

MANAGEMENT PLAN - KERRIDGE RIDGE AND INGERSLEY VALE COUNTRYSIDE AND HERITAGE PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

The Kerridge Ridge and Ingersley Vale Countryside and Heritage Project is a five year partnership project between Groundwork Macclesfield and Vale Royal, Macclesfield Borough Council, Cheshire County Council, Bollin Valley Partnership, Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Bollington Town Council and Rainow Parish Council and the local residents.

The overall project aims are to preserve the natural and traditional features of the landscape in an area of accessible countryside that is heavily used for informal recreation. The main objectives are as follows:

- To survey the area and record the important historical features, the wildlife and the landscape
- To identify and carry out a programme of work to restore and enhance the landscape and the heritage features
- To involve the local communities of Bollington and Rainow and work with the landowners in the project area in order to increase their interest and concern for the conservation and enhancement of the area
- To maintain and improve the public footpaths and investigate the possibility of access agreements in the area
- To maintain and where appropriate increase the tree cover in the area, as a contribution to the Royal Forest of Macclesfield Initiative
- To interpret the important and interesting features of the area
- To combine and focus resources from the partner organisations and seek further funding from public sector grants, charitable donations and business support

LOCATION

The areas of Kerridge Ridge and Ingersley Vale are between Bollington and Rainow, in the Borough of Macclesfield. The area of accessible countryside is immediately adjacent to the Peak District National Park and is heavily used for informal recreation. It is within an area designated as Special Landscape Value.

The Kerridge Ridge is an important landscape feature with spectacular views across the Cheshire Plain and towards the Peak District. The western slopes of the hill are heavily quarried for stone and there is both historical interest and issues of landscape impact of the quarries when viewed from the ridge above. The Gritstone trail, a long distance path, runs the length of the ridge. At the northern end, the White Nancy monument overlooks Bollington. White Nancy is a popular, local landmark and a historic symbol of Bollington. At the southern end there is a trig point at 313m with views over the village of Rainow. Here, three paths descend to Rainow, Tower Hill and Kerridge End. The path along Kerridge Ridge is heavily used by local walkers and in places the footpath is eroded and stiles are requiring repair.

Ingersley Vale is a “hidden Valley” which links Rainow and Bollington along the River Dean. There is no through road in the valley and it remains a quiet haven of attractive countryside with small fields, walls and flag paths linking across fields. There were a number of small mills with ponds along the valley and at Waulkmill there is a spectacular small waterfall and gorge. The Hough Hole house and its allegorical garden are open to the public on some weekends. The valley is an attractive historic landscape with many of the features of the early industrial revolution. Situated along the River Dean are many old mill sites as Bollington and Rainow are historically mill areas. Many of the mills now lie empty, although some are still in working order. There is considerable potential for interpretation.

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WHY A MANGEMENT PLAN?

A management plan is needed to provide a summary of work that has already taken place, set down the long term objectives of Kerridge Ridge and Ingersley Vale Landscape Management and Countryside Access project, it is also important to clearly show how these will be achieved. The plan will be of particular interest to Bollington residents and anyone involved in the project.

This Management Plan has been formed from the information gained through a Draft Action Plan and consultation. The Draft Action Plan came about as a result of three reports that were carried out on the area, and were completed in late Summer 2002. In the Autumn of 2002 these reports were used for two consultation events with local residents and these events produced a list of possible actions that were considered for the Action Plan. From these lists, a draft Action Plan was produced that included all the proposed actions that were not strongly opposed. This Action Plan was distributed in the form of a questionnaire to households in Bollington, Kerridge and Rainow. A questionnaire was distributed with the free local newspaper at the end of November. Collection boxes were placed in Bollington library, the Drop-in centre, Bollington Town Hall and four local pubs. A majority of people agreed with all of the proposed actions. These responses have now been used to form this Management Plan to set out some short-term and long-term objectives for the management of the area.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Western slopes of Kerridge Ridge are heavily quarried for stone. The Gritstone Trail, a long distance path, runs the length of the ridge. Ingersley Vale is a ‘hidden valley’ and is an area of attractive countryside with small fields and some pond areas. The whole area is slightly acidic grassland, with some neutral areas, containing a selection of species, usually between 35 and 40. There is a grade A, Site of Biological Importance (SBI), this imposes specific restrictions on the landowners over what can be done.

GEOLOGY

The geology of the area is closely linked with coal mining and quarrying that takes place in the area. It is carboniferous sandstone with a wide range of colour spanning, yellow, grey and pink. There are also coal and shale seams in the area.

ECOLOGY

The ecology of the area is very varied and this is why there is a Grade A SBI. Species in the area include Devils and Adders Tongue, Harebells, Autumn Hawkweed, Heather and Bilberry. The reason for the SBI is thought to be the Mountain Pansy (Yellow Flower) which flowers in May. Yellow Tornotil, Common Sorrel and White Pignut are also found in the area and these all flower in May.

GRASSLANDS

The site is a lightly grazed unimproved/semi-improved acid pasture on steep East facing slope, which has rocky outcrops in places. On the brow of the hill is a small strip of Heathland while to the South dense scrub with a variable canopy occupies part of a disused quarry. The pasture is herb-rich with some uncommon species, adders tongue and moonwort and is of entomological and ornithological interest. It is a Grade A Site of Biological Importance.

Suggested Management methods.

- Removal of Birch and Scrub in one area
- Move sheep from Barlows land, which is overgrazed to the Masseys land which is undergrazed, This is effective scrub management
- On the brow of Kerridge Ridge, Heathland Management is much needed

WOODLAND

There is a small area of forest at the end of the ridge containing Hawthorn, Rowan, Ash and Sycamore.

RIVER DEAN

The River Dean runs through the Kerridge Ridge and Ingersley Vale area. Two areas have been surveyed because there are several working factories along the banks. More species variety is found upstream from Rainow rather than upstream from Rainow Textiles.

PLAN

This Management Plan has been developed after consultation with the people living in the area to try to set out a plan that incorporates their ideas and meets their needs.

In order to implement the plans set out by the action plan and detailed in this Management Plan it was felt by the local residents that creating a 'partnership' involving local residents with statutory authorities as advisors was a high priority. This has been formed and the partnership of comprises local residents, Cheshire County Council, Bollington Town Council, Rainbow Parish Council, Macclesfield Borough Council, Bollin Valley Partnership and Groundwork.

The Project Area has been divided into four areas of work, as shown on the Map, for specific management areas. There is also some short-term management actions that need to be carried out throughout the area.

- Renovating hedgerows by filling in gaps and laying hedges where appropriate.
The dry stone walls in the area are thought of as the traditional boundary in defining the landscape character of the area however the hedges are also very important features for the landscape and for the wildlife within the area. They should therefore be managed to preserve them.
- Management of all footpaths in the area
It is important that all of the footpaths in the area are managed well in order to keep them in good condition and accessible to everyone who wants to use them. Maintaining the footpaths and having them well signed and clear means that people are less likely to stray off them and therefore a potential conflict of uses of the area between recreational users and landowners is avoided.
- Encouraging diversity of wildlife
Throughout the whole area diversity of wildlife should be encouraged by enhancing areas of wildflower meadow where appropriate and other measure such as the installation of animal boxes.

AREA 1 (As shown on Map)

This will be one of the most used areas in this project as White Nancy is at the tip overlooking Bollington. Most visitors use the existing pathway up the side of the hill, which was in a state of disrepair. The area around White Nancy is used for picnicing when the weather is good enough. Many of the boundaries in the area are in need of repair; some of these are fences whilst most are dry stone walls.

Landowners in Area 1 are: -

- Tullis Russell Coatings
- Mr and Mrs Roberts
- Mr Moss
- Doreen Earl
- David Tooth

AIM

- To provide a well surfaced footpath so that visitors can easily get up to White Nancy and Kerridge Ridge
- Repair wall around White Nancy and do any repairs to the monument that may be necessary
- Ensure that footpaths are safe along Kerridge Ridge

ACTION

- To install steps up to White Nancy from the track at the bottom.
This has now been carried out using a specialised technique with pitched stone. This technique is in keeping with traditional methods and environmental impacts were kept to a minimum. The Redway Steps are expected to be opened in March 2003.

- Carry out repairs to White Nancy.
The monument itself had some graffiti on it and there was other repairs which needed to be done. These have now been carried out and the monument restored and painted white.

The ground surrounding the monument was also in a poor state, the grass around the foot of White Nancy had been worn away and the ground was eroded. Paving around the foot of the monument in local stone has solved this problem in an unobtrusive way.

These were felt to be the key areas of work to be done in this area but there are other issues that need continued management.

- Repair walls in the area
It is felt important that any dry stone walls in the area that are in poor condition are restored using local stone and local skilled people to carry out the work. This needs to be an on-going action so that once restored the walls are maintained and do not fall into a state of disrepair again. Mr and Mrs Roberts of North End Farm are undertaking repairs to the wall on the summit of Kerridge Ridge, to the South Side of White Nancy. They have also built a new wall around the East side of White Nancy, leaving a gap of 3m so people can get round and see the vista.

- Tidy up places where old fencing spoils the pathway
The path along the ridgeway above Five Ashes is spoilt by there being old fencing and netting by clearing this up the area would seem much more attractive. The presence of this fencing is especially detrimental as it is on the ridgeline and so detracts from the vista.

- Manage footpaths that are stony and boggy in places.
The area of land in Area 1 is the most popular for recreation so it is important that the footpaths are maintained in a good state of repair and managed suitably.

- Heathland management is also much needed

In order to maintain the area it is important that in the long-term the area is managed in a way to preserve its heathland qualities with the right level of grazing.

AREA 2 (As shown on Map)

This area is mainly grassland, some being grazed by sheep. There is a small area of woodland towards Kerridge end, which needs some maintaining. The Site of Biological Importance is also situated here. This area has quarries down the side of Kerridge Ridge, along with heathland scrub that is in much need of some management. The footpaths in the area may need some attention so that more visitors are able to get to all the areas that they would like to.

Landowners in Area 2 are: -

- Mr and Mrs Roberts
- Mr Moss
- Mr and Mrs Hirst
- Mr and Mrs Barlow
- Mr Massey
- Mr Sykes

AIM

- To provide a well surfaced, clear unbraided path through the fields
- To maintain Site of Biological Importance, SBI

ACTION

Carry out work to improve footpaths in the area.

- Show a clear unbraided path by North End Farm by the use of several means
 - a. define and improve best line
 - b. close off the other paths and restore vegetation
 - c. encourage use of defined path

By creating one clearly defined well maintained footpath it will encourage users not to stray off the path. This should significantly reduce detrimental effects on the area of land surrounding the footpath especially the erosion currently being caused over a wide area. This will be of benefit to the landowner because a lesser amount of land will be crossed by footpaths and less damage caused. It will also benefit the environment reducing erosion and damage to plants and to the people using the path as it will be one clear well maintained route rather than a confusing set of eroded paths.

- Provide clear way markers

This should take the form of small unobtrusive signage enabling visitors to be able to tell which way they should be going – this route is a gentler way up to White Nancy

than straight up the hill and so it is more accessible to some people. This will allow a wider range of people access to the ridge.

- Clearing of footpath by North End Farm

This path has become overgrown in some places, it is important that these areas are cleared allowing users of the path better access. This clearance can be done by using machinery and herbicides as well as hand tools and should be ongoing being undertaken whenever necessary.

Maintaining the SBI and character of the landscape.

- Manage heathland in an effective way through the removal of birch and scrub in certain areas.

These species have encroached onto an area of heathland scrub and unimproved/semi-improved acid pasture due to under grazing. However simply introducing higher stocking levels now would not remove them. It is therefore important to remove these species in certain areas in order for the ecologically important habitats to be maintained.

- Grazing of cattle

Also in order to maintain the heathland it is necessary to use the area for grazing cattle. It is important that this is managed to neither over nor under graze the area as both could be detrimental.

There is currently a problem in this area with one of the Public Rights of Way. This is that the definitive map shows a bridleway in the Parish of Rainow, this changes to a footpath in Bollington. This means that the horses can't get out of the field due to that chained gates and the cattle grids so they travel on footpaths. They travel through an area of woodland that has a steep drop to the East side and so is unsuitable for horses. It is very important in the long-term that this problem is resolved and the Right of Way is maintained suitably for the types of users determined by the outcome. This situation is of concern to the landowners that the path crosses including Mr and Mrs Hirst, of Kerridge Side and Mr and Mrs Barlow, of Tower Hill Farm.

It is also considered important that traditional features such as dry stone walls are preserved which is an ongoing action.

AREA 3 (As shown on Map)

This is an area of open grassland that is maintained by the farmers and residents who own the land through mowing and also grazing (usually sheep). This is a particularly pretty area of the access project that is popular with many walkers because it is flat. The Weir at Walkmill Farm can also be seen in this area that is an attractive feature. The 2 paths that become one are well maintained and easy to walk on as they are made up of paving stones. Mr and Mrs Collins of Lower Brook Farm planted some trees in Hayes Clough 15-20 years ago and would now like help with the management of these. Many of the boundaries in this area are hedges and fences and are, on the

whole, in good condition. There are some walls that seem to need a lot of repair, but these seem to be in an area that no one owns.

Landowners in Area 3 are: -

- SDB Trustees
- Brian Peacock
- Roy Grindley
- Mr Moss
- Mr and Mrs Collins
- Mr and Mrs Tunwell

AIM

- To maintain the traditional feature of the area.
- Maintain clear, easily accessible, footpaths.

ACTION

- Maintain any boundaries in the area and carry out any repairs where necessary
It is important to establish who owns the walls and other boundaries. Otherwise these features will just be left to deteriorate and will detract from the work done elsewhere. Where walls are not going to be restored because they are in too poor a condition the stone should be cleared for use in the restoration of other walls in the area.

- Aid local landowners in management of their property
Mr and Mrs Collins, of Lower Brook Farm planted trees in Hayes Clough between 15 and 20 years ago, which are now in need of management. They are also willing to consider environmental enhancement schemes to their land such as planting trees in some corners of fields or leaving corners as wildlife areas.

- Maintain clearly defined footpaths that can be used easily by all abilities
There are a few footpaths crossing this area that are in generally good condition and just need to be managed in order to maintain this and their clear definition so that people can use them. As this area is flatter than areas 1 and 2 these paths are more accessible to people of all abilities therefore it is important that they are kept in good condition.

AREA 4 (As shown on Map)

The footpath in this area leading to Brook House Farm is in good condition. Although by the weir the footpath is in a very shaded area and so it is quite boggy. The walls in the area are quite substantial although some are in need of repair.

Landowners in Area 4 are: -

- Mr Moss
- Mr and Mrs Barlow
- Mr Sykes

AIM

- To preserve the traditional features of the area.

It is again an important management aspect of this area to maintain the dry stone walls that form a large proportion of the boundaries in this area. This is an ongoing feature of the management as allow restoration of the walls is the main task in the short term it is important that they are looked after and do not return to a state of disrepair.

LONG-TERM

The Community Consultation about the Action Plan and other work such as community meetings and group walks also generated some actions to be considered for the management of the area in the long-term.

- Carrying out a feasibility study and survey to establish the best way to restore/preserve the mill ponds at Cow Lane Mill and Waulkmill.

These features are very important to the landscape of the area and it is important in the long-term to establish the best management practices for them.

- Placing some information boards at a few selected sites of industrial heritage
This again is something to be considered in the long-term management of the site but could be useful in preserving the industrial heritage and interpretation of the sites. These boards should be low-level and unintrusive and for information rather than promotion of the area.

- Finding a good use for Ingersley Mill
If a suitable use for the mill could be found so that it is restored and renovated it will not be left to deteriorate further thus preventing it ending up being demolished. Ingersley Mill is a major feature of the industrial heritage in the area and its long-term preservation is important to the character of the whole area.

- Establishment of a volunteer warden system
This action is very important to the long-term management and maintenance of the whole area. A volunteer warden or ranger system would provide ongoing support and help in the area to carry out the management plan and maintain present features. It would also provide the driving force to carry out future projects and put other long-term plans into action.