

# Monken Hadley Common: Management Plan 2024- 2029

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This is the seventh in a series of Management Plans for Monken Hadley Common ('the Common'), dating from 1993. It is the first prepared under the oversight of Monken Hadley Common Trust which became owner of the freehold of the Common on 1 December 2022. It presents a detailed programme for the development and maintenance of the Common for the five years commencing 1 January 2024.

1.2 The common is a Metropolitan Common within the London Borough of Barnet in north London. It is an area of about 74 hectares (174 acres) of mixed grass and woodland situated near the northern edge of the borough. It is bounded at the western end by Monken Hadley Village and on the southern side by the residential area of New Barnet, both in the London Borough of Barnet. On its northern side it is bordered by the residential area of Hadley Wood in the London Borough of Enfield. The Common is a roughly wedge-shaped tract of land of about 2.5 kilometres (1.5 miles) long. It tapers from about 0.5 km (0.3 mile) wide at the broadest point at the western end near to Monken Hadley Church to only about 50 metres (160 feet) at the eastern end at Games Road, Cockfosters. (See map Appendix A).

1.3 The purpose of this plan is:

- To set out the principles, strategies, objectives and targets approved by the trustees that will inform the curators' day-to-day decisions on the management and maintenance of the common
- To explain how these principles, strategies, objectives and targets relate to and will be in accordance with and furtherance of the Trust's statutory objectives
- To set these in the context of performance in the delivery of the previous management plan for the Common, the financial outlook for the trust and the prospects for future membership and a risk management strategy for the Common
- To provide information on these matters to the Trust's members and prospective members, to stakeholders and to the general public.

## 2. The changing governance of the Common

2.1 The tract of land now known as Monken Hadley Common ('the Common') was originally a portion of the Royal Forest called Enfield Chase and was part of the Duchy of Lancaster Estates. The Common was created by the Enfield Chase Act of 1777. Under the terms of that Act it was held in trust by the churchwardens of Saint Mary the Virgin, Monken Hadley on behalf of the Commoners. Commoners held and still retain grazing rights, although these have not been exercised for many years and there is no longer a complete or authoritative register of those with rights of Common.

2.2 In accordance with the provisions of new legislation, the Monken Hadley Common Act 2022, Monken Hadley Common Trust, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, took over from the original trustees. The Commoners no longer play any part in the management of the Common. Most of the Common is registered under the Commons Registration Act 1965 and its status as a common was not affected by the recent change in the ownership of the land.

2.3 Under the terms of the 2022 Act and the Trust's constitution, the primary objects of the Trust are:

- The preservation of Monken Hadley Common as a place for peaceful open air public recreation and enjoyment; and
- The conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment of the Common for the benefit of the public, having regard to the requirements of good forestry and the desirability of conserving flora and fauna.

2.4 The Trust is a membership-based charity. It is the members who appoint the trustees. To this extent it is therefore they who will exercise significant control of it. However it is the trustees who are responsible for governance and managerial decisions.

2.5 Prior to the establishment of the new Trust the management and maintenance of the Common were generously supported by grants from a separate charity, the Friends of Hadley Common. As the Trust is a charitable membership-based body, it has been agreed that the Friends will be dissolved and that all its assets will be transferred to the Trust. This process is underway and members of the Friends who so wish are being admitted to membership of the Trust.

### **3. A profile of the Common**

3.1 Approximately 52 hectares (130 acres) of the Common are mixed semi-natural deciduous woodland with some open glades. The remainder is largely grassland with planted or selected trees.

3.2 Two roads cross the western part of the Common and a third road enters at the Cockfosters gate and runs for about 0.25 km. The roads are linked by a bridleway which forms part of the London Outer Orbital Path (the 'London Loop'). The Pymmes Brook Trail enters the Common at the Hadley Common Road gate and leaves at the bridleway south of Jack's Lake in the direction of East Barnet.

3.3 The Common is divided by the East Coast Main railway line, the two parts of the Common being linked by a bridge.

3.4 About 70% of Jack's Lake (named "Beech Hill Lake" on some maps) lies within the Common and is leased to the Hadley Angling and Preservation Society (HAPS). The remainder is owned by the neighbouring Hadley Wood Golf Club.

### **Present Usage**

3.5 Nowadays, usage of the Common is almost entirely recreational. Most visitors come to walk, run, cycle, exercise their dogs, picnic or simply quietly to enjoy the scenery. In the summer months cricket is played on a pitch at the western end of the Common (as it has been for nearly 200 years). This area is also used for sports activities by the two neighbouring schools. Fishing on Jack's Lake is regulated by Hadley Angling and Preservation Society (HAPS) which is licensed by the Trust for this purpose. A new 21-year licence was established in March 2023. Pedal cyclists and horse riders, as well as walkers, are permitted to use the bridle path which runs across the Common from Games Road to Bakers Hill. Cyclists and horse riders are not entitled to ride elsewhere on the Common, although some choose to do so. During the Covid pandemic the Common became an important place for outdoor exercise and reflection.

3.6 In recent years the Common has been increasingly used for commercial dog walking. The lack of effective powers to control this activity has been a matter of concern in the management of the Common. However Barnet Council's designation of a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) in 2022 should help the Trust in seeking to ensure adherence to good practice.

### **Conservation and environmental designations and relevant local authority planning policies**

3.7 *Barnet's Local Plan (Core Strategy) September 2012* contains the current local planning policies for the borough. Of particular relevance are policy CS5, which seeks to preserve and enhance conservation areas and areas of special character, and Policy CS7, which protects open spaces including green belt and sites of importance for nature conservation. In accordance with the statutory provisions for the Common the Trust will seek to ensure that these policies continue to be fully and properly applied to protect it from inappropriate development of any kind.

3.8 *Conservation* The whole of the Common lies within the Monken Hadley Conservation Area. The purpose of such designation is to help preserve and where possible enhance the area's special architectural and historic interest, and preserve its character and appearance. (For a detailed description of the Conservation Area see '*The Monken Hadley Conservation Area Character Appraisal 2007*', produced by the London Borough of Barnet).

3.9 *Tree Preservation* The woodland to the west of the railway line is protected by a Tree Preservation Order. Its conservation area status also provides protection to trees throughout the Common, as planning permission must normally be sought for the felling or pollarding of trees.

3.10 *Listed Buildings* The five white-painted wooden gates which stand at the main access points to the Common, in Games Road, Hadley Road, The Crescent, Camlet Way and Hadley Green Road, and which would have originally controlled access are all included on the statutory list of buildings of historic or architectural merit (Grade II) The war memorial situated near Camlet Way was added to the statutory list in 2017 (see *Statutory Listed Buildings of Barnet* produced by the London Borough of Barnet).

3.11 A number of other building and structures in the conservation area are included on the council's local list (this covers buildings considered to contribute to the character of an area but which do not merit statutory listings). These include the cattle pound by Hadley Common Road. This has in the past been rebuilt but its condition has unfortunately now deteriorated beyond repair. The Trust will consider fitting ways of marking its location.

3.12 The western half of the Common is classified as a *Site of Nature Conservation Importance - Borough Importance – Grade I* in recognition of its significance as a habitat for flora and fauna, (see *Barnet Local Plan Core Strategy*, map 11 and also *Nature Conservation in Barnet*, page 54: published by the London Ecology Unit (Ecology Handbook 28) 1997).

### **Other Designations**

3.13 An area either side of the railway line that bisects the woods is designated as a *Local Area of Special Archaeological Significance*. Some evidence of early settlement, including Bronze Age artefacts, has been found there (see *The Conservation Area Character Appraisal* produced by Barnet Council).

3.13 The Common has also been designated one of London's *Locally Important Geological Sites* following a study carried out in 2015 (see the *Guide to London Geological Sites* ref. GLA72 MHC LIGS). Most of the common lies on London Clay but on the high ground at the western end of the common, the clay is overlaid by Stanmore Gravel. There is a spring line at approximately the junction with the London Clay.

3.14 Although it is not primarily a nature reserve, in accordance with its primary objects, the Trust attaches considerable importance to wildlife conservation. It attempts to maintain a balance between this objective and other policy requirements. Within this context there remain valuable opportunities for the protection of a wide range of flora and fauna. In its ecological inspections prior to laying its new water main in 2020, Affinity Water identified a population of Great Crested Newts, a protected species, in the pond beside Hadley Common Road. A torchlight inspection by an expert with LB Barnet representatives in early 2023 revealed no signs of these newts or their eggs. Management of the pond however continues to comply with the requirements associated with their protected status.

3.15 Current management challenges include:

- *Maintaining the common, its habitats and ecology as an attractive, varied and safe location for recreation*. This challenge has become increasingly apparent over the last five years. The Common is affected by invasive species. The caterpillars of the Oak Processionary Moth, now endemic in SE England, cause damage to trees and their hairs, which can remain in the nests after the moths have flown away, can cause unpleasant skin, eye and throat irritations in people and animals. Periodic action is required to control Himalayan Balsam in one location. The pond beside Hadley Common Road is affected by Pygmy Weed and Parrot's Feather. It is likely that woodland on the Common will be increasingly affected by ash dieback. Extreme weather events- high winds and heavy rain- are causing damage to and falls of mature trees, necessitating an

increased use of tree surgeons to maintain the safety of well-used paths. Extended hot, dry periods result in an increased risk of fire. Open fires and barbecues are not permitted on the Common, but unauthorised fires are often set. These will smoulder for a prolonged period and may reignite. They can be very difficult to extinguish completely, as in many locations sources of water are not readily accessible.

- *Maintaining constructions and infrastructure on the Common in sound and serviceable condition.* The largest and most significant constructions on the Common are the weir, auxiliary sluice and embankment at the southern end of Jacks Lake. Work is required to service and repair the auxiliary sluice. A point of weakness and seepage in the embankment is being monitored by the Trust and by HAPS. Attempts at remediation in the summer of 2022 were unsuccessful. Minor repair works to the main weir are required. The white gates at the main entrances to the Common are subject to annual cleaning and cyclical repainting. They are however of timber and metal construction and, as listed constructions, will in future require skilled and expensive attention and repair. Benches and signposts require periodic cleaning, repair and recoating with preservative.
- *Responding to litter, fly-tipping and dumping.* Accumulations of litter and rubbish can quickly harm the character of the Common. Waste bins and dog bins are emptied by the local authority, which has also removed reported fly tipping promptly from a number of locations. However the Trust is responsible for the removal of litter and rubbish (both inorganic and organic) away from the roadsides. It will pursue action against identified perpetrators. The areas around Jacks Lake and Bakers Hill are particularly vulnerable, with occasional evidence of substance abuse and nocturnal anti-social behaviour.
- *Works by utility and service providers.* A number of providers of services for water, gas and electricity, as well as Network Rail need from time to time to access the Common to maintain or improve their infrastructure. These companies have statutory rights of access and appropriate wayleaves are in place. Such activity can impact on the appearance of the Common and the public's ability to access certain areas during the period of the works and subsequent remediation. The most significant recent example of this was the installation by Affinity Water in 2020 of a section of their Cockfosters resilience main across the Common from Camlet Way to King George's Playing Fields. In its interaction with service providers the Trust seeks to minimise the impact of any works on the Common, its flora and fauna and that any inconvenience or safety risks to users (including motorists) are well considered and adequately communicated. We stress the need to ensure full remediation of work sites upon completion. In cases in which it is necessary for trees to be felled, the Trust seeks replacement planting, if necessary at other sites on the Common

#### **4. The management structure of the Common**

The Trust currently has a board of six trustees. Prospective trustees will stand for election by members at Annual General Meetings of the Trust. In accordance with its Code of Governance the board has appointed to five roles (all of which are unremunerated):

- Two curators. The curators are responsible for the day-to-day management and upkeep of the Common and for recruiting, training and organising a team of conservation volunteers to carry out and support tasks and activities in accordance with the Management Plan and the Trust's primary objectives.
- Secretary. The secretary organises and minutes meetings of the board of trustees and provides legal advice to the board, including on matters of regulatory and statutory compliance and compliance with charitable objects, including data protection. The secretary ensures appropriate insurance cover for the Trust.
- Membership secretary. The Membership Secretary is responsible for managing the membership register, ensuring collection of subscriptions due and the recruitment of new members.
- Treasurer. The treasurer is responsible for budgeting, financial management and financial control and for the preparation of annual accounts in accordance with regulatory requirements.

#### **5. Management goals and priorities**

5.1 During the period of the previous Management Plan 2016/17- 2021/22 the then management committee identified nine key policy areas in order to achieve its overall aims and fulfil the responsibilities of the then trustees. These related to:

- *Health and safety.* High priority has been given to ensuring that the Common is a safe environment for all visitors as well as for conservation volunteers and contractors. However, as a matter of policy, unspoilt and natural woodland is retained in large areas of the Common; consequently, all visitors need to exercise appropriate caution, particularly during or after extreme weather conditions when seemingly healthy trees can fall and branches break. It should be noted that there are three areas within the boundary of the Common where others have responsibilities for health and safety:
  - Jack's Lake and its surrounds excluding the weir are with HAPS
  - two areas either side of the bridleway east and west of the railway bridge which are owned by Network Rail.
- *Preservation of common rights.* Although there has been no grazing or foraging on the Common for many years the Trust would engage with any stint holders with rights of common which are duly registered by the London Borough of Barnet as the Registration Authority pursuant to the Commons Registration Act 1965 (Register Unit CL43), to consider how their rights might reasonably be exercised.
- *Preservation of the landscape value.* Great importance has been attached to preserving and enhancing the landscape of the Common both in its historical context of a local grazing common and as a valuable open space in a suburban area. Woodland management has been seen as the most important long-term issue for maintaining the Common as a valuable community asset. A 10-year Woodland Management Plan by Simon Levy an arboriculturalist recommended by the Forestry Commission, finalised in 2016, will require review and updating during the period of this management plan.
- *Maintenance of the rural character.* The trustees have resisted any pressure for development which would tend to change the nature of the Common into that of an urban park.
- *Conservation of wildlife.* The Common is a Site of Conservation Importance. Although it is not primarily a nature reserve, considerable importance has been attached to wildlife conservation and attempts to maintain a balance between this objective and other policy objectives. By conserving the Common's variety of habitats there are valuable opportunities for the protection of a wide range of flora and fauna.
- *Encouragement of the traditional recreational activities.* The view has been taken that whilst it is a natural desire for participants in a wide range of recreational activities to use the Common for their particular purposes, in the small area available it is impossible to accommodate all desired activities. Priority has been given and is given to facilitating and enabling the range of quiet activities which have traditionally been pursued on the Common, including walking, running angling and cricket.
- *Encouragement of the use of the Common for educational purposes.* The grounds of three schools border directly onto the Common. A Forest School is licensed to operate on the Common. There is much scope for the use of the Common for educational purposes for all age groups. From time to time requests have been received and granted for information or facilities.
- *Recognition of the needs of people with disabilities.* Although the semi-natural character of the Common creates challenges it has been recognised as important that so far as is reasonably possible people with restricted mobility or physical or mental disabilities should be able to visit and enjoy the Common. This has involved maintaining ramped access to Jack's Lake, encouraging HAPS to continue to provide facilities for the disabled and ensuring that there is seating available at strategic points
- *Preservation of the integrity of the boundaries of the Common.* There is a danger that over time the boundaries of the Common may become eroded by creeping encroachments or by changes in land use. To prevent this, all leases and wayleaves are recorded and relevant sums due are collected. Expiring leases or wayleaves are renewed or the land reclaimed. Care has been taken to ensure accurate and complete registration under the Land Registration Act 1965 and The Commons Act 2006.

5.2 This set of objectives is consistent with the primary objectives of the Trust and its strategy and approach will build on and develop from these foundations. The work carried out since 2016, largely by volunteers in furtherance of these has supported the preservation, protection conservation and improvement of the Common as now set out in the 2022 Act. In particular: During the period of the previous plan a regular programme of maintenance repair and improvement work has continued, with a balance of planned and reactive activity. Most of this has been undertaken by conservation volunteers. However grass cutting and more challenging tree surgery and arboricultural activity have been outsourced to professional providers. (Activity was



scaled back during the period of Covid lockdowns and the regular activities of the volunteers were of necessity suspended, although with the agreement of the curators several volunteers on their own or working in pairs did undertake tasks such as removing fallen trees and branches from footpaths).

5.3 This programme has included

- Grass cutting
- Clearance of ditches and watercourses
- Reducing or felling dead and diseased trees
- Control of invasive species (including holly and in one location Himalayan Balsam)
- Reduction of brambles near paths and path width maintenance, particularly in summer
- Pond maintenance
- Watering of saplings during periods of low rainfall
- Cleaning and periodic repainting of the five sets of white gates
- Repairs to the surface of the Bakers Hill car park
- Maintenance of sleeper bridges across ditches and watercourses in the woodlands.

5.4 Significant improvements and enhancements over the period have included:

- Resurfacing in spring 2023 of the gravel path beside Hadley Common Road. This work was originally requested by the Friends of Monken Hadley Common and a grant was made by the Friends to cover the cost. This has improved the access path to King George's Playing Fields.
- Wooden bollards were installed in April 2023 along western edge of the Common east of the church in an effort to reduce encroachment onto the Common by parked or moving vehicles
- The banks of an unsuccessful pond in the woodland north of Bakers Hill were breached to create a new better-drained area in which two water courses meet, replacing part of the former avenue of horse chestnuts trees between the war memorial and Monken Hadley Primary School with appropriate disease resistant saplings. (It is likely that most of the remaining horse chestnut will fail within the next few years).

5.5 The local authority has provided litter and dog waste bins in several places on or adjacent to the Common which are emptied regularly. The collection of litter from other areas has continued to be a task for volunteers and members of the public acting on their own initiative. Litter problems were most acute during the period that the Common experienced increased footfall during Covid lockdowns. Dumping from adjoining gardens and fly tipping from vehicles driven to the location specifically, is a periodic nuisance - Barnet Council has responded promptly to larger incidents of fly tipping, removing rubbish from the roadside and the Bakers Hill car park once these have been reported.

5.6 Looking ahead, factors influencing the plan over the five years to 2029 include:

- *Footfall* Across the Common visitor numbers seem to have returned to pre-Covid levels. There are no factors or trends currently obvious that would lead to significant increases or decreases in the next five years. However, it is possible that if the number of members of the Trust increase we will receive an increase in queries and suggestions with a consequent dialogue about issues relating to the Common.
- *Climate* Some extremely dry summers, high winds and heavy rainfall are having an impact on some of the Common's older trees. This has resulted in some dropped boughs and trees showing signs of distress. Those close to paths or neighbouring property are subject to monitoring in an effort to ensure appropriate early action is taken, either by the volunteers or professionals, although falls are difficult to predict. An increased reliance on professional tree surgeons will unfortunately be costly. Where it is relatively safe to do so dead trees are left standing to provide habitats for birds and insects.
- *Oak Processionary Moth* This invasive species continues to be a matter for concern, thankfully so far in specific areas of the Common e.g. the west and eastern ends and to the south of the lake. Nests were first identified on oak trees on the Common in 2018. Until 2022 the trustees were required to report sightings of OPM caterpillars or their nests to the Forestry Commission and then arrange for the nests to be removed by specialist contractors. This is no longer a legal requirement as OPMs have now become established in woodlands throughout London. Nevertheless the curators have continued to arrange for the volunteers to carry out nest spotting surveys in late May- June in parts of the Common which are well used by the public and near

local schools. Arrangements are then made to have nests removed professionally where it is considered necessary (e.g. from infected trees near the local schools). The curators are monitoring the approach to the management of this problem being taken by landowners in London and the South East.

- *Condition of Jack's Lake* During the spring of 2021 an area of wet ground was seen below the south eastern corner of Jack's Lake, beyond the embankment. The Environment Agency was immediately informed and arrangements were put in place in conjunction with HAPS to monitor the leak. A specialist reservoir engineer David Littlemore of Stillwater Associates, was appointed and following visits a report was provided, which included an assessment and recommendations. These recommendations have been followed (the reduction of nearby vegetation and small trees, regular trimming of the spillway.) The situation is being monitored.
- *Value for money* To enable it to respond effectively and rapidly to issues and problems that arise the Trust is grateful for the service it receives from a relatively small number of professionals and contractors who understand its aims and objectives and the character of the Common and have provided good service. The Curators will however look for opportunities to expand this group and will seek competitive quotations for major items. They will on occasions market test smaller jobs to ensure that value-for-money is achieved.

5.7 Key priorities and proposed goals and activities to 2029 will include:

- *New regulations* The introduction and establishment of a new set of regulations for the Common, to complement the expectations already set out in the borough-wide Public Spaces Protection Order 2022. The Trust consulted on a draft set of regulations in 2023. Once the regulations are confirmed by DEFRA, the Trust will pursue enforcement action in the event of serious and/or repeated breaches
- *Land registration* The title to and ownership of the land is registered under the **Land Registration Act 1925** (as amended). Partly since the last management plan was prepared, small parcels have been added to the land originally registered in 2014. The only outstanding issue is adjusting the boundary with Network Rail. With Network Rail's agreement the application to amend was lodged with HMLR in April 2022. It has still not completed the adjustment.
- *Boundary management* The fact that the land is a common is registered under the **Commons Registration Act 1965**. Whilst there is now considered to be no risk of any land on the Common being annexed or unlawfully occupied, the Trust needs to remain vigilant to identify any physical incursions or actions by neighbouring property owners that would impact upon the amenity or character of the Common.
- *Conservation volunteering* The continuation of a programme of cyclical activities as outlined above and as itemised in Annex B. At the moment no material changes are envisaged from the current approach. Two working party sessions for conservation volunteers occur each week on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. This approach will be kept under review in consultation with the volunteers, if needs or resources change. Most volunteers are above the age of retirement and the Trust needs to ensure that volunteering is an attractive, realistic and worthwhile option for members of the local community of all ages, backgrounds and capabilities.
- *Jack's Lake* Continued monitoring will be needed of the condition of the weir at Jack's Lake. Further minor repairs will be undertaken during any low water periods, presumably in the summer. The Trust will continue to commission an inspection of the lake by a qualified engineer every ten years. As the last full inspection was in 2014 a new inspection would have been due in 2024. However, in view of the recent inspection and report by Stillwater Associates following the discovery of the leak and the subsequent visit by representatives of the Environment Agency it is propose to defer a further full inspection until 2025.
- *Bridges* Upgrading of wooden sleeper bridges across ditches in some locations on the Common. Some of these have become rather worn out and at least one new bridge seems necessary (adjoining Arundel Road).
- *Car park* Improvement of the surface of the Bakers Hill car park, particularly at its entrance, to encourage motorists to park there rather than along the roadside. We will also consider whether to replace existing wooden bollards in poor condition and additional wooden bollards along the northern verge of Bakers Hill and in other locations to reduce damage to verges and encroachment into the woods by vehicles.

5.8 The Trust will over the period of this plan seek to engage with relevant local authorities and neighbouring property owners to identify opportunities for partnership working to improve the Common and access to it. This includes:

- *Regulation* Liaising with LB Barnet to ensure appropriate and proportionate application and enforcement of the Public Spaces Protection Order 2022.
- *Flooding alleviation* To continue negotiations with LB Enfield in order to finalise an agreement over its longstanding plans to divert surface water from Parkgate Avenue and Parkgate Crescent to create a new wetland area on the Common. The scheme, to relieve flooding in the gardens of houses nearby, would be wholly within the Common and consequently requires the approval of the Trust. Surface water run-off would be discharged via a new pipeline into a shallow basin on the Common from which it would flow into the existing ditch near the alleyway from Parkgate Crescent. A low embankment (or “bund”) would be constructed around the site into which rain water would be directed to allow it slowly to drain and soak away. This area of the Common currently becomes waterlogged after periods of heavy rain. A new footpath would be laid along the top of the bund to improve conditions for walkers. It is understood that a small number of trees would need to be removed to construct the scheme. The Trust would require replacements to be planted elsewhere on the Common. The scheme would be entirely funded by LB Enfield Council in conjunction with Thames Water and it will be their responsibility to obtain the necessary statutory approvals. LB Enfield has applied to LB Barnet for planning permission for this scheme. Aside from the benefits to local residents, it is considered that the scheme has the potential to improve what is one of the less attractive and inaccessible parts of the Common. If it progresses the Trust will monitor the delivery of the project and will on completion consider the results of LB Enfield’s proposed long-term monitoring of tree health in the area affected by the scheme.
- *Easing of traffic congestion* To consider in the context of the Trust’s principal objects any plans that may be proposed by the two schools at the western end of the Common for new coach parking arrangements to reduce traffic congestion on Camlet Way during school set-down and pick-up periods.
- *Bin provision* To encourage the provision by LB Barnet of some additional waste bins and dog-waste bins at appropriate locations and to liaise with HAPS about the installation of improved litter bins at Jacks Lake.
- *Boundaries and access* To identify opportunities to improve, replace or create boundary fencing, gates and stiles in some areas. This would include measures to prevent unauthorised vehicular access at the Northfield Road passageway.
- *Maintenance of adjoining public spaces* To encourage LB Barnet to improve its maintenance of the land bordering the access path to the Common beside JCOS School.
- *Maintenance of white gates.* The Trust will seek expert advice on cost-effective ways of treating some rotten timber in the five sets of white gates in order to improve their appearance and prolong their life.
- *Benches* To replace the bench close to the entrance to the Common at Games Road. In recent years the Common has benefited from the installation of some memorial benches funded by bereaved families. Sites for further benches that would not impact on the attempt to maintain the Common’s semi-natural character are now limited. The Trust would welcome funding for a new bench to replace the one near the eastern entrance to the Common, which is in poor condition.
- *Concerts and events* To support and encourage further small summer classical concerts at Jack’s Lake. It is envisaged that these would be similar in scale and character to those staged successfully in the last three years. The Trust’s approval of any larger scale events in this location or elsewhere on the Common would be dependent on it being satisfied that they would not disturb the character of the Common or the general rights of public access to all areas and would be dependent on evidence of appropriate event organisation and resourcing.
- *Tree planting* To support small scale planting of trees on the Common. In 2022 and 2023 the Trust accepted a total of some 60 saplings, planted by teams from Barnet U3A. These were native British deciduous varieties that were likely to be able to adapt to changing climate conditions. This formed part of an initiative to plant a tree within the borough for every U3A member. The U3A teams have accepted responsibility for tending and watering these until they become established. The Trust will seek to identify suitable locations for further planting in future years to continue to support this programme. To maintain the character of the Common these would need to border on existing wooded areas and avoid encroaching on grassland.
- *Protection of Jack’s Lake* To consider any plans that HAPS may develop to deter poaching of fish stock or acts of vandalism at Jack’s Lake.
- *Support for educational activities and research* To continue to encourage educational activities on the Common. The Trust has issued a licence to a forest school which meets on the Common. It supports the use of the Common by its neighbouring schools and welcomes study visits,



activities and research by students, schools and colleges. It will seek to support well-conducted archeological and historical research. It will seek to respond positively to detectorists provided prior permission is sought.

- *Church House* To continue to liaise with St Mary the Virgin, Monken Hadley about any of its plans for the renovation or replacing of Church House that may impact upon the Common.
- *Anniversary celebrations 2027* will mark the 250th anniversary of the creation of the Common. The Trust will consider with members and other interested parties appropriate ways of celebrating this milestone. This may include consideration of how best to mark the location of the pound.

5.9 Currently the Trust has no proposals for the period of this plan for:

- Any arrangements to support the reinstatement of any grazing or foraging on the Common
- The introduction or reintroduction of any new species of flora or fauna on the Common
- Any large scale programme of tree planting on the Common. Whilst the Trust is mindful of the government's objectives for planting more trees, it considers it right to maintain the mixed character of the habitats and appearance of the Common. Large scale planting would only be considered in the event of significant deforestation or evidence that the woodland was demonstrating a failure to regenerate.
- The commercial extraction of timber from the Common. Fallen trees will be sawed and piled up if they are impeding access, but all wood is left on the Common to decompose.
- The rebuilding of the Cattle Pound. The pound is in an advanced state of disrepair. Nowadays, with increased traffic, it is poorly located for safe and convenient pedestrian access. Options for the pound include leaving as is, tidying the area, removal of the remaining structure re-building or the installation of some signage. Research and consultation would be required prior to any rebuild programme to avoid a pastiche and funding would need to be secured both for the initial work and subsequent maintenance.

5.10 As part of its risk management strategy, the Trust has established and will maintain a risk register for the Common, which takes account of its governance arrangements, the full range of its activities, goals and priorities, its financial position and outlook and the environmental and other factors which may affect the condition, the sustainability and the safety of the Common

## 6. Financial status and strategy

### Financial position

6.1 MHCT is currently in sound financial health. Despite the substantial legal cost associated with the preparation and passage of the Monken Hadley Common Bill, over £100,000 incurred between early 2019 and late 2022, MHCT inherited from its antecedent organisation, an investment portfolio with a market value of £170,000 (November 2022) and a modest bank balance. Due to the generosity of the Friends of Hadley Common, the bank balance now stands at £16,000, albeit that the value of its investments has declined to £155,000 (June 2023). It has no significant or imminent liabilities or financial commitments and can therefore be confident of maintaining a healthy financial position for the foreseeable future. The Trust will benefit from a recent legacy payment of £10,000 within the next six months.

6.2 It is anticipated that the Friends of Hadley Common will be wound up as a separate entity within the next 12 months and their assets transferred to MHCT. The Friends had total assets of £16,000 as at April 2022, although since then they have donated almost £13,000 to MHCT, leaving a small residual cash balance to be transferred.

### Income and expenditure

6.3 MHCT sources its income in following ways:

- *Membership subscriptions and donations.* The Friends have traditionally sought financial support in this way, generating between £3,000 and £4,000 annually. A membership secretary has been appointed by the MHCT trustees and it is anticipated that a good number of the Friends' previous supporters will transfer their patronage to MHCT and that, with renewed energy and purpose, the Trust can build a stronger membership cohort and rely on it more significantly for financial support.
- *Rents and wayleaves.* MHCT receives payments from a number of neighbouring properties for the benefit of limited access across the common. Most of these are regular annual payments. It

also receives occasional one-off payments from adjacent residents, schools and utility companies that are negotiated individually. The average annual income from this source for the last five years is around £4,000, though the guaranteed regular income is around £1,400 of this total.

- *Parking, filming and other donations.* Income from these sources is wholly unpredictable and can vary in a year from as little as £1,000 to over £10,000.
- *Investment income.* The Trust's portfolio typically yields between 2% and 3% of dividend and other income in a year. This has generated close to £4,000 in the past when our portfolio value was greater and markets performing strongly. The current yield expectation is 2.2%, which should generate at least £3,400 income, albeit that the management charges are c£2,000 per annum.

6.4 Regular expenditure typically runs at between £11,000 and £16,000 each year. This covers costs associated with the direct management of the common - grass cutting, forestry, lake/pond maintenance, equipment repairs/replacement, expenses for the curators and volunteer group. It also includes necessary costs in operating the charity including insurance, investment management and modest administrative costs. In addition to the regular expenditure, there will be exceptional costs for work on the common, planned or otherwise, that is either one-off or occurring relatively infrequently. It would be prudent, based on past experience, to assume a further £3,000 to £5,000 for such items.

### Projections and targets

6.5 A five-year forward view of the receipts and payments may therefore look as follows:

	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Receipts</b>					
Membership subscriptions & donations	2,000	3,500	5,000	6,500	8,000
Rents & wayleaves	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000
Parking, filming, other	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
Investment income	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	3,500
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>12,500</b>	<b>14,000</b>	<b>15,500</b>	<b>17,000</b>	<b>18,500</b>
<b>Payments</b>					
Regular expenditure	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000
Exceptional expenditure	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>19,000</b>	<b>19,000</b>	<b>19,000</b>	<b>19,000</b>	<b>19,000</b>
<b>Excess of payments over receipts</b>	<b>6,500</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>3,500</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>500</b>
<b>Assets</b>					
Investments	155,000	155,000	155,000	155,000	155,000
Bank	12,500	7,500	4,000	2,000	1,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>167,500</b>	<b>162,000</b>	<b>159,000</b>	<b>157,000</b>	<b>156,500</b>

6.6 These projections assume the value of our investments remains unchanged and that the Trust is able to build the membership income steadily from £2,000 to £8,000 within five years. The

pattern of receipts and payments will not be as uniform as illustrated here. The projections assume that the annual excess of payments over receipts is met from the balance of cash in the bank, though the trustees could choose to meet the exceptional expenditure by accessing cash from the investment portfolio.

6.7 In conclusion, the Trust can reasonably aim for its receipts to cover the cost of regular expenditure within three years and to match total expenditure within five years, and that this can be achieved without materially reducing the value of its assets. The trustees could consider setting and monitoring these as key financial goals. In addition the Trust will investigate potential sources of financial support for any significant projects or items of expenditure.

### **Financial risks**

6.8 The primary financial risks to which MHCT is exposed are as follows:

- *Major unplanned exceptional cost* – it is hard to conceive of a need that is of such a significant scale that it could threaten the Trust's ongoing viability. It has good insurance coverage in place, a well-managed organisation and substantial asset value. The antecedent organisation was able to absorb an exceptional cost in excess of £100,000, albeit over 3-4 years.
- *Sustained decline in irregular income* – this was experienced during the Covid pandemic when receipts from parking, filming and other events dried up. The organisation does not place a high level of reliance on this source of income.
- *Failure to build membership income* – the Trust should be confident about its ability to increase membership numbers and support but the pace at which this can be achieved is unknown. There is action that it can take, and is taking, to put resource and effort behind this endeavour.
- *Loss in the value of our investments* – the Trust does not rely on the value of its investments rising in real terms and there is always a risk that they can decline, as it has experienced recently. Its investment target is to produce a certain level of income and preserve capital value in real terms. It manages its investments in a diverse portfolio that spreads risk and with a 'medium risk balanced' profile. The trustees should review regularly the balance of assets held between cash and investments from a risk and liquidity perspective, as well as monitoring the investment manager's performance.

### **7. Membership strategy**

7.1 To date the focus of the Trust with respect to membership has been to encourage and arrange for members of the Friends to transfer their membership to the new body, with the aim of completing their admission by the end of October 2023. At the end of August 2023 the Trust had 59 members. A new membership secretary was appointed in July 2023 and the Trust has started to look initially for relatively straightforward opportunities to expand its membership:

- By encouraging its conservation volunteers to join
- By distributing flyers at the summer classical concerts at Jack's Lake
- By advising people who express an interest in the Common of the opportunities to join
- By preparing a leaflet for house-to-house distribution in the local area.

7.2 The Trust recognises the importance of raising its profile and identity in the local community in order to attract new members. This is likely to include establishing a presence at some of the regular community events and an attractive, engaging and informative on-line presence.

## Annex A

### Management areas of the Common

For management purposes the Common has been subdivided into ten 'Management Areas' as depicted on the maps at the end of the document. These are:

A. *The War Memorial Area*. Lying north-west of Camlet Way this area is comparatively formal and contains, besides the village war memorial, an avenue of mixed Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus Hippocastanum*) and English Oak (*Quercus Robur*). A small part of the area is used by Monken Hadley Church of England Primary School under licence by the Trustees as an extension to its playground.

- In dry weather and at the discretion of the Curators this area is used for car parking for events such as weddings and funerals at the Church, cricket matches and school events.
- The grass in this area is cut once or twice a year, the first cut normally being in July.
- The Horse Chestnuts in the avenue have not done well and other appropriate native species are planted to replace those that die, with a view to re-establishing the avenue as a significant feature of the Common.
- The maintenance of the War Memorial is not the responsibility of the Common but the grass mound is kept cut.
- The undergrowth and scrub at the back of the area masks the fence (which is not a boundary fence) and will be retained. It is cut back as necessary.

B. *The Cricket Pitch Area*. Immediately east of Camlet Way is an area of open grassland with some planted or selected trees part of which is used by Monken Hadley Cricket Club. This area is classified as relict heath and is botanically very rich and includes an area of acid grassland. It is also the most conspicuous area of the Common.

- The area is subject to encroachment by the neighbouring woodland and self-seeded silver birch. This is controlled manually and by mowing.
- The cricket pitch and outfield are maintained by the cricket club having regard to their needs and those of other users of the Common.
- The pond opposite Gladsmuir is spring fed. It was last emptied, fully cleaned and de-silted in 2009. Invasive de-oxygenating weeds have also been periodically removed by the Volunteers and excess vegetation was removed by a mechanical digger in 2009. The pond will continue to be given regular attention during the period covered by this Management Plan. The pond in Camlet Way does not have a reliable feed, but is periodically cleared. As part of its environmental enhancement programme following the laying of the Cockfosters Resilience Main, Affinity Water paid for some marginal planting on the pond banks.

C. *The West Wood*. East of area B is an area of deciduous woodland sloping gradually towards the railway. Growth in this large wood is vigorous.

- The canopy is largely composed of Common Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), English Oak (*Quercus Robur*), Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), Common Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Cherry (*Prunus avium*), Field Maple (*Acer campestre*) and Willow (*Salixfragilis*). It also contains specimens, presumably planted, of Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*), Balsam Poplar (*Populus balsamifera*) and Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*).
- Sections of this area have heavy concentrations of Sycamore (*Acerpseudoplatanus*).
- Where light levels allow there is dense undergrowth including holly, brambles, elder, blackthorn and hawthorn. Some of the holly and hawthorn are fair sized trees. There are also suckers of English Elm (*Ulmus procera*) from trees killed by Dutch elm disease but these succumb to the disease before reaching maturity.

D. *Area alongside Bakers Hill*. This is a more open area where there is a car park and adjacent picnic area.

- The grass to the south of Bakers Hill is cut twice a year
- The surface of the car park will need to be maintained
- The 'picnic area' across the road from the car park will be kept clear of encroaching trees, brambles etc.
- Dumped rubbish will be cleared away as quickly as possible
- Barnet Council will be asked to maintain the height barrier in good repair.

E. *Newmans Hill*. Lying east of the railway line, this rise is covered with deciduous woodland which is generally better drained than the other woodland areas of the Common.

F. *The East Wood*. As the ground slopes down from Newmans Hill to the east, two gas mains (one redundant) and an electricity main cross under the Common from north to south. These require periodic maintenance by the utility companies, including ensuring that infrastructure is not damaged by tree roots. If it becomes necessary to fell trees for this reason the Trust will seek replacement planting at another location on the Common. The woodland is again poorly drained further east.

G. *'The Plantation'*. This area to the south of the East Wood is not actually a plantation but an area which was formerly grazing land that is now covered by semi-mature oaks which have been thinned to enable better specimens to develop. South of the bridleway the land was planted with hornbeam, oak and other species to screen an unattractive view.

H. *Jacks Lake*. The major part of Jacks Lake lies within the Common: the remainder is owned by Hadley Wood Golf Club. The lake and its immediate surroundings are maintained under a licence granted by The Trustees to the Hadley Angling and Preservation Society (HAPS). A new 21 year licence was issued in March 2023. HAPS is responsible for maintaining the banks and immediate surrounds of the lake. Responsibility for the maintenance and repair of the dam, weir and sluices lies with the Trustees.

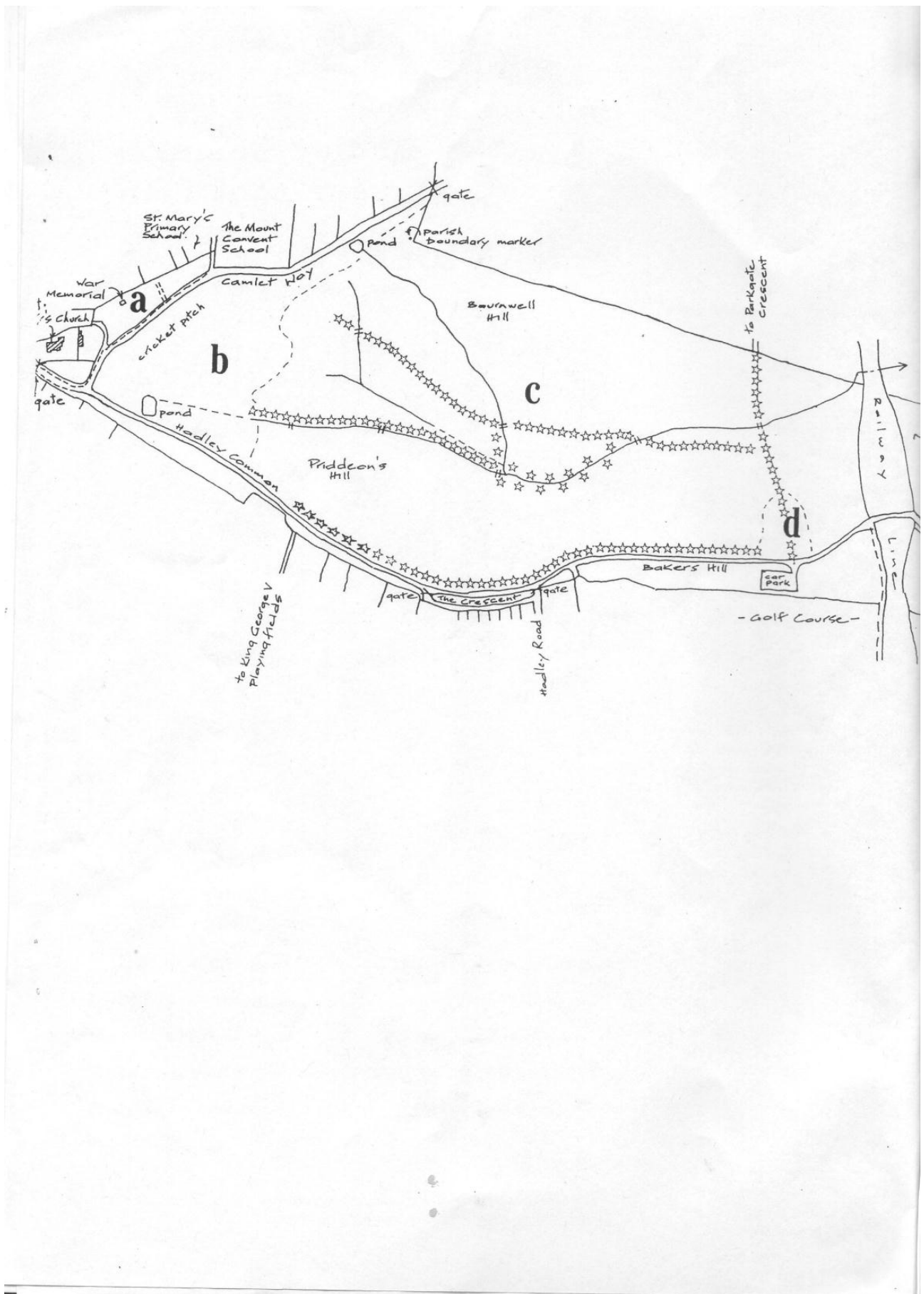
I. *Games Road Wood*. East of the Lake a narrow area of deciduous woodland rises towards Cockfosters.

J. *Games Road*. Bordering the road is a small area of grassland with a small number of trees.

- Grass is cut as needs dictate to maintain a transition between the suburban area and the woodland
- Bulbs already planted in this area by local residents will be retained but further planting will not be encouraged.
- Low hanging branches of trees will be removed to encourage the growth of grass and to maintain its appearance as an open area.



# Common Management Areas A to D



# Common Management areas E to J

