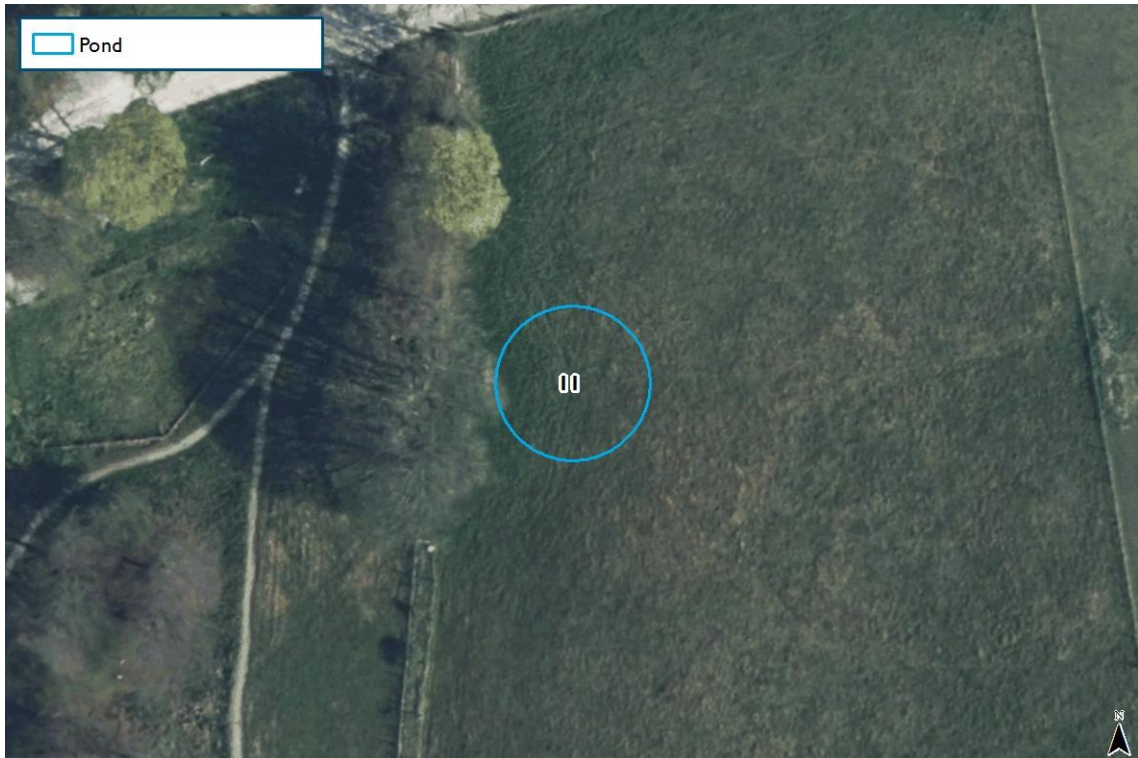
The project would like to look at managing the current ponds located at Truleigh Hill (YHA field and Truleigh Hill Stables) and working with Froglife to create a new pond in Paddock B.

- YHA field
  - See plan under 'Opportunity YHA Field'
- Truleigh Hill Stables (10)
  - Work with landowner if they require help with management of the pond e.g. planting or patching up any cracks forming in the concrete, or the hibernaculum





- Paddock B (11)
  - Froglife project looking to create a number of dew ponds across the Downs
  - Froglife are delivering a local project in Sussex funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund called Discovering Dewponds
  - This will act as a stepping stone pond between the YHA Field and Truleigh Hill Stables



When will it be carried out?

Truleigh Hill Stables

- Planting carried out between summer to autumn
- Repairs on concrete during summer (driest period)

Paddock B

- Survey work with contractors and dip holes to be completed this autumn/winter 2022
- Planning permission, creation and planting during 2023

How will it be carried out?

Truleigh Hill Stables

- The SDNPA would work with volunteers to carry out any practical habitat management
- SDNPA would help repair the pond if cracks form

## Paddock B

- Froglife will hire contractors to carry out the creation of the pond
- Froglife will then look to SDNPA to engage with groups of volunteers to help plant up the pond and create a hibernaculum
- SDNPA will look to help install fencing around the pond to prevent livestock puncturing the liner

For all ponds we would look to work with Froglife to provide advice and possible monitoring training in the future so then the community or volunteers can help survey and carry out work on the ponds.

## 8. Opportunity Area – Conifer / Non-Native Tree Removal and Planting

What is the project?

The removal of all the conifers located around :

- The YHA and car park (12)





- Along the SDW up to the YHA (13)



- Around Truleigh Hill Stables (14)





The reasons for the removal of conifer trees around YHA area:

- Improve landscape character at Truleigh Hill through the removal of dominant uncharacteristic trees from the landscape
- Opening up panoramic views across the chalk Downland
- Trees originally planted as a windbreak, now having outgrown the location will start to decline and pose a future risk to the public safety
- The trees in general are misshapen and windblown and excessively larger for the situation and location, with the growing risk of failure resulting from wind stress, size and exposure

The reasons for the removal of non-native trees around Truleigh Hill Stables:

- Improve landscape character at Truleigh Hill through the removal of uncharacteristic trees from the landscape running alongside and to the north of the South Downs Way

The deciduous trees/shrubs will remain allowing them to have more space to mature and fill out.

The SDNPA has communicated with the Forestry Commission and had a tree officer out who would be supportive of the work. The work would require a felling licence but this would also require a tree planting plan. Both locations would be planted up with appropriate native species of trees and shrubs including disease resistant elm trees.

We will try to use the timber from the conifers (excluding the trees located around Truleigh Hill Stables) around the YHA field as informal seating and some left on site to rot down and act as habitat. Most of the chippings will be deposited into one of the woodland copses located in the YHA field and then used to mulch current hedgerow saplings and any future plantings.

When will it be carried out?

If the project is approved by the Truleigh Hill residents then the SDNPA will explore where they can receive the funding for the work to be carried out. When the SDNPA has found the funds then the next steps would require getting three quotes for the work and going to the Forestry Commission to apply for a felling licence. The SDNPA would also look to hire an ecologist to carry out a pre-work survey of the areas to make sure there were no protected species or species of importance. This survey may alter the amount of trees to be felled.

When all approved the tree work would be carried out during the autumn/winter months (outside of bird nesting season). The work could be done all in one season or carried out over two years to lessen the immediate impact of sudden change on the landscape.

How will it be carried out?

Contractors will be employed to carry out the work. This will involve felling the trees to ground level and then grinding out the stumps. They would cut up a number of the large trunks and help manoeuvre them into place to be used as rustic furniture. The chippings would be disposed of in one of the woodland copses and used for tree planting. Any logs or chippings not used will be removed from the site.

## 9. Opportunity Area – Parking

What is the project?

Creation of temporary parking to address access and parking issues in the area (15). During the Covid pandemic Truleigh Hill and Beeding Hill became inundated with vehicles. They were parking on all the verges, in gateways, blocking others in which became an issue with residents and farm vehicles. Both car parks at the YHA and Beeding Hill are regularly at capacity. The project wants to alleviate some of that pressure by creating additional parking. The new parking area could help alleviate the pressures of coaches turning around beyond the YHA. The SDNPA will be working with charities to see if they can help groups drive up to Truleigh Hill in mini buses rather than in separate vehicles. Staff members at the SDNPA are looking at sustainable transport options along the Heritage Coast.



When will it be carried out?

This is very dependent on additional external funding but also landowner and YHA working together through the plans and finances.

How will it be carried out?

If the funding has been secured then the work must receive planning permission before work can begin. The work would be carried out by external contractors depending on the approved surfacing. Some of the small jobs such as gates may be completed by the farm workers.

## 10. Opportunity Area – Grazing Opportunities

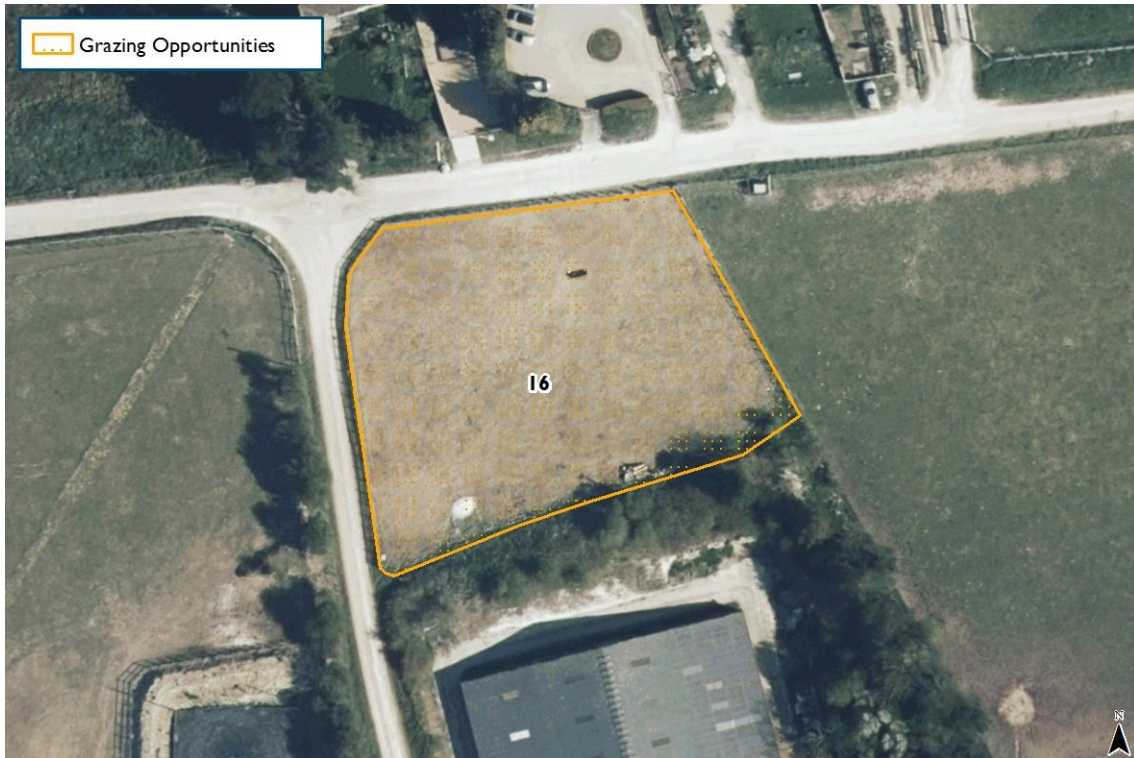
What is the project?

Help support a grazing system that is sustainable for those who do not own their own livestock to help increase flora biodiversity on the parcels of land. This may involve other tasks to help increase biodiversity. The SDNPA are investigating how we could look to engage with a local grazier who specialises in conservation grazing to graze these areas.

Paddock A (16):

- Unimproved grazing paddock with low species value
- This paddock has been grazed in the past by horses during the winter months
- Currently the paddock will only allow for horses to graze the site because it is not stock proof for livestock such as sheep
- If horses are the preferred animal then look to stock the paddock with lower densities during the winter than in the past
- Future plans could consist of sowing some yellow rattle to decrease the dominant grass species





#### Paddock B and C (17):

- Unimproved grazing paddocks with low species value
- These paddocks have been grazed or topped in the past
- This year paddock B has had rams and ewes from Mudchute Park and Farm which is part of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust
- The plan would be to use either Mudchute or a local grazier in the future for both paddocks
- Northern boundary fence line in Paddock B will need renewing in the coming years to allow the continuation of stock grazing the site
- Stretch out an electric fence line between the boundary fence to the east in Paddock B. This is to prevent damage to the fence line when the rams are in the field but it also allows the grass to grow creating structure in the sward and encouraging suitable hunting habitat for kestrels
- Future plans could consist of sowing some yellow rattle to decrease the dominant grass species



Unmanaged grassland (18):

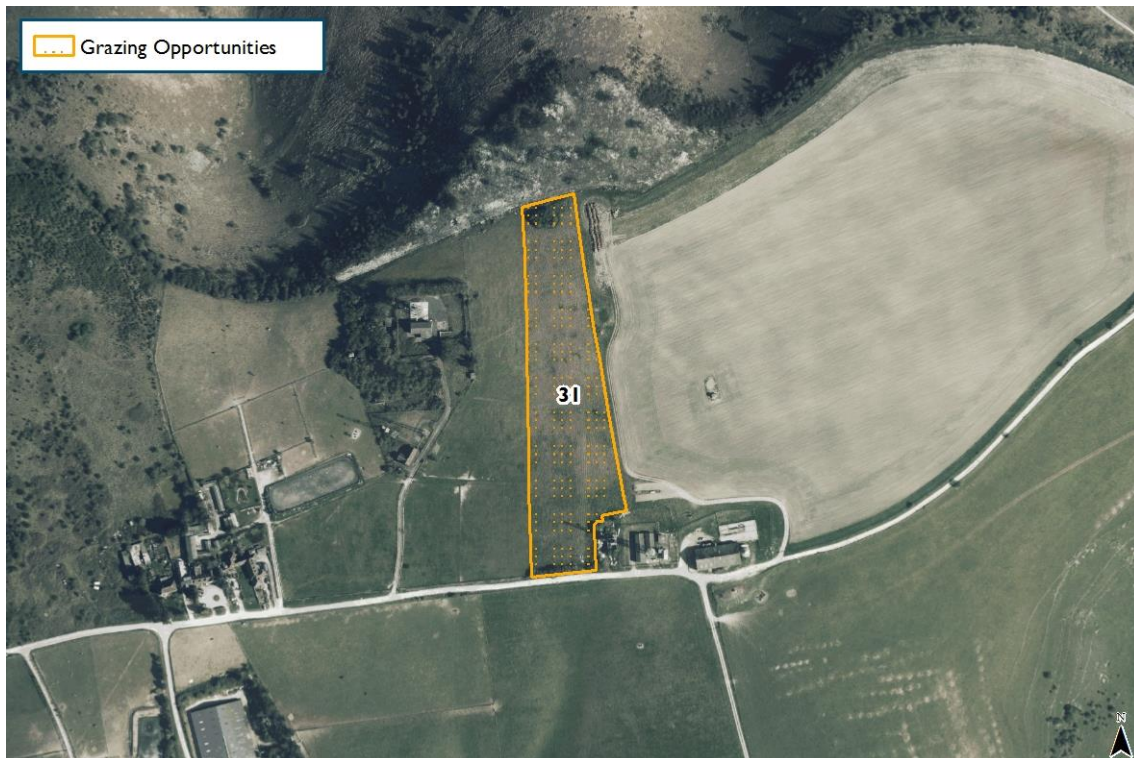
- 6.75 ha of unmanaged calcareous grassland, located to the south and adjoining unit 4 (Truleigh Hill) of the Beeding Hill to Newtimber Hill SSSI
- Unmanaged and reverting to scrub and small tree cover
- Look to engage with new landowner about potential land management options





### Unmanaged grassland (31):

- Work with landowner to see what vision they have for the site
- Unimproved grazing paddocks with low species value
- Work with landowner about potential grazing opportunities on the land to help improve biodiversity
- Possibly use either Madchute or a local grazier or horses in the future
- New fencing will need to be installed to make the area stock proof



### When will it be carried out?

The SDNPA will work with the landowners if they want to engage after the workshop. In the meantime, the SDNPA is looking to find a sustainable way for conservation grazing to function within the park in the future.

If the landowners want to engage then we can provide advice and initial monitoring which will help decide on the management going forward.

### How will it be carried out?

The SDNPA will work with landowners and graziers to come up with solutions.

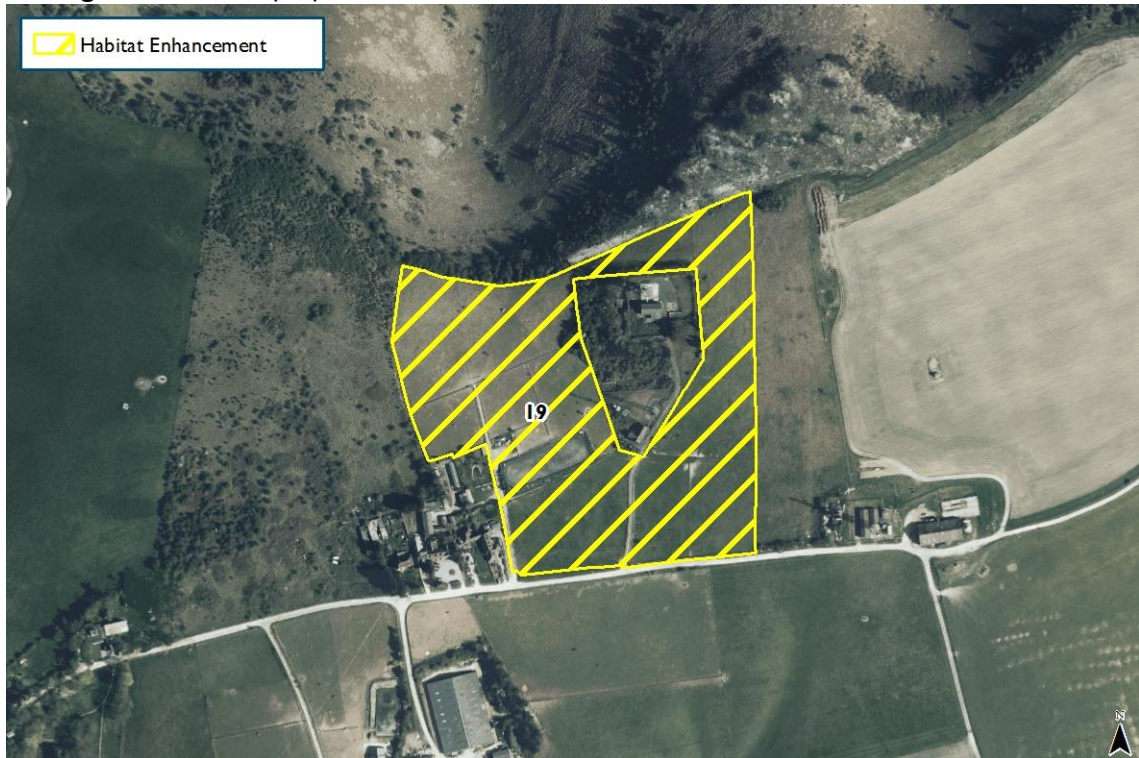


## 11. Opportunity Area – Habitat Enhancement

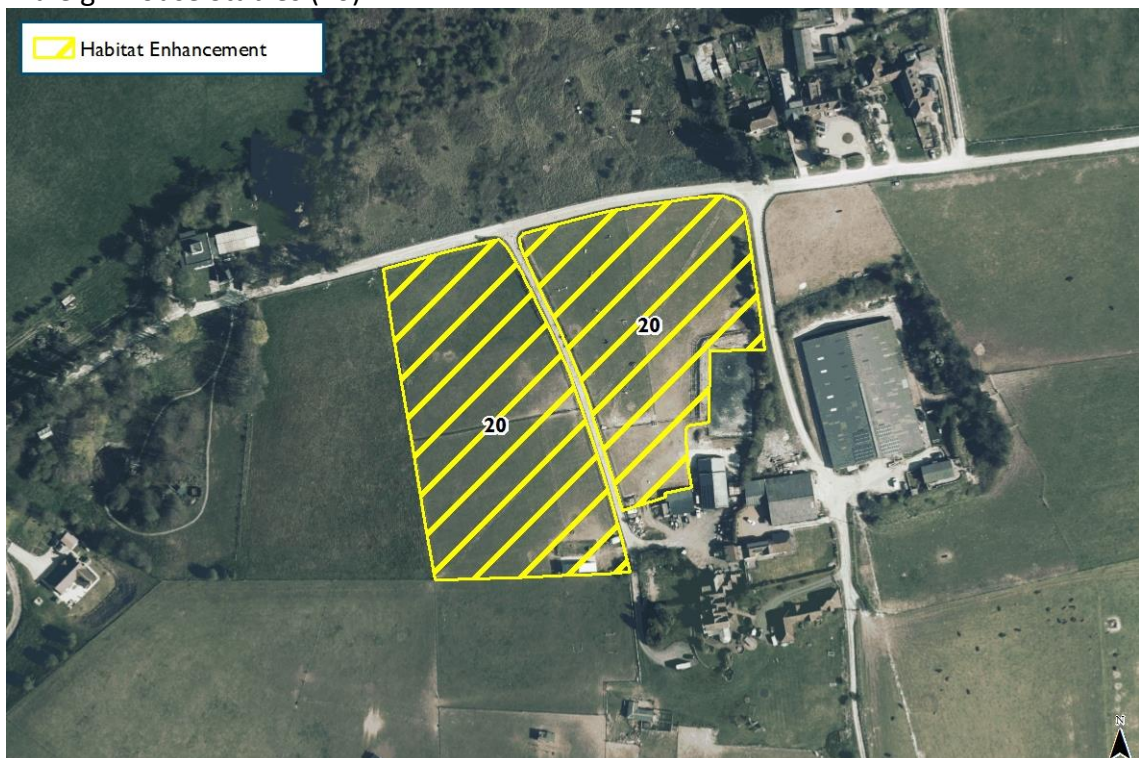
What is the project?

This project focusses predominantly on the equine grazing paddocks:

- Truleigh Hill Stables (19)



- Truleigh House Stables (20)





- Freshcombe Lodge Stables (21)



- There is a small butterfly bank/meadow and pond (22) also included under this project



The SDNPA want to engage with all the stables and see if there are areas where we could help to improve the quality of the equine grazing paddocks for biodiversity and wildflower species. Will also look to see if there are solutions to reduce the amount of

compartmentalisation and different types of fencing across the landscape. Please see Equine Technical Advice Notes and fencing material palette for further information.

When will it be carried out?

The SDNPA will work with the landowners if they want to engage after the workshop. The SDNPA can look to work with the owners of the butterfly bank/meadow (22) to help cut and collect if required (during late summer/autumn months), pond work/maintenance (autumn/winter) or even just give advice.

How will it be carried out?

The SDNPA will work with landowners as and when required. If there are any practical tasks such as cut and collect then the SDNPA could look to engage with volunteers to help.

## 12. Opportunity Area – YHA Field

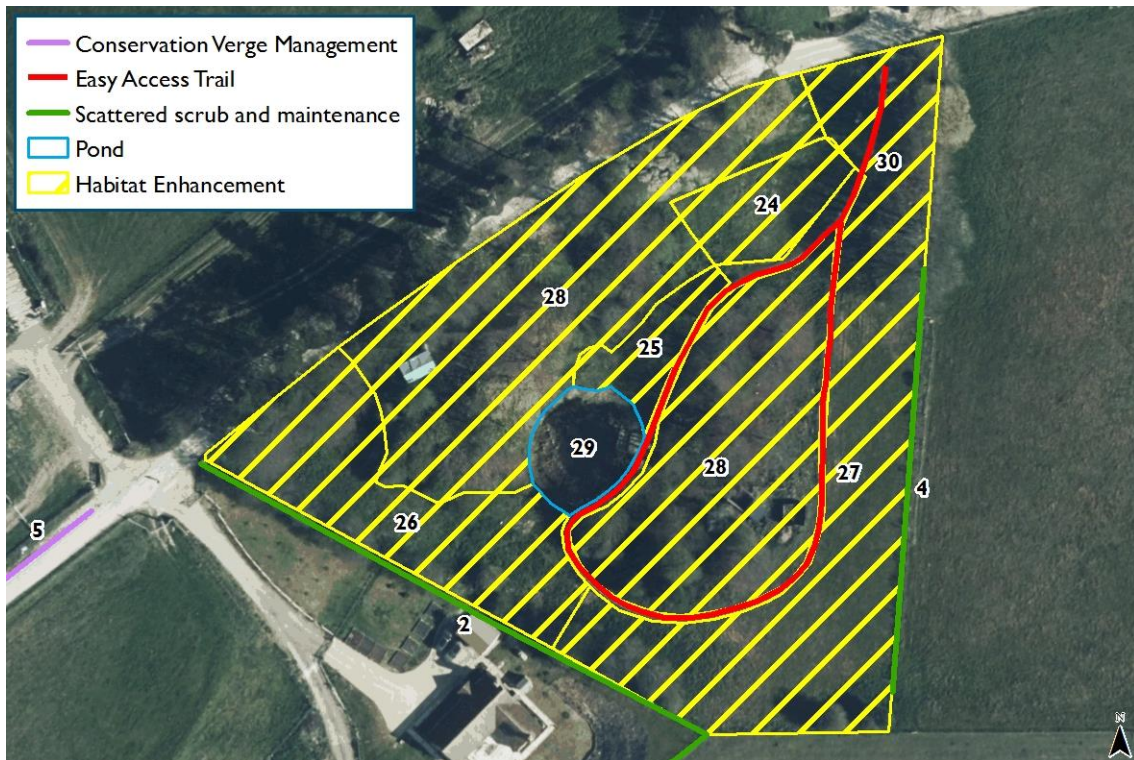
What is the project?

The overall project for this field is for the SDNPA and YHA to work together to make the area more biodiverse and accessible. The SDNPA wants to work with the YHA to potentially utilise their facilities and create a Health and Wellbeing hub to engage and encourage those underrepresented groups that struggle to access the countryside to have the opportunity to enjoy the SDNP. This project comes out from our Partnership Management Plan specifically [Outcome 5: Outstanding Experiences - South Downs National Park Authority](#)

The field is about 1 hectare and has a mix of habitats: butterfly meadow, woodland copses, grassland and a dew pond. The SDNPA will be looking to work with charities that help underrepresented groups of people to see if they would like to participate in practical volunteering tasks on an ad-hoc basis. If the tasks involve machinery, we will ask our current volunteer ranger service to help us.



The YHA field is divided up into six compartments plus an easy access trail:



- **Compartment 1 – Butterfly Meadow (24)**
  - The Butterfly Meadow is located within the northern portion of the YHA field area. It was created by the SDNPA and has been maintained since. Meadow comprising of a diversity of chalk wildflower species

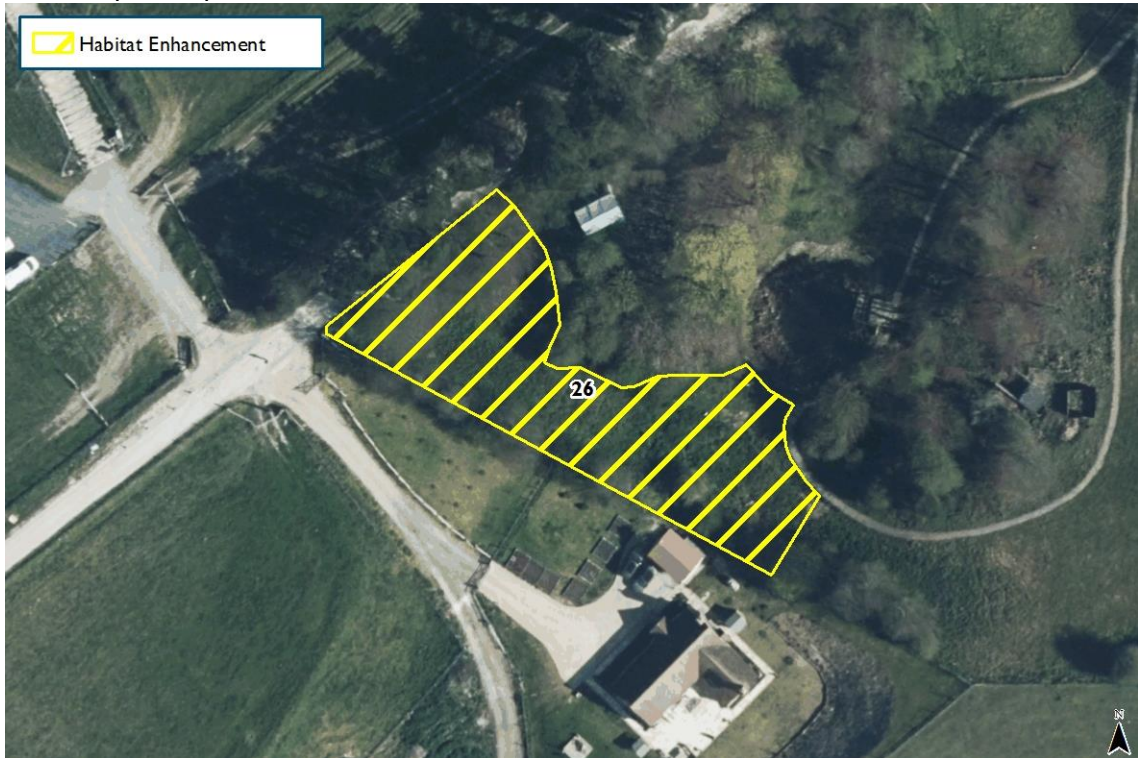


- Compartment 2 – Lower Grassland (25)
  - This area of grassland connects the Butterfly Meadow to Dew Pond
  - It is used by members of the public and those staying/camping at the YHA to use and enjoy
  - There is low species diversity, with some chalk wildflowers present
  - This area is predominantly used by the public so not many biodiversity gains will be made here



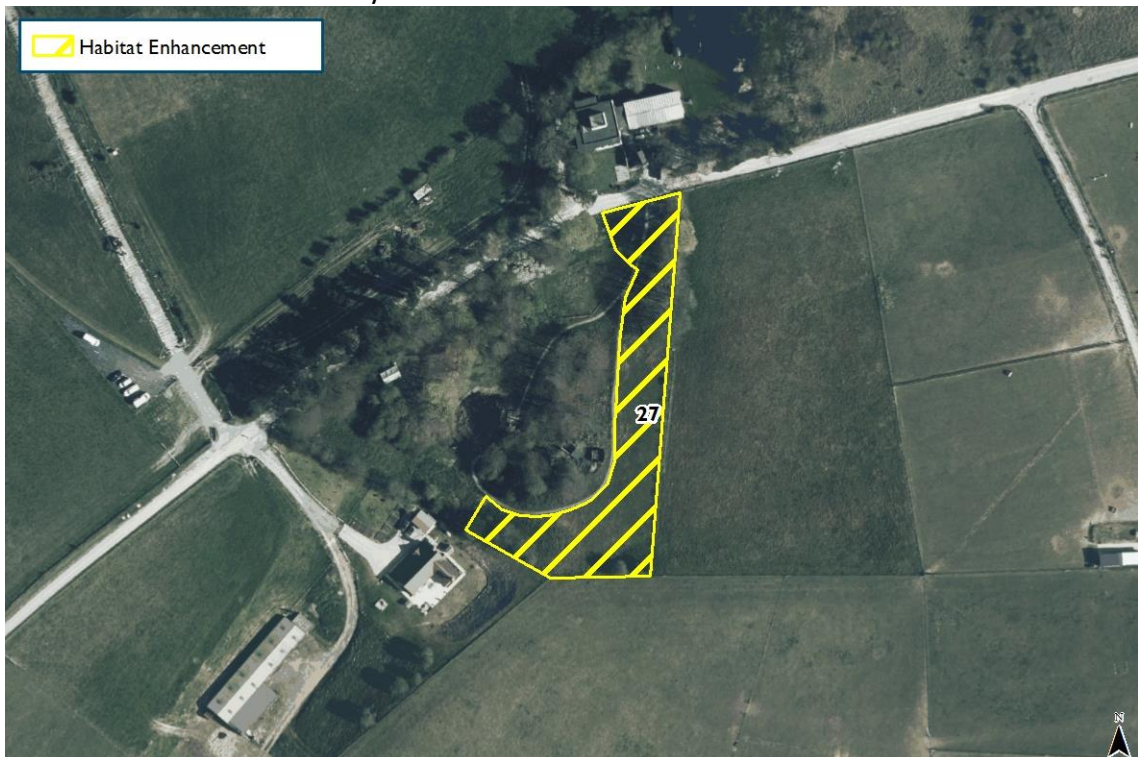


- **Compartment 3 – Southern Grassland (26)**
  - Grassland area within the southern portion of the site, located between the Dew Pond and property boundary
  - The compartment is fringed by a number of mature trees with some hedgerow species have been planted along the western boundary
  - Low species diversity within grassland area with some chalk wildflower species present





- Compartment 4 – Upper grassland/camping field/line of mature trees (27)
  - Open grassland compartment within the eastern and southern portions of the site
  - Enjoys good views over the open Downland to the south of Truleigh Hill and out to the coast, with views of the Rampion Offshore Wind Farm
  - Most of this compartment is maintained as an open camping field but there is the odd hawthorn growing along the southern boundary
  - The compartment is fringed by a number of mature trees. Some hedgerow species have been planted along the western boundary and edge of the woodland copse. There is a line of mature trees as you enter the field along the eastern boundary

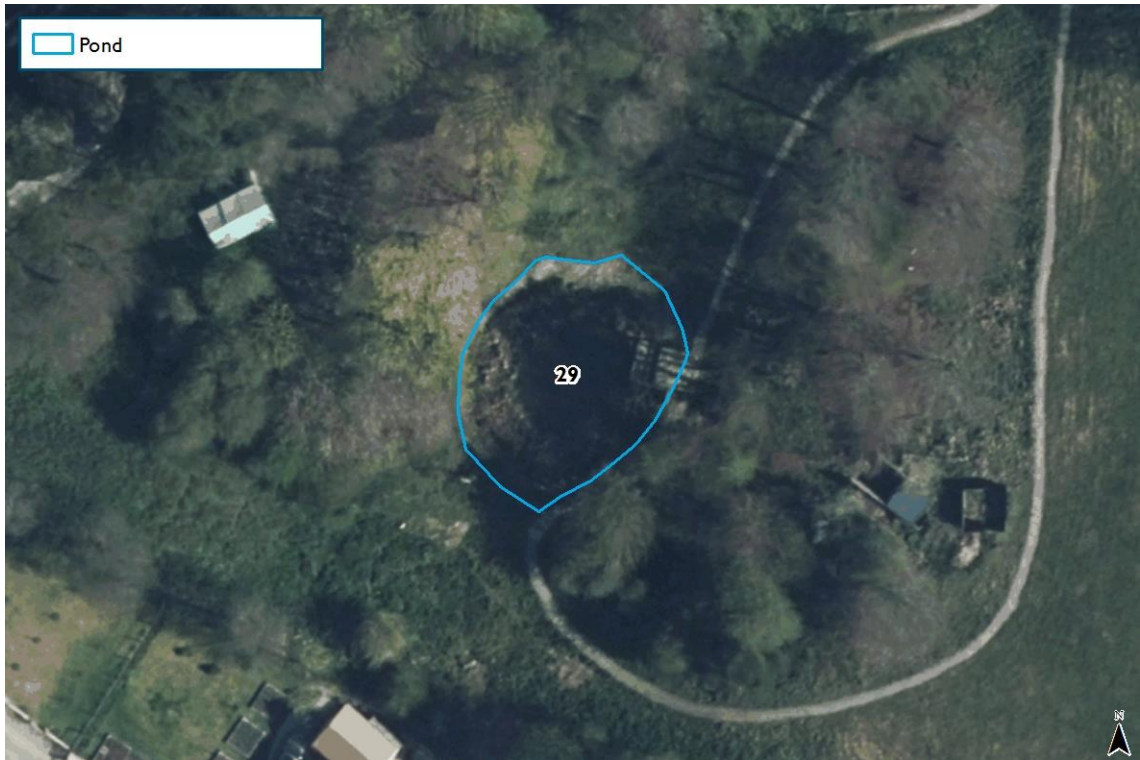


- Compartment 5 – Woodland Copses (28)
  - There are two woodland copses with a mixture of species
  - Both copses have been unmanaged which has resulted in a lack of light reaching the understory and ground flora. The trees are predominately mature and all of a similar age and outcompeting each other



- Compartment 6 – Dew Pond (29)
  - The dew pond was restored a few years ago and now helps hosts numerous amphibians (including great crested newts), dragonflies/damselflies and pond invertebrates.
  - There is also a hibernaculum north of the pond, which was created after the pond was restored with material from the site. The will be added to either with vegetation pulled from the pond, leaves and branches
  - Due to the presence of great crested newts practical habitat work can only be carried out during the autumn/winter months. This also goes for any educational pond dipping. If anyone wants to carry out pond dipping during the spring and summer months then that person will need to obtain an education great crested newt licence because this is during their breeding season





- Easy Access Trail (30)
  - An easy access trail (240m) was installed at Truleigh Hill as a part of the Truleigh Hill Habitat and Access Improvement Project. It is a circular route round the field and includes the dipping platform at the dew pond





## When and where tasks will be carried out?

This section will be split up into regular/annual tasks and ideal tasks (depends on numerous factors). Each type of task will have the compartment number next to it so it indicates where the work will be carried out.

### Regular Task:

- Cut down or dig out competitive species such as burdock and nettles throughout the spring and summer months (1)
- Dig out Spanish bluebells starting to colonise the area in early spring (1, 4)
- SDNPA to organize Cut and collect the meadow & field late August/September (1, 2, 3, 4)
- Cut back any encroaching vegetation on ground and overhanging branches during autumn/winter (easy access trail)
- Cut vegetation around saplings and collect the arisings early spring and again in autumn (3, 4)
- Mulch saplings (dependent on whether the conifers are removed and then use the chippings from the work) (3, 4)
- Look to replant along boundary if saplings die during the winter (3, 4)
- SDNPA to monitor kestrel box located in one of the mature sweet chestnut trees looking out over Paddock B (4)
- SDNPA to monitor little owl box located in one of the beech trees out looking to the south (4)
- Create habitat piles throughout the year (5)
- Pulling up bulrush and putting it on the hibernaculum during autumn/winter (6)
- Removing leaf litter and native invasive species (if starting to take over) e.g. duck weed and blanket weed during autumn/winter (6)
- Put soil over any of the areas where the liner is showing through (6)
- Inspect and maintain the dipping platform when and if necessary (6)
- General path maintenance throughout the year (easy access trail)

### Ideal Task:

- Graze with sheep during the winter months (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- Plant plug plants in spring or autumn (1, 4)
- Remove the fencing to make it easier to manage (1)
- Aerate and sow areas that have become compacted and lost vegetation cover during the autumn (2)
- Promote spread of wildflowers into rest of field – arrange cut and collect of field in autumn, tine harrow areas and spread green hay from wildflower meadow or re-sow (1, 3, 4)
- Maintain a cut path through the spring/summer months to create a route which connects from the easy trail to the woodland copse (3)
- Thin out some of the trees during the autumn/winter (4, 5)
- Pollard some of the trees during the autumn/winter (5)

- Plant sapling such as such as hawthorn, hazel and disease resistant elms – if the conifers are felled then there will be a replanting scheme which would be a great opportunity (5)
- Work with Froglife to plant with native flowering species to increase biodiversity and help increase great crested newt habitat. Done during autumn/winter (6)
- Work with Froglife to cover half of the hibernaculum with soil and sow with wildflowers (6)

#### How tasks will be carried out?

The annual cut and collect around the field will be carried out by contractors. Apart from that all the tasks hope to be completed by SDNPA rangers, volunteers, underrepresented groups, local community and groups utilising the YHA. The SDNPA will work with the YHA regarding what tasks want to be carried out and work together going forward.

### 13. Opportunity Area – Biological Monitoring

What species are present at Truleigh Hill, where they are found and how they are using Truleigh Hill should underpin much of the habitat enhancement proposals in this action plan. The local community are encouraged and invited to use their expertise to log species records (iNaturalist), carry out surveys (bats/birds etc) and attend training sessions offered as part of the ongoing Truleigh Hill Project, to better understand their local environment.

There is also an opportunity to engage experts from further afield – such as the Sussex Bat Group (bunkers), Froglife and Butterfly Conservation to help us better understand the wildlife that can be found here. There is also an opportunity to engage with schools and other stakeholders to survey and add to the list of species (eg. Bike it Wild Project – insert video)