

## **KNLNR Strategic Plan 2007**

### **KINGS NORTON LOCAL NATURE RESERVE STRATEGIC PLAN 2007**

#### **THE TEN YEAR VISION**

At the heart of the Kings Norton Local Nature Reserve lies Wychall Reservoir, at present used by the City principally to hold back floodwater briefly when the Rea is in spate. The inclusion of the Kings Norton Ward into Northfield Constituency provides a means to look at the upper Rea valley in its entirety. It offers a unique opportunity to develop the area's rich potential in order to create a wetland area to rival other award-winning Wetland Centres as a leisure and educational asset for local residents and visitors to Birmingham alike, and as a haven for a diverse range of wildlife.

In our vision the former flood plain and associated allotments to the west of Popes Lane, currently derelict and with the river canalised to one side of the site, would be developed to allow the river to move naturally over the site, dissipating its force when in flood through a series of pools, reedbeds and flood meadows, allowing silt to settle and flotsam to be filtered out using technically advanced filters before the water crossed over to Wychall Wetlands at a number of points. Appropriate wetland planting would make this area attractive to humans and wildlife alike.

At Wychall, rather than the current occasional and violent rush of silt- and rubbish-laden water, water would be introduced at a number of points on to the wetland site by a series of sluices, allowing the area to be developed to attract a diversity of wildlife while, we believe, the floodwater absorption capacity of the area would be increased. Sensitive introduction of pools, scrapes and hides, together with an attractive building (as far as possible built using renewable materials and sustainable technologies – possible site on Wychall Road, Northfield) to offer visitor interpretation, refreshment and education facilities, would make this an enormously valuable facility for the whole city.

Further upstream we would like to see the Rea valley enhanced by “re-naturalising” the flow of water to the benefit of wildlife and the local community, linking through Longbridge with the Friends of Daffodil Park and the Friends of Balaams Wood. Downstream, riparian areas of Kings Norton Park and Kings Norton Playing Fields would also benefit from environmentally sensitive management. The ultimate aim is to create a Green Corridor along the Rea from its source to the canal at Kings Norton.

Other areas of the LNR would be developed in quiet and sympathetic ways that reflect their location and sensitivity. Wildflower meadows will be developed along the banks of the River Rea and at Pinehurst, which backs onto residential properties. The fields currently grazed by horses will be maintained. The tranquillity of Merecroft Pool and the associated woodland will be sustained in a way that protects the native bluebells and aquatic life.

In order to achieve the vision it will be essential that a structure is put in place that not only allows for Community involvement in the maintenance and development of the site but also provides full-time employed staff to guide and manage the volunteer resource and to provide wider links to education, health and housing sectors and to private sector employers.

The industrial heritage of the area will be protected and recorded and the full potential of the area developed for educational purposes for the benefit of the wider community.

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Our vision for an enlarged LNR is therefore aimed at meeting the following citywide objectives:

### **Sustainable drainage**

- Better use of drainage absorption capacity of whole river corridor
- Improved management of the river corridor in terms of 'day to day' maintenance
- Increased capacity at Wychall reservoir, plus slower release of water downstream
- Improved environment

### **Wildlife Haven**

- Improved water quality
- Meet the City Council's biodiversity objectives
- Develop ponds and scrapes at different water levels to encourage a wider range of water fowl and mammals (protected species inc – Water Vole)
- Enhance wetland flora
- Build wetland centre and hides with comprehensive visitor information
- Build on success of existing LNR and help develop the creation of others upstream
- Employ dedicated Ranger staff (at least 2 fte in the first instance) – and offer training opportunities for future Rangers

### **Leisure, Health and Quality of Life**

- Enhanced access for local community
- Attractive open space for local recreation and relaxation
- Fitness track on Kings Norton Park/Playing Fields
- Promote strategic cycle route
- Meet the City's strategic policy objectives on open spaces and nature conservation
- Events involving the local community
- Community involvement

### **Education & Job creation**

- Interpretation Centre at wetland
- Develop environmental science/education centre in co-operation with local schools
- Outdoor classroom – 'Forest Schools' initiative
- Training opportunities for ranger service
- Tourism
- Other training facilities and job opportunities for the local community

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## **STRATEGIC PLAN 2007**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Kings Norton Local Nature Reserve comprises several connected areas, owned by a range of organisations that were brought together under a single management structure in April 2005. The nature reserve was formed in the context of Birmingham City Council's nature conservation strategy and environment policies and provides a green open space within a predominately urban area. Formal designation as a Local Nature Reserve was secured after public consultation and debate. Appendix 1 consists of the relevant location maps, which place the LNR in its urban context.

The formal management of the LNR is under a Council-led management committee, assisted by the Friends group of volunteers. This plan provides some background on the management of the LNR and explains the Friends' vision and action plan to cover the 10 years from 2007.

### **OUR MISSION**

To create, develop and maintain a sustainable haven for wildlife and a place of recreation for all in the local community.

The mission includes a plan to develop the Rea Valley from Frankley/Longbridge to Kings Norton for people, for wildlife and for more sustainable drainage.

### **OUR AIMS**

1. To maintain and appropriately enhance the biodiversity of the:
  - a. water bodies
  - b. freshwater courses
  - c. meadows
  - d. woodland
2. To contribute to the local community by:
  - a. helping to connect people with their locality, in turn helping to build community health and sustainability
  - b. encouraging and supporting educational use of the site
  - c. maintaining and enhancing the site's public amenity, including accessibility, and appreciation
  - d. consulting stakeholders and partners, using feedback and keeping them informed of plans and progress
3. To provide a safe and healthy site in accordance with appropriate legislation for all volunteer workers and all site users
4. To safeguard the site and protect it from inappropriate use
5. To work with other conservation groups to enlarge the managed area along the River Rea to create a 'green corridor' from its source
6. To develop the Friends' skills in managing a local nature reserve

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### **THE PLANNING CONTEXT**

Kings Norton LNR is situated on and about the River Rea corridor that has, for a long time, been seen as a vital green corridor between the City boundary and City centre. This corridor provides a means of passage for people and wildlife between rural and urban areas and provides valuable open space for City residents. It is an artery that has the potential to mitigate some of the anticipated effects of climate change.

The Nature Conservation Strategy for Birmingham was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in November 1996 (and published in March 1997). It provides for comprehensive advice and guidance for the conservation of the city's nature resource. It was one of the first nature conservation strategies for an urban area to be developed following the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It develops in an innovative way the key themes of sustainability and biodiversity.

The Nature Conservation Strategy follows the statutory land use policies set out in The Birmingham Plan (the City's Unitary Development Plan) and Birmingham's Green Action Plan. It forms part of the City Council's Local Agenda 21 programme.

The protection of sites of quality is critically important for nature conservation. It is not enough though simply to protect a series of scattered, individual sites. There is a parallel need to protect a network of open spaces linking together sites of quality and special habitats. This can also provide, for example, easy access to a network of footpaths of great value to people. It also offers the chance to visit key sites and experience nature in its own right.

The proposals in the long-term plan for Kings Norton LNR specifically accord with the policies contained within the City strategy. In particular policy nineteen states "The City Council will, itself, and in partnership and liaison with others, seek to secure appropriate management of the City's nature conservation resource". Policy twenty states "The City Council will, itself, and in liaison and partnership with others, seek to expand the City's nature conservation resource through the creation of new wildlife habitats and natural features".

### **Sustainability and Biodiversity**

The protection provided by the City's existing nature conservation resource is crucial, but in itself not enough to ensure the survival and development of a flourishing natural environment. Proper management of the nature conservation resource can help to increase its value, for both wildlife and people. Equally, poor management or the lack of management can damage or destroy good nature conservation sites as effectively as the bricks and mortar of development.

A healthy natural environment is important to everyone. It is essential for the well-being and enjoyment of our generation. It is also part of the heritage we hold in trust, to hand on at least undamaged, and wherever possible improved, to future generations.

### **Habitat Protection**

Generally speaking the older, less disturbed and larger a habitat is, the more valuable it will be for nature conservation. The City's rare habitats are: lowland heathland, wetland (including bog, fen and marsh) unimproved acid grassland, wet

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grassland and ancient woodland. Kings Norton LNR meets several of these criteria and is therefore important in meeting specific City policies relating to Sustainability and Biodiversity. In particular:

### **“Policy Seven**

The intrinsic value of any land or natural features having a corridor function, in terms of nature conservation and associated access and amenity, will be safeguarded wherever possible.

### **Policy Eight**

The City Council will protect the City's rare habitats as key elements of Birmingham's Critical Natural Capital by not normally allowing development that may destroy or adversely affect their nature conservation value, and by seeking to prevent other forms of damage.

### **Policy Nine**

The City Council will, wherever possible, protect other natural, semi-natural and wildlife-rich artificial habitats in the City, as part of Birmingham's stock of Constant Natural Assets, against development which may destroy or adversely affect their nature conservation value, and by seeking to prevent other forms of damage. Efforts will be made to maintain the stock of Constant Natural Assets habitats and wherever possible to increase them.”

### **Existing site Status**

The meadows owned by British Waterways at the junction of Meadow Hill Road and Wychall Lane, while not formally part of the LNR, are being managed by the Friends under a Grazing Agreement from November 2006; this allows the ‘joining up’ of the Wychall and Merecroft sectors of the LNR.

There are long-term plans to develop the fauna and flora on the site (appendix 2) and this will involve completion of a number of long-term work tasks (appendix 3).

Clearly development will extend over several years. A separate document will be produced annually clearly specifying work tasks for the year. A new four-year plan will be developed to succeed the existing one that ends in 2008.

## **FINANCE**

The Local Nature Reserve is supported by the FKNNR and has a sound financial structure, with an annual income in 2005-2006 of £15K and expenditure of £7K. This is the minimum level of funding needed to meet the maintenance requirements that are set out in an approved ‘Management Plan’ from which annual working party tasks are established (and includes grants earmarked to be spent on particular projects). The accounts are audited and presented to the management committee and to members at the AGM.

The City, through its various departments and contractors is able to commission a substantial proportion of the specialist work occasionally required on site and the FKNNR has been successful in attracting additional funding from both lottery and private sector sources.

The FKNNR is in process of seeking charitable status.

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## **HOW WE WORK**

### **Organisation**

*A Management Committee:* led and serviced by the City Council, bringing together representatives of voluntary organizations, the FKNNR, statutory authorities and other relevant bodies and individuals as appropriate. The committee meets quarterly to review progress and value for money.

*The Friends Group (FKNNR):* has a membership of over 150 households. A volunteer committee runs the Group, meeting every 3 months. It has an active network of working volunteers. The Friends' Group has representatives on and reports to the Management Committee.

#### *Partnerships:*

FKNNR works with a range of partners:

- Land owners:
  - Birmingham City Council
  - British Waterways
  - Environment Agency
  - Severn Trent Water
  - British Rail
- Birmingham City Park Ranger service, based at the Lickey Hills
- The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham & the Black Country
- River Rea Conservation Group
- Friends of Balaam's Wood
- Friends of Daffodil Park
- Local primary and secondary schools

### **Measuring success**

#### *Baseline;*

The site at the inception of the nature reserve is described in detail in the first four-year management plan (2004-2008).

#### *Long term conservation goals;*

There are long term plans to develop the fauna and flora on the site (appendix 2).

#### *Work Ethic:*

To represent and care for the community in which we operate, is important that FKNNR's activities and ways of working are safe, relevant and accessible to all. FKNNR:

- is developing a clear governance structure
- seeks to develop a culturally-diverse network of inspirational, skilled leaders and volunteers that reflects local demographics
- motivates its volunteers and develops their skills and knowledge
- delivers value for money for our stakeholders

#### *Management and communication:*

We review and evaluate our work at committee meetings and communicate results to ensure that:

- our members are kept informed (via a quarterly newsletter and emails)

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- everyone feels truly valued for their work
- the results will continue to inform FKNNR's strategic direction
- our partners appreciate the mutual benefits
- policy makers listen to our advocacy on behalf of the individuals and communities with whom we engage to provide sustainable social, economic, health and environmental benefits for all

### **River Rea Green Corridor**

Our *Aim 5* is to work towards the creation of a 'green corridor' from the source of the River Rea toward the City to Lifford Lane and Cannon Hill Park. The Management Committee of Kings Norton LNR and the FKNNR will take every opportunity to work with existing and new partners towards creating effective and appropriate environmental management of areas beyond the existing boundaries of the LNR.

Good relations are already in place with Friends groups upstream at Balaams Wood and Daffodil Park.

#### *Adjacent land appropriate for management*

The former allotments immediately upstream of Popes Lane, within Northfield, are ripe for major environmental (and flood prevention) enhancement, while riparian areas of Kings Norton Park and Kings Norton Playing Fields through to the canal would also benefit from environmentally sensitive management.

**David Human, Amanda Cadman, Phil Evans, Paul Adams - FKNNR**  
May 2007

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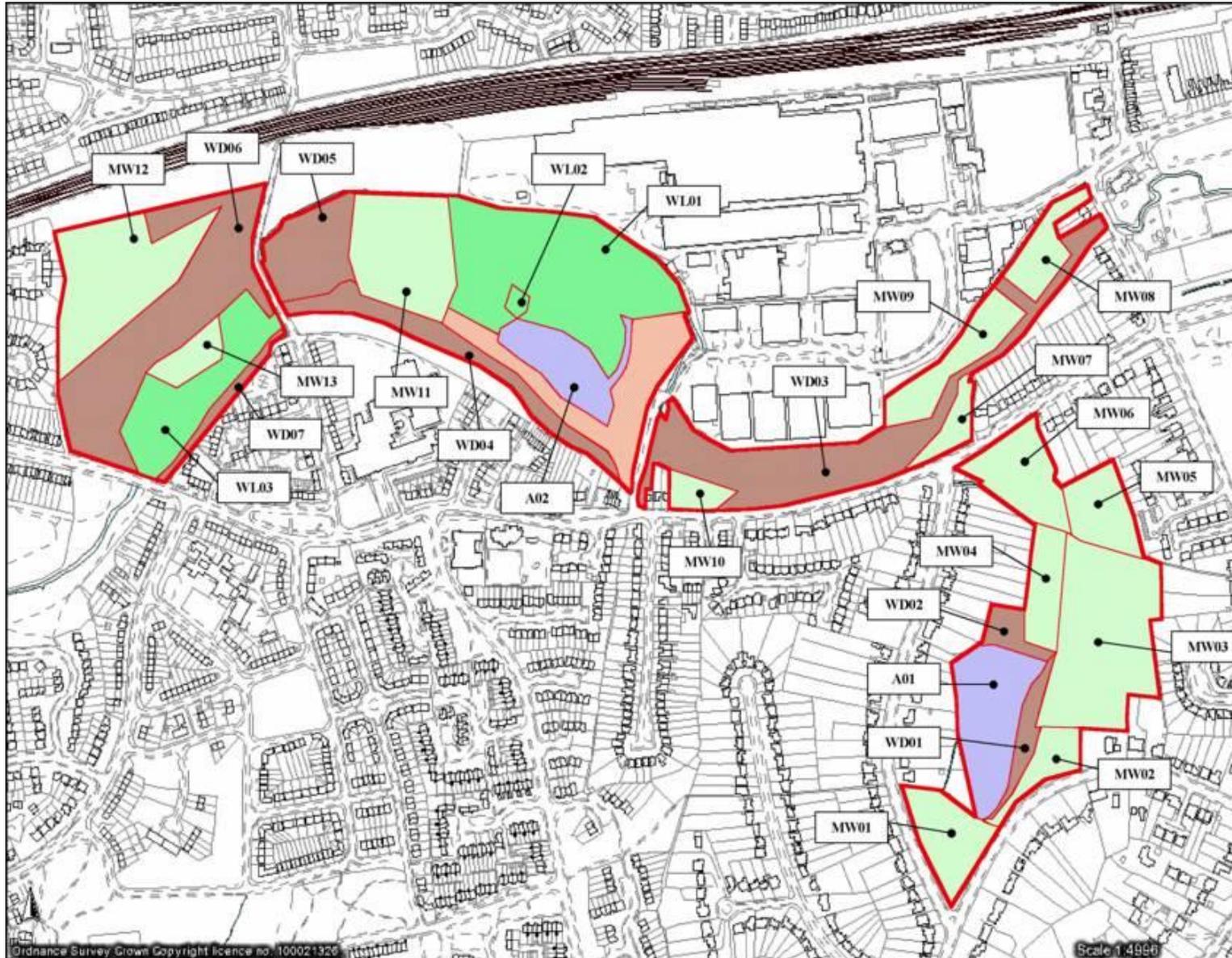
### **APPENDICES:**

1. Site map of Kings Norton LNR at February 2007
2. Long term Target flora and fauna by habitat
3. Long term Work tasks
4. Milestones

# KNLNR Strategic Plan 2007

## APPENDIX 1

### Site Map of LNR at February 2007



## APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF TARGET FLORA AND FAUNA

Habitat	Zone Code	Flora	Fauna
River	River Rea		Stickleback, Kingfisher, Otter Water Vole
Deep water lake	A01	Phragmites reeds.	Freshwater mussel, Stickleback, Dragonfly, Daubenton's Bat, Great crested grebe, Little Grebe, Mallard, Coot.
Shallow lake	A04	Phragmites Reeds.	Dragonfly, Water Vole, Mallard, Teal, Gadwall Reed Bunting, Reed Warbler, Little grebe.
Wetland with willow carr and channels/ pools of varying depths (including scrapes)	WL01/ WL02/ MW11/ WD03/ WD04	Willow, Ash, Alder.	Teal, Heron, Snipe, Reed Bunting, Willow Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Kingfisher, Water Vole, Fox, Willow Tit, Muntjac deer, Badger.
Wetland/ marsh	MW02b (lower fifth of zone)	Marsh Marigold, Water Avens	Newt, Frog
Wet meadow	MW01	Great Burnet, Meadow-sweet	Moth, Spider.
Woodland on river bank	WD03	Ramsons, Oak, Alder, Hawthorn, Hazel.	Blackcap, Song Thrush, Lssr Spotted Woodpecker, Kingfisher.
Wildflower Meadow	MW07/ MW08	Yorkshire Fog, Thistle.	Fox
Amenity areas linked by path through WD03	MW12/ MW06	Grassland with Woodland flowers (snowdrops, bluebells)	Humans!
Grassland with thickets	MW03/ MW04	Yorkshire Fog, Bramble, Hawthorn, Blackthorn.	Goldfinch, Bullfinch, Red Legged Partridge, Wood Mouse, Shrew, Bank Vole, Fox, Badger, Muntjac Deer
Horse pasture	MW02a (upper four fifths of zone)	Scabious	Common Blue Butterfly Crow, Horse.
Woodland	MW05	Beech	Fox, Bats, Gt Spotted Woodpecker
Woodland	WD01/02	Oak, Elm, Hazel Alder.	Chiff Chaff, Tawny Owl, Fox

Current Zone Codes

A = Aquatic; MW = Meadow; WD = Woodland; WL = Wetland

**Appendix 3****APPENDIX 3.****Work Tasks To Achieve Desired Outcomes**The General Environment

- a) monitor air and water quality
- b) identify sources of pollution
- c) report incidences of pollution/fly tipping and identified sources to City Council
- d) remove pollution/litter (e.g. through litter picks)
- e) influence water levels at Wychall Reservoir to promote biodiversity
- f) create amphibian ponds on Merecroft wet meadow

Woodland

- a) protect existing native woodland
- b) identify location of site of rarer native trees (e.g., elm, hornbeam) and devise a protection plan
- c) remove invasive non-native species (e.g. sycamore)
- d) replace non-native species by planting native species (e.g. oak, hazel, hawthorn)
- e) plant new areas of woodland (e.g. MW05 Beech trees)

Grassland And Wild Flowers

- a) protect existing areas of native grassland and flowers
- b) identify location on site of rarer grasses and wildflowers and devise protection plan (e.g. Royal Fern, Great Burnet)
- c) remove invasive non-native species (e.g. Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan balsam, Laurel, Rhododendron)
- d) cut hay and remove
- e) replace non-native species by planting native species (e.g. Phragmites)
- f) create new area of grassland/flowers by removing shrub/bramble and planting seeds/bulbs (e.g. Wildflower meadow at MW07/08, Wetland/Marsh plants at MW02b, bluebells in woodland areas)

Insects

- a) identify insects currently on site (e.g. Butterfly and Dragonfly survey)
- b) protect and develop watercourses and grassland/wildflowers in a manner consistent with enhancing the biodiversity of insect life.
- c) introduce new species, which could breed on the site (e.g. Heath Fritillary?)

Fish

- a) identify fish currently on site.
- b) protect and develop watercourses in a manner consistent with enhancing the biodiversity of fish life.
- c) introduce new species, which could breed on the site.

Amphibians and Reptiles

- a) identify location and breeding sites on the reserve of amphibians and reptiles

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- b) protect and enhance amphibian and reptile breeding sites
- c) introduce native species (e.g. toads, great crested newt, slow worm, grass snake)

Birds

- a) record location on site of bird species
- b) protect and develop watercourses, woodland and grassland/wildflowers in a manner consistent with enhancing the biodiversity of bird life. (e.g. creating scrapes, pools and areas of rush for wetland birds such as teal and water rail)
- c) put up bird boxes around the site
- d) put up owl boxes and create a heronry
- e) introduce species which will be able to breed in the existing environment (e.g. partridges and pheasants to MW03/04)
- f) develop the wetland areas to make them attractive to Lapwings

Mammals

- a) identify the location and breeding sites on the reserve of less frequent or endangered mammals (e.g. hedgehogs, water voles, bats, foxes, badgers and Muntjac deer)
- b) protect and enhance mammal-breeding sites
- c) put up bat boxes
- d) introduce new species, which could breed on the site. (e.g. water voles and otters?)

Education

- a) form links with local primary and secondary schools and engage pupils in projects on the nature reserve
- b) develop opportunities for adult environmental skill development, both at an amateur level and as to underpin professional environmental education

Community Access

- a) maintain and enhance current footpaths on the site to facilitate access
- b) create new footpaths across the site (e.g. at MW 12 and MW 06)
- c) specially protect certain other identified areas using natural means (hedges, bramble etc)
- d) publicise and provide information on the reserve
- e) provide appropriate signage to facilitate the local community getting around the reserve
- f) develop a running/fitness course around the nature reserve
- g) develop hides in order that the community may better enjoy the reserve's bird and animal life

## Appendix 4

## Appendix 4

## Long Term (20-Year) Milestone plan

Year	Aim	Milestone
2007/8	1 2a/b/c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bird, owl and bat boxes deployed</li> <li>• Events programme on Wychall recreation area launched, e.g. bonfire night, summer fair, nature walks</li> </ul>
2008/9	5 1a 1 2 2b 2b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Popes Lane allotment ground managed</li> <li>• Reservoir dredged</li> <li>• Heronry established</li> <li>• Membership tops 200 households</li> <li>• Basic outdoor classroom established: 3 schools signed up</li> <li>• Cameras in selected breeding boxes deployed</li> </ul>
2009/10	2c 5 all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fitness track established</li> <li>• Green corridor through to the canal established</li> <li>• Dedicated Ranger employed</li> </ul>
2010/1		
2011/2		
2012/3		
2013/4		
2014/5		
2015/6		
2016/7		
2017/8		