

Birmingham & Black Country Local Sites Assessment Report

EcoRecord Reference	Site Name	Grid Reference	Designation(s)	Survey Date(s)
WA114	Skip Lane	SP043977	SLINC	20/08/2018
Planning Authority	Site Ownership	Area/Length	Reason for Survey	Report Date
Walsall MBC	Private	5.85 ha	Black Country Call for Sites	13/12/2018

Meets LS Criteria	SLINC	Type	Wildlife	i.e. Wildlife/Geological

Amendment(s)	Extension	i.e. None; New Site; Upgrade; Downgrade; Extension; Whole/Part Deletion
Description	Surveyed area to south-west of existing SLINC meets threshold for selection as SLINC.	

Citation (Summary of Value)

The survey site, located to the east of Daisy Bank, Walsall, comprises of 5.85ha of neutral grassland, semi-natural broadleaved woodland, mature hedgerow and scattered scrub. There has been limited management work undertaken on site, therefore a mosaic of habitats of varying condition are present due to natural succession.

Skip Lane should remain a SLINC and the SLINC boundary extended to include the area to the south-west, as marshy grassland has previously been recorded, therefore restoration of the habitat could be undertaken. The site acts as a 'stepping stone' in the wider landscape providing connectivity between the urban area of Walsall to the north-west with sites of ecological and geological importance including Hay Head Quarry (SSSI). An additional survey on the former limestone quarried embankment at the north of the site would be beneficial to determine whether there are any geological features of interest present.

Local Site Selection Criteria

Ecological		
Habitat Diversity	M	Natural successional processes are occurring due to limited management practices being undertaken on site resulting in a mosaic of habitats, resulting in varying structural diversity and condition in the habitats present. These include a mature hedgerow, tall-herb, semi-natural broadleaved woodland and grazed neutral grassland.
Species Diversity	M	There are a good range of species present including mature Hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>), Field Maple (<i>Acer campestre</i>) and Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>) in southern boundary hedgerow. Grassland species composition is limited due to intensive grazing, although Zig-Zag clover (<i>Trifolium medium</i>) is present. Dog's Mercury (<i>Mercurialis perennis</i>) and Hairy-brome (<i>Bromopsis ramosa</i>) are also present in the semi-natural broadleaved woodland to the north.
Habitat Rarity	M	The habitats present on site are <i>Common to Frequent</i> in Birmingham and the Black Country.
Species Rarity	L-M	Most of the flora and fauna recorded are <i>Very Common to Common</i> within Birmingham and the Black Country.
Size or Extent	M	In the context of Walsall's Local Sites Skip Lane is <i>Medium</i> in extent.
Naturalness	M	The site appears to be unmanaged, as a result, natural succession of tall-herb encroachment into the paddock is occurring, as well as natural regeneration of Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>), Goat Willow (<i>Salix caprea</i>) and Blackthorn (<i>Prunus spinose</i>) from an overgrown hedgerow on the southern boundary which is beginning to form a woodland block. A derelict caravan at the south-west area of the site distracts from the natural feel of the site.
Position & Connectivity	H	The site is situated on the eastern side of Daisy Bank and forms a semi-wooded corridor to the open formal countryside to the east and a corridor with Cuckoos Nook and the Dingle to the north.
Geological		
Not assessed	N/A	
Social		
Historical & Cultural	M-H	Skip Lane forms a link between Daisy Bank and Daffodil Farm and includes former limestone workings along the northern side which links to the historic Hay Head limestone works (The Dingle) to the north.
Access	L	There is a gate on the south-eastern boundary off Skip Lane, however, access to the site by the general public is not permissible.
Aesthetic	M	Skip Lane is an attractive area of Walsall's remnant open countryside, the semi-natural broadleaved woodland on the northern boundary forms a screen to the residential area to the north.
Recorded History	L-M	The ecological importance of the site has been recorded in several previous surveys. It is likely that the history of the site has been documented in relation to the former quarrying work on site.
Value for Learning	L	Use of the site for learning opportunities is limited as access to the site is restricted.

Site Description

Skip Lane is a 5.85 ha site located to the east of Daisy Bank, Walsall. The site comprises of a flat field, which historically would have been permanent grassland with limestone quarrying to the north of the site. Most recently, Skip Lane has been used as horse pasture and as a result species composition within the paddock is relatively poor. The field slopes in the north-west of the site which is dominated by scattered scrub and Ash woodland along the northern boundary with an overgrown hedgerow to the south along Skip Lane.

Residential housing is located to the north and east of the site with open farmland to the south. Skip Lane acts as a 'stepping stone' within the wider landscape due to its position within a corridor of designated sites including Hay Head Quarry (SSSI) and The Spinney to the east and Rushall Canal and Walsall Country Park in the north.

There is a derelict caravan in the south-western area of the site, in addition to an area of the woodland which has been cleared for access purposes in the north-western area of the site. However, despite of this, there does not appear to be any other management work being undertaken on site. There is a gate in the south-eastern area of the site off Skip Lane, the gate is locked due to private ownership of the site.

Habitats

Phase 1 Name	Semi-natural broadleaved woodland	Phase 1 Code	A1.1.1
There is an area of naturally regenerated woodland in the south-western area of compartment 1 comprising of young Ash and Goat Willow (<i>Salix caprea</i>), with a field layer comprising of Creeping Buttercup (<i>Ranunculus repens</i>), Wood Avens (<i>Geum urbanum</i>), Marsh Thistle (<i>Cirsium palustre</i>) and Bramble (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.). The northern boundary in compartment 2 is formed of woodland predominately comprised of Ash. In the north-eastern area of compartment 1 there is an area of Ash, Hawthorn and Pedunculate Oak with a field layer comprising of Dog's Mercury.			
Phase 1 Name	Scattered scrub	Phase 1 Code	A2.2
In the western area of the site in compartment 2 there is an area of woodland which has been cleared to gain access to a residential property on the northern boundary which has resulted in the presence of scattered scrub. The scattered scrub comprises of Ash, Hawthorn, Norway Maple (<i>Acer platanoides</i>), Sycamore (<i>Acer platanoides</i>), Cherry Laurel (<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>), Bramble, and Great Willowherb (<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>). Mature Hawthorn and Elder (<i>Sambucus nigra</i>) is present throughout the area of tall-herb on the northern boundary of compartment 1.			
Phase 1 Name	Dense scrub	Phase 1 Code	A2.1
There is a dense patch of Blackthorn (<i>Prunus spinose</i>) scrub on the southern boundary of compartment 1 which is likely to have originated from the adjacent hedgerow.			
Phase 1 Name	Neutral grassland	Phase 1 Code	B2
The paddock in compartment 1 has been used for horse grazing in recent times which has had an impact on species composition. The grassland comprises of Common Bent (<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>), Creeping Bent (<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>), Cock's-foot (<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>), Red Fescue (<i>Festuca rubra</i>), Perennial-Rye grass (<i>Lolium perenne</i>), Timothy (<i>Phleum pratense</i>), Annual-meadow grass (<i>Poa annua</i>) and Smooth-meadow grass (<i>Poa pratensis</i>). There is a presence of undesirable species including Common Ragwort (<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>) and Creeping Thistle (<i>Cirsium arvense</i>) which are locally abundant in the vegetation. Additional forb species include Common Cat's-ear (<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>), Ribwort Plantain (<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>), Greater Plantain (<i>Plantago major</i>), Selfheal (<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>), Common Sorrel (<i>Rumex acetosa</i>), Common Dandelion (<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> agg.), Goat's Beard (<i>Tragopogon pratensis</i> agg.), Zigzag Clover (<i>Trifolium medium</i>), White Clover (<i>Trifolium repens</i>), Tufted Vetch (<i>Vicia cracca</i>) and Bush Vetch (<i>Vicia sepium</i>).			
Phase 1 Name	Tall-herb	Phase 1 Code	C3.1
Along the northern area of the paddock there are patches of tall-herb including Creeping Thistle, Bramble, Common Nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>) and Great Willowherb (<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>) as well as an area in the south-eastern border near the entrance whereby Creeping Thistle, Broad-Leaved Dock (<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>) and Bramble is beginning to encroach into the paddock.			
Phase 1 Name	Defunct hedge with trees	Phase 1 Code	J2.3
Alongside Skip Lane on the southern boundary of compartment 1 is a defunct hedgerow comprising of Ash, Blackthorn, Field Maple, Pedunculate Oak and Hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>), Ivy dominates the field-layer.			
Notes			

Habitats of Note [1]

Phase 1 Name	Phase 1 Code	EHD	BAP	NERC	Rarity	Year Recorded
Defunct hedge with trees	J2.3		Y			2018
Notes						

Species of Note [1]

Flora

Species	Statutory	BAP	NERC	RL	Rarity	Axiophyte	Year Recorded
<i>Bromopsis ramosa</i>					F	BBCF_Ax	2018
<i>Cirsium palustre</i>					F	BBCF_Ax	2018
<i>Dioscorea communis</i>					F	BBCF_Ax	2018
<i>Malus sylvestris</i>					F	BBCF_Ax	2018
<i>Mercurialis perennis</i>					F	BBCF_Ax	2018
<i>Trifolium medium</i>					F	BBCF_Ax (secondary)	2018
<i>Sequoiadendron giganteum</i>					VR		2018
<i>Iris foetidissima</i>					R		2018
<i>Ribes nigrum</i>					U		2018
<i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i>					F	BBCF_Ax	2002
<i>Cirsium palustre</i>					F	BBCF_Ax	2002
<i>Pulicaria dysenterica</i>					U	BBCF_Ax	2002
<i>Allium ursinum</i>					F	BBCF_Ax	1994
<i>Achillea ptarmica</i>					U	BBCF_Ax	1988
<i>Ajuga reptans</i>					U	BBCF_Ax	1988
<i>Carex nigra</i>					U	BBCF_Ax	1988
<i>Festuca gigantea</i>					F	BBCF_Ax	1988
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>					F	BBCF_Ax	1988
<i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>					U	BBCF_Ax	1988
<i>Silene flos-cuculi</i>				Red	U	BBCF_Ax	1988
<i>Stellaria holostea</i>					F	BBCF_Ax	1988
<i>Torilis japonica</i>					U	BBCF_Ax	1988

Notes

Fauna

Species	Statutory	BAP	NERC	RL	Concern	Rarity	Year Recorded
<i>Rana temporaria</i>	Y	Y				F	2018
<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	Y	Y		Y		U	1987

Notes

Site/Habitat Suitability for Other Species of Note (not recorded during the survey)

Description/Notes	The mature Oak tree in the hedgerow could provide suitable roosting sites for Bats, in addition to foraging habitat due to the sites position in a corridor which includes Cuckoos Nook and The Dingle to the north of the site. Bat species including Noctule and Pipistrelle have been recorded in close proximity to the site including the nearby Rushall Canal.
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Invasive Species [2]

Species	Location	Abundance (DAFOR)	Year Recorded

Notes None recorded.

Geology

Solid/Drift Formation	Silurian Barr Limestone formation
Description	Barr Limestone forms outcrop running along the northern edge of the site.
Features of Value	
1	Northern edge of the site has a former limestone workings 'trench' which follows the limestone which extends to The Dingle, historic limestone workings.

Soils

The vegetation present within the grassland indicates that the soils are neutral.

Public Access & Site Usage	
Land Use	Pasture.
Access Level	Restricted.
Access Type(s)	Access is through prior arrangement only.

Comparison with Previous Survey(s) Results
A Local Site Assessment undertaken in 1988 recorded an area of floristically diverse marshy grassland in the south-western side of the site comprising of Common fleabane (<i>Pulicaria dysenterica</i>), Ragged robin (<i>Lychnis flos-cuculi</i>), Great burnet (<i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>) and Sneezewort (<i>Achillea ptarmica</i>). However, surveys undertaken in 2002/07/12 recorded increasing degradation overtime of the marshy grassland due to scrub encroachment. During the recent survey the south-western area of the site was dominated by scattered scrub and was impenetrable. Elsewhere on site the habitat types recorded in the present survey are in similar in condition to those recorded in previous surveys of the site.

Boundary (notes)
Residential housing borders the site on the north, east and west. Skip Lane forms the southern boundary with open countryside to the south of the site, it is recommended that this area is surveyed seperately.

Summary of Assessment
When assessed against the Birmingham and Black Country Local Site Selection Criteria, Skip Lane scores <i>Medium</i> against most of the ecological criteria. The site scores <i>Low</i> against the social criteria due to access restrictions. It is recommended that Skip Lane retains the current SLINC status as the site provides good connectivity between urbanised areas to the north-west with open countryside to the east and south as well as designated sites. In addition, it is advised that the SLINC boundary is extended to include the area in the south-west of the site, as in the current state of scattered scrub could provide suitable nesting opportunities for breeding birds. Alternatively, habitat restoration work could be undertaken to restore an area of marshy grassland that was recorded on site previously in this area of the site.
It is advised that the below management and enhancement recommendations are implemented in order for the site to retain SLINC status if additional Local Site Selection surveys are undertaken in the future.

Recommendations (including further survey & site management/enhancement)	
1	Hedgerow management including coppicing and re-planting would be beneficial for the overgrown hedgerow on the southern boundary.
2	Grazing is integral to maintain suitable conditions for floristic diversity within the grassland on site. However, it would be beneficial to implement a rotational grazing regime to ensure grazing pressure is reduced and prevent further scrub encroachment into the grassland.
3	It would be beneficial to clear an area of the scattered scrub in the south-western area of the site to implement long-term restoration of an area of marshy grassland that was recorded in previous surveys.
4	Geological survey of the former limestone quarry to the north of the site.

Data Sources		
	Source	Date
Species and Habitat Data Source(s)	The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country	20/08/2018
Geological Data Source(s)	British Geological Society 1:50,000 bedrock & superficial deposits GIS web map services from BGS website: https://www.bgs.ac.uk/data/services/mash-ups/desktopgis.html	2018
Historic Data Sources(s)	Ordnance Survey Country Series Mapping 1884 – 1992.	2018
Assessment Author and Organisation	The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country	2018

[1] HABITATS/SPECIES OF NOTE TABLES – ATTRIBUTE DEFINITIONS

STATUTORY (PROTECTED) -

EHD = EU Habitats Directive (plus where relevant the Annexe II or IV). **PBA** = Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

WCA S1 = Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 1 (birds protected at all times). **WCA S5** = Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 5 (animals with various levels of protection). **WCA S8** = Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 8 (higher and lower plants with various levels of protection).

BAP – Habitats/Species included on latest UK BAP list of Priority Habitats/Species.

NERC P.I. - Habitats/Species included on current list of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006 or amended).

RL - Species included on Global IUCN & British Red Lists (Red Data Books).

RARITY (HABITATS) - BIRMINGHAM & BLACK COUNTRY - Habitats included on the B&BC list of locally rare habitats (administered by EcoRecord).

RARITY (FLORA SPECIES) - BIRMINGHAM & BLACK COUNTRY - (based on data held and managed by EcoRecord).

VR = Very Rare - a species present in less than 1.0% of 1Km squares, tetrads, or 5Km squares in B&BC.

R = Rare - a species present in 1.0% - 4.3% of 1Km squares, tetrads, or 5Km squares in B&BC.

U = Uncommon - a species present in 4.3% - 12% of 1Km squares, tetrads or 5Km squares in B&BC.

AXIOPHYTE - included on the Birmingham & the Black Country list of axiophytes.

CONCERN (FAUNA SPECIES OF CONSERVATION CONCERN) -

Birds: **R** = Red List - species that are Globally Threatened according to the International Union for Nature Conservation criteria; those whose population or range has declined rapidly in recent years; and those that have declined historically and not shown a substantial recent recovery. **A** = Amber List - species with an unfavourable conservation status in Europe; those whose population or range has declined moderately in recent years; those whose population has declined historically but made a substantial recent recovery; rare breeders; and those with internationally important or localised populations.

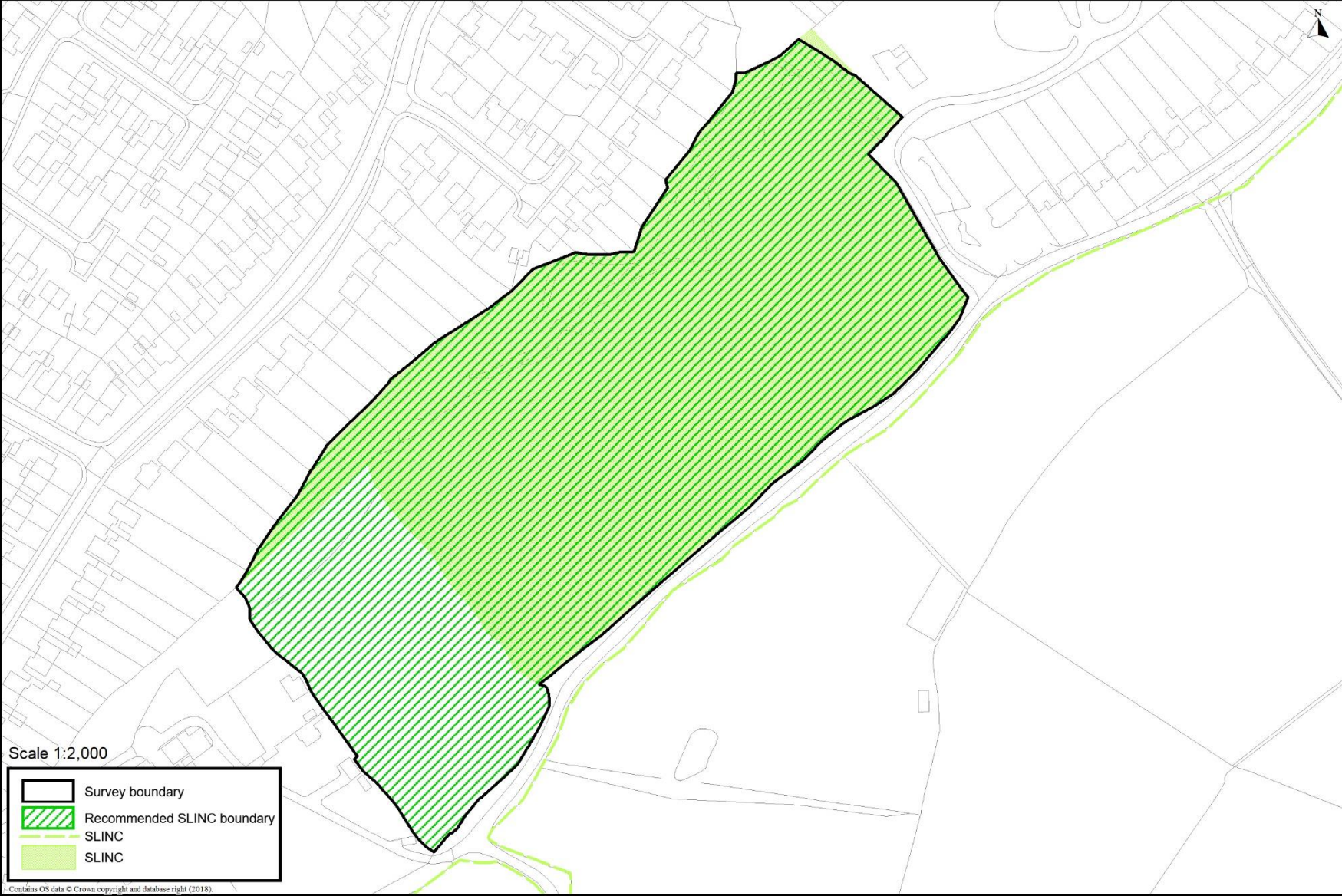
Mammals: **ND** = National Decline and **ED** = England Decline as measured by the Mammal Societies Table of Recent Population Changes in the Native Species of Land Mammals.

Invertebrates: **RD** = Regional Decline identified in Butterfly Conservation West Midlands Regional Action Plan.

YEAR - The most recent year the species has been recorded.

[2] Species listed on Schedule 9 part 1 (animals) and part 2 (plants) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended - this lists animals which may not be released or allowed to escape into the wild and plants which may not be planted or otherwise caused to grow in the wild.

Map 1: Skip Lane Current & Recommended Designation





Map 2: Skip Lane Phase 1 Habitat Map



Site Photographs



Tall-herb along northern boundary, August 2018



Patches of Creeping Thistle encroaching into neutral grassland in compartment 1, August 2018



Natural regeneration of Ash and Goat Willow in south-west of compartment 1, August 2018



Cleared area of woodland in south-west in compartment 2, August 2018

Species Records

Flora

Compartment 1 - Field & Roadside

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Acer campestre</i>	Field Maple
<i>Acer platanoides</i>	Norway Maple
<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	Common Bent
<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Creeping Bent
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False Oat-grass
<i>Arum maculatum</i>	Lords-and-Ladies
<i>Betula pendula</i>	Silver Birch
<i>Bromopsis ramosa</i>	Hairy-brome
<i>Circaea lutetiana</i>	Enchanter's-nightshade
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle
<i>Cirsium palustre</i>	Marsh Thistle
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear Thistle
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot
<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>	Tufted Hair-Grass
<i>Dioscorea communis</i>	Black Bryony
<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>	Male-fern
<i>Elytrigia repens</i>	Common Couch
<i>Epilobium ciliatum</i>	American Willowherb
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	Great Willowherb
<i>Epilobium obscurum</i>	Short-fruited Willowherb
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red Fescue
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash
<i>Geum urbanum</i>	Wood Avens
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire-fog
<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	Cat's-ear
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Holly
<i>Iris foetidissima</i>	Stinking Iris
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial Rye-grass
<i>Malus</i>	Apple
<i>Malus sylvestris</i>	Crab Apple
<i>Mercurialis perennis</i>	Dog's Mercury
<i>Phleum pratense</i>	Timothy
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort Plantain
<i>Plantago major</i>	Greater Plantain
<i>Poa annua</i>	Annual Meadow-grass
<i>Poa pratensis</i>	Smooth Meadow-grass
<i>Potentilla reptans</i>	Creeping Cinquefoil
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Selfheal
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn

<i>Quercus robur</i>	Pedunculate Oak
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup
<i>Rosa arvensis</i>	Field-rose
<i>Rosa canina</i> agg.	Dog Rose
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Common Sorrel
<i>Rumex crispus</i>	Curled Dock
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved Dock
<i>Rumex sanguineus</i>	Wood Dock
<i>Salix caprea</i>	Goat Willow
<i>Salix cinerea</i>	Common Sallow
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder
<i>Scutellaria galericulata</i>	Skullcap
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Common Ragwort
<i>Sequoiadendron giganteum</i>	Wellingtonia
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	Smooth Sow-thistle
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> agg.	Dandelion
<i>Tragopogon pratensis</i>	Goat's-beard
<i>Trifolium medium</i>	Zigzag Clover
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover
<i>Ulmus glabra</i>	Wych Elm
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common Nettle
<i>Vicia cracca</i>	Tufted Vetch
<i>Vicia sepium</i>	Bush Vetch

Compartment 2 - Woodland Belt and Southern Field

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Acer platanoides</i>	Norway Maple
<i>Acer platanoides</i>	Sycamore
<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	Rosebay Willowherb
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn
<i>Dioscorea communis</i>	Black Bryony
<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>	Male-fern
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	Great Willowherb
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Holly
<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>	Honeysuckle
<i>Prunus avium</i>	Wild Cherry
<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>	Cherry Laurel
<i>Quercus robur</i>	Pedunculate Oak
<i>Ribes nigrum</i>	Black Currant
<i>Rosa arvensis</i>	Field-rose
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	Bramble
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Common Ragwort
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common Nettle

Fauna

Whole site

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Pararge aegeria tircis</i>	Speckled Wood
<i>Rana temporaria</i>	Common Frog
<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Goldfinch
<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Woodpigeon
<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	Blue Tit
<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Jay
<i>Parus major</i>	Great Tit
<i>Pica pica</i>	Magpie
<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Wren