

One Horse Field
Annual Report
April 2021 – March 2022



Produced for Totland Parish Council



Overview

It has been another busy year for the Gift to Nature team. The Covid Pandemic has highlighted the value of our sites, being important to local neighbourhoods by providing free to use access to the natural environment and open green spaces.

Whilst we are pleased with the feedback we receive, and the support provided by our many volunteers, we continually strive to improve and enhance the sites whilst ensuring the very best environmental practices are maintained. Your support and feedback are greatly appreciated.

As the current custodians of these special and important sites their increased usage is welcomed but not without challenges. We have seen a noticeable increase in the incidences and range of anti-social behaviour, which now requires increased ranger time to address.

It is not our approach to restrict or to try to control how the Gift to Nature sites are used but we do try to inform and influence good behaviour and environmental best practice. In this respect we have recently launched a new project called Reaching Communities – please see later.

In the coming year we will continue our work to protect and enhance the Gift to Nature sites for the benefit of all.

Report – One Horse Field

Activity 04/21 – 03/22	Comments
Site visits including litter pick	15 separate occasions
Grass cutting/strimming	5 separate occasions
Tree pruning/felling	1 full day spent doing so
Youth camp clean up	Damaged scrub tidied up and party litter removed
Viewpoint clean up	Party litter removed and fire site doused with water
Fly-tipped waste	Tipping of grass cuttings onto site; spoke to homeowner
Contractor meadow cut	Martin Eason with tractor mounted flail
Green Gym session	Raking and removing contractor cut grass from meadow

One Horse Field has been audited for accessibility by Isle Access to help inform our 2022/3 site activity plan.

Planned Activities 2022/23 – One Horse Field

The management regime at One Horse Field will remain broadly unchanged with every effort made to attend to the site as efficiently as possible. In protecting and enhancing the site for the benefit of all its users, both human and otherwise, we need to strike a delicate balance: -

1. Site checks will continue to be made regularly to ensure that One Horse Field is a safe and welcoming place to visit. Site infrastructure and trees will be inspected and litter will be collected and taken away. The condition of the two interpretation boards and the wire art pillar in the SE corner of the site is very poor; we ask that you consider allowing us to remove them from site, or preferably we would welcome the opportunity to work with you to replace them.
2. Management works will be timed and undertaken sensitively to ensure that whenever possible our efforts do not compromise the value of the site for its associated flora and fauna. We will keep the established grass footpaths and the meadow cut and neat, whilst also protecting the wildflowers that are so valuable to wildlife and enjoyed by many site users.
3. As mentioned in the Activity table above, we employ a contractor to rotationally cut the meadow every year, followed by a number of ranger and volunteer sessions to remove the grass cuttings from the meadow. Removal of the cuttings is an important step in the management of a wildflower meadow as it prevents a build-up of nutrients, keeping the soil relatively infertile, which is favoured by wildflowers over the grasses and weeds, which prefer a nutrient rich topsoil. Most wildflower meadows will be cut in August but due to a healthy population of slow-worms at One Horse Field we delay this cutting until November when the slow-worms will be safely tucked away in hibernation. Slow-worms are protected from harm by law and give birth to live young between mid-August and late September.
4. Keeping the site 'tidy' and useable can be achieved whilst maintaining its wild value; a variety of habitat (for example closely mown grass footpath edged by medium length grass, itself edged by long grass before a transition into brambles or nettles or a hedgerow) is in many cases 'better' for wildlife than either a completely wild or excessively managed area. This is where the training and experience (general and site specific) of the ranger team will be of most value.

Reaching Communities

In support of our aim to make all our sites more accessible and fulfilling we have secured funding from The National Lottery to run a project called Reaching Communities.

An important first step has been the appointment of a Gift to Nature Engagement Officer who will working with local groups, developing and delivering a range of activities and volunteering opportunities. We are keen to make our sites available to everyone to enjoy.

With regards to One Horse Field and Totland Parish Council our Reaching Communities activities will include:

- Contact with the Parish Council to discuss the opportunities to engage with local groups and organisations
- Design and production of I Spy activity sheet, colouring sheet, audio guide for visually impaired people, map of the site and a site information sheet
- Installation of an Activity Pillar on site, from which the above can be downloaded to mobile phones
- Enhancement of the Gift to Nature website pages for One Horse Field to include the above

In addition, we will be including One Horse Field in a geocaching project across all our sites, and within a site wide 'Bugging Game.'

We will also be linking clusters of Gift to Nature sites within a series of suggested walks and cycle rides which will be promoted in a leaflet and will be downloadable.

Ongoing engagement with Totland Parish Council

We hope you will engage with our Reaching Communities project.

If you so wish, please also create links to the following pages on the Gift to Nature website:

- <https://gifttonature.org.uk/discover/the-wild-west-wight/one-horse-field/>

In view of important role the natural environment plays within a community's health and wellbeing we are looking to increase our portfolio of sites and we will welcome suggestions to this effect.

Gallery

