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**THE MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNTRYSIDE PARK**

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*This policy paper is based on lengthy discussions that have involved the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Clerk of the Parish Council, Greg Chandler, leader of the Friends, former Councillor Heidi Thompson, Jason Kidman (who was responsible for the tree-planting), Robert Rice (the Garden Guardian) and Sid Cooper from the Forestry Commission. It was approved by a meeting of the Friends of the Countryside Park on the 18th July 2015.*

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1. The Countryside Park is not a 'town park'.

2. The Park’s unique attractiveness lies in its naturalness.

3. The Park should offer variety of perspective and ensure the maintenance of significant areas of cover for wildlife.

4. In order to meet the conditions of the Forestry Commission, a small area around each planted tree should be weeded annually – either by hand, by mulching or by careful use of a weedkiller. Any weeds that are growing within the tree guards must be removed

5. But, in general, a policy of non-intervention should be adopted. The grass and undergrowth in all parts of the woodland will die down naturally each winter.

6. Neither the edges of the Park nor the edges of the parkrun track should be cut. Hard-edge fencing should be kept as ‘green’ as possible.

7. Heidi Thompson’s key dictum: “The ‘weeds’ are not weeds; they are wild flowers, and should be allowed to grow naturally”.

8. The parkrun track, the glade and the avenues into the glade will be kept cut.

9. To provide variety, there will be two narrow footpaths hand-cut through the area close to the apple orchard and the hazelnut grove.

10. To enable access to the apple orchard (for pruning and fruit-picking), there should be an annual hay-cut in August or September, with the cuttings raked off to a pile at the edge.

11. The Friends have already sown a large area with wild flower seed; its progress will be monitored and managed appropriately.

12. The parkrun track will be maintained in good condition for safe running.

13. It is intended that the Countryside Park will gradually evolve – not only in its appearance as the trees mature, but also in the way that it is used.

**Schedule of tasks for the**

**Parish Council and the Friends**

1. In 2015 and annually, remove any weeds growing inside the tree guards.
2. 2015 and after: create and maintain by hand-cutting one or two narrow footpaths through the undergrowth at the Southern end of the woodland and to the side of the orchard.
3. Possibly 2015, definitely 2016: Hay-cut the apple orchard area annually in August or September, raking off the cuttings to a pile at the edge.
4. 2015/6: Monitor the development of the Friends’ wild flower seeded area.
5. In April/May 2016, clear a small area around each tree to encourage healthy growth.
6. In April/May 2016, possibly use a chippings mulch around some of the trees.
7. Encourage the emergence of ideas for people to enjoy the Park.
8. In 2016, perhaps, throughout the year make a record (with photographs) of the Park’s wild flowers. The end-result could be put on-line.
9. Keep the Park’s management policy under review.

md / 21.07.15