

**Cambridgeshire & Peterborough County Wildlife Site
Monitoring Visit Recording Card**

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|--|-----------------------------------|
| Site Name: St. Denis' Churchyard | |
| Parish: Hatley | Grid ref.: TL285505 |
| Date: 21/06/17 | Surveyor(s): Siân Williams |
| Time spent on site: 1 hour | Weather: Hot, sunny |
| <p>Current & Historical Management Actions</p> <p>There is a local management group who manage the grassland by mowing twice a year, with arisings raked up and moved to compost piles around the edges of the site. Some areas are mown more frequently to maintain them as access paths around the churchyard. These paths expand into a larger short-mown area to the south of the church. The extent of this more frequently mown area could be reduced, particularly where native wildflower species are most abundant, to allow more of the grassland to flower and set seed.</p> <p>A major effort was made to remove nettles from around the base of the church several years ago. Any re-growing nettles are continuing to be removed. There is potential to add a membrane and/or layer of stones to this area immediately surrounding the base of the church, to help to control weed growth in future.</p> <p>Other potential future management discussed included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of the two young horse chestnut trees within the grassland which are diseased. These could be replaced with an alternative native species, although in the long term any trees planted should not be allowed to grow too large, as they would then shade out the species-rich grassland. • Trimming the large ash tree which is extending into the grassland from the eastern boundary and causing shading. This would need to be done in consultation with the neighbour whose property the tree is on. • Reducing the height and width of some of the hedges surrounding the churchyard, again to prevent eventual development of large lines of trees which would over-shade the grassland. Options for management include trimming (although reaching the top of the hedge to trim the height will require specialist equipment), coppicing, and potentially clearance and replanting with a range of native species. Gradual management in short sections was suggested, with different methods trialled and monitored to see what works | |

best. There is some elm present in the hedges, which should be retained as it is an uncommon species which is valuable for invertebrates, and will follow a cycle of growth and die-back naturally, also providing some standing deadwood habitat. Some standard trees should be retained.

Wildlife Trust management recommendations implemented?

Partially

Comment:

Since the last survey in 2012, mowing has been carried out more or less according to the recommendations, with occasional delays due to lack of resources.

Trimming of trees and scrub around the edges of the grassland was also recommended, but this has not yet been carried out. It was discussed again on this visit (see above).

Qualifying criteria prior to current survey:

| Criterion code | Criterion text |
|----------------|--|
| 2d | Site supporting frequent numbers of eight or more grassland indicator species. |

Assessment of criteria during current visit:

| Criterion code | Criterion met? | Condition comment |
|----------------|----------------|---|
| 2d | Yes | The grassland is still most species rich to the north of the church, as at the last survey, but indicator species are present throughout. Frequent indicators include common knapweed, rough hawk-bit, and lady's bedstraw. |

Is this site a priority for full resurvey?

No

However, the management group would appreciate a re-survey in 2-3 years.

Rationale:

- Major change to extent of habitats since previous Phase 1 map
- Landowner indicates strong preference for full survey
- Other: _____

Overall condition:

Favourable Stable

Comment:

Overall character of the grassland is very similar to its condition at the time of the last

survey. Although the mix of indicator species has changed slightly (for example there is less ox-eye daisy than previously), management is maintaining a good range of indicator species which are allowed to flower and set seed.

SDL160 Scoring

Is the site in Positive Conservation Management?

Yes

Rationale for positive scoring (tick one and annotate with detail as appropriate):

- There is a written site management plan detailing appropriate conservation actions and this is being implemented (note the date the plan was prepared and the external organisation involved).
- The site is currently enrolled in an agri-environment or woodland grant scheme and this is being implemented (specify scheme and note start and end dates).
- The landowner has been offered appropriate professional management advice and guidance and this is being implemented (South Cambridgeshire District Council and The Wildlife Trust have both provided advice on management in the past, and this is being implemented as discussed above).
- The landowner is not known to have received external advice, but is nevertheless implementing management that contributes to maintaining or enhancing the features of interest for which the site has been selected.