

Marhill Copse is a place of historical natural beauty, maximising the woodland's biodiversity to provide a safe, sustainable and accessible space to educate and inspire, and for the whole community to be proud of.

The vision for Marhill Copse 2030

Woodland Management Plan Marhill Copse: have your say in its future

Why we are consulting

In August 2018, Southampton Airport purchased Marhill Copse, Swaythling, in order to undertake tree management work required under European aviation legislation. Specifically, the airport has an obligation to manage and minimise obstacles that breach a set of 3D safeguarded surfaces around the airfield. These are designed to protect aircraft operating in the area.

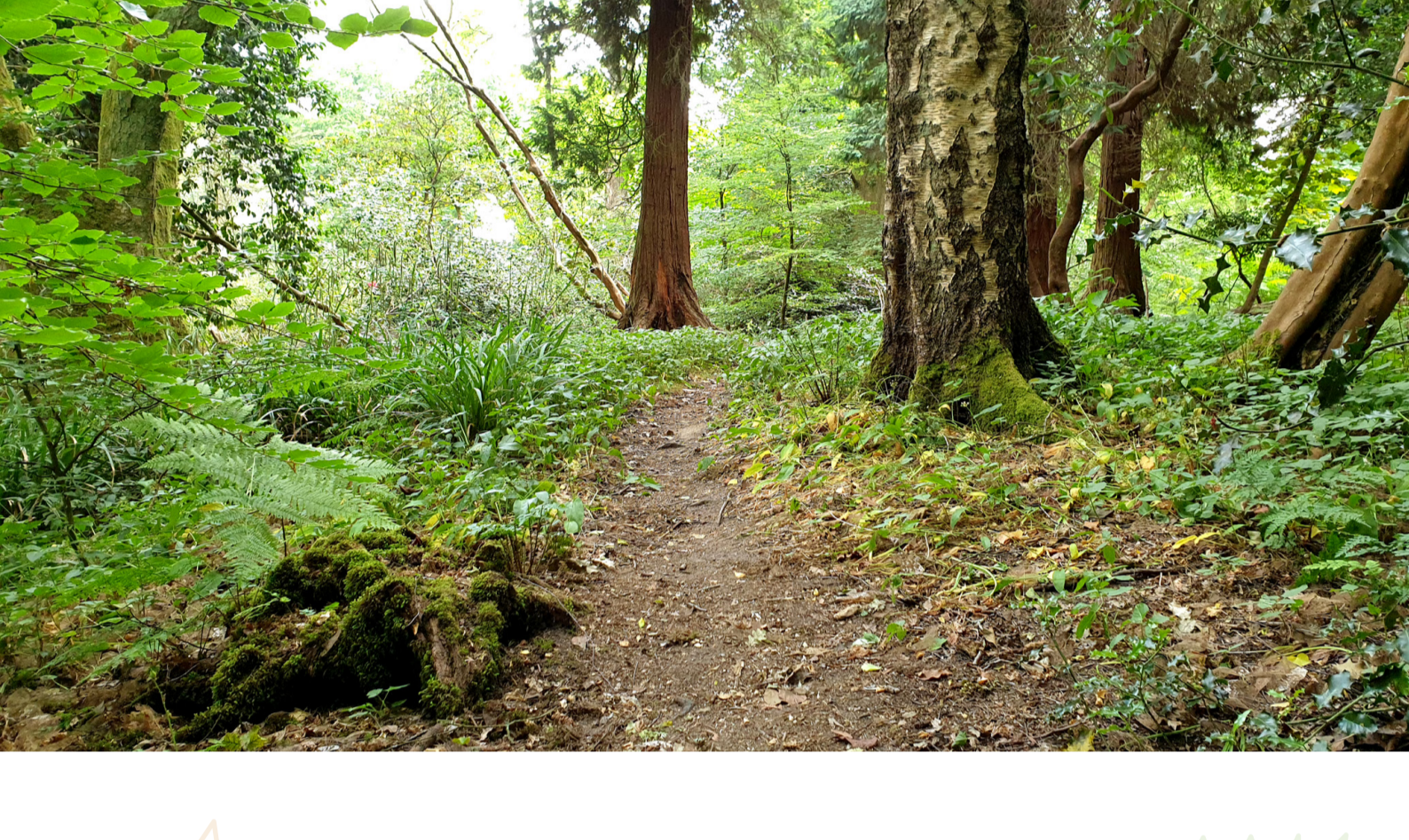
The copse has a rich history as part of the Townhill Park Estate and is classified as Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and a Registered Park and Garden. All trees in the copse are protected by virtue of their location within the Itchen Valley Conservation Area and/or by various Tree Preservation Orders.

A Woodland Management Plan has been carefully prepared in conjunction with highly experienced arboriculturalists, the Forestry Commission, Natural England and expert ecologists. It details how the airport will manage and enhance the woodland over the next five to ten years.

The voice of the community is hugely important to us in shaping the future of the copse. We want it to be a natural space enjoyed by all within the community that also provides education and encourages community spirit and active participation.

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We will be submitting our Woodland Management Plan to the council later this summer and it is really important to us to capture the thoughts and feedback of local residents, which will enable us – working together with the city council – to shape the future plans to ensure they meet community needs.



The Woodland Management Plan - what is it?

In a nutshell, the plan details how the airport will manage and enhance the woodland over the next five to ten years.

The plan ensures what forestry works within the woodland are completed in a responsible and sustainable way and in accordance with the practice of good forestry and relevant arboricultural regulations, guidance and best practices. The plan also ensures that the special character of the woodland and the woodland character of the area are maintained.

Our priority is to make the woodland safe for the public and neighbouring residents, and to see Marhill Copse maintained as a safe, beautiful and healthy space for the local community to enjoy. Through the delivery of the plan, Marhill Copse will be restored to its former glory, whilst maintaining the woodland character of the area.

The plan has been developed in consultation with key ecological and environmental authorities, notably Natural England, Historic England and the Forestry Commission. We have also worked closely with SCC and local community groups to prepare the plan.

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The eight key objectives of the plan:

- Enhance and maintain habitat diversity
- Promote sustainable woodland management & regeneration
- Embrace the woodland's landscape contribution
- Remove and control invasive exotic species
- Restore and improve derelict land
- Conserve heritage features
- Convert pine dominated southern and eastern edges to a natural shrub interface
- Adopt a safe and accessible community woodland ethos

The woodland will be considered alongside adjacent spaces, including Southampton City Council's Riverside Park to the west and their adjacent field to the east. Woodland management will be completed with sensitivity to and in conjunction with plans for adjacent areas. A permissive path will be maintained in the copse, running east through the adjacent field and out onto Cutbush Lane.

We are fully committed to our health and safety and community responsibilities as current owners of the copse, but in the long term it is our mission to identify the most appropriate owners to safeguard the future of this copse. During the delivery of this plan, an independent group will be set up to assess options for future ownership and agree a plan for handover and ongoing management. The group will be responsible for identifying the most suitable future owner and ownership model to ensure the ongoing and future restoration and enhancement of the woodland for all to enjoy.

Though derelict and in great need of suitable care and management, this woodland remains impressive and locally renowned. A long-term programme of management is required to both enhance and maintain its biodiversity and recreational value to the local community. The Woodland Management Plan addresses these issues and also ensures that our legislative obligations as an airport operator are delivered in a sensitive and responsible way.

What we have done so far to enhance the copse

- Clearance and opening of main entrance (1) at River Walk. Installation of gates and fencing (including accessible kissing gate)
- Removal of debris and waste material dumped within the copse
- 20 trees planted (2)
- Urgent safety critical arboricultural works (following years of neglect and storm damage through the winter)
- Habitat creation, through use of vegetation, log piles (3) and fracture pruning (4)
- Invasive species removal (Himalayan Balsam)
- Benches (5) crafted from previously felled trees
- Clearance and road-sweep of the main track running through the copse
- Clearance of paths and routes within the copse
- Addition of Ancient Oak (6) within the copse in onto the Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Inventory.
- Preparation of info-board signage (7) (throughout the copse) and directional signage (at River Walk entrance)



How to give your feedback and help shape the future of the copse

To view the plan in detail, please visit:
www.southamptonairport.com/about-us/aerodrome-safeguarding/marhill-copse
Please send your feedback by clicking on the Feedback button on this web page.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to email our dedicated mailbox
Marhill@southamptonairport.com

Or you can send your feedback via post to:
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