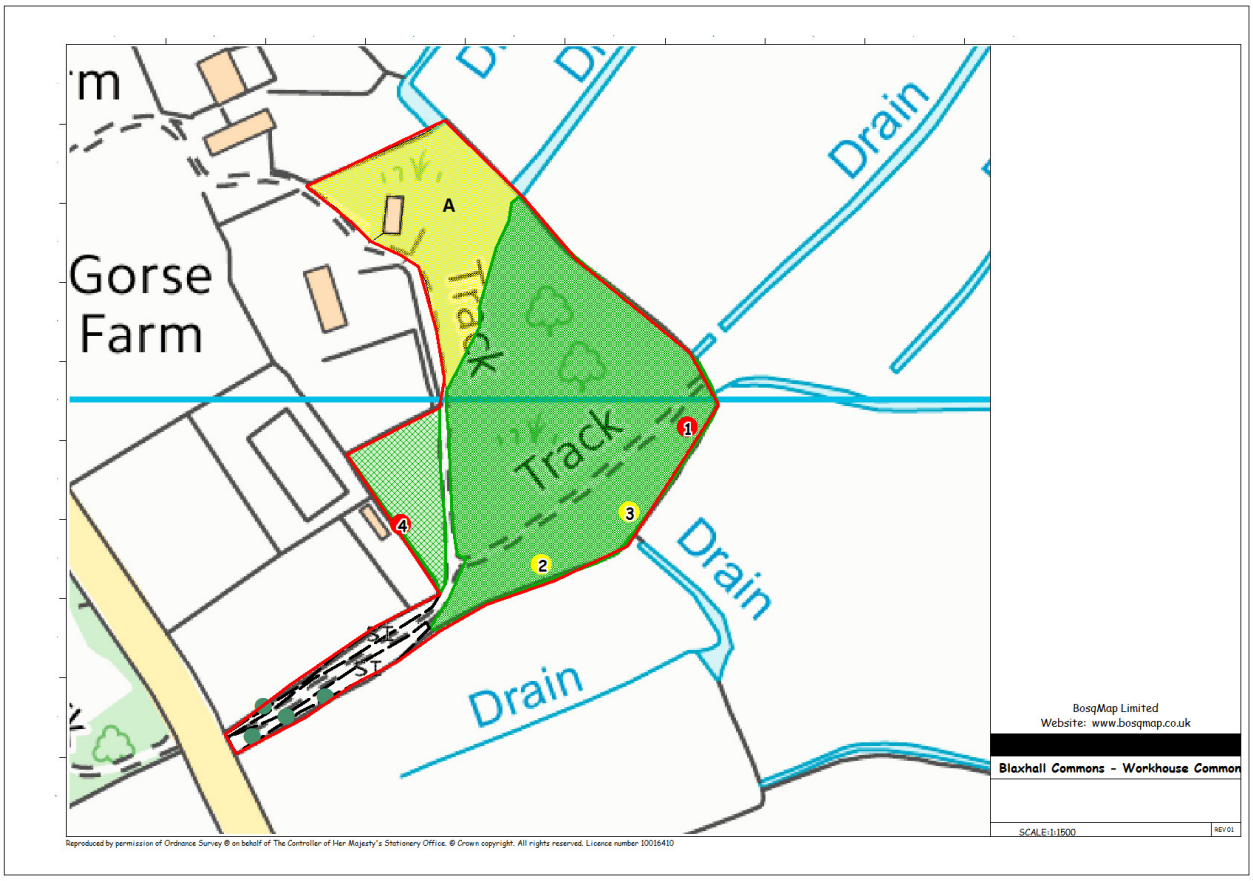
Site name: Workhouse Common

Site status: Registered common land
Grid ref: TM 36301 58004
Area: 1.8 ha
Date: 13th March 2017
Recorder: S. Bullion & J. Crighton
Weather conditions: Wispy cloud, sunny, 11°C
Biodiversity value: Medium - High

Map:



Photos:

View looking east through the site, showing fallen dead wood and mature trees

Veteran oak with crevices and cracks suitable for bats and nesting birds

Veteran oak west of the driveway

Habitat type(s):
Broad-leaved woodland, dense continuous scrub, wet ditch

Subsidiary habitats:
Fallen and standing dead wood, mature and veteran oak trees

Site description:
The site lies east of Farnham Road and south of the railway, approximately 875m north west of the village center. Although formerly open common, Workhouse Common is now an area of successional mature oak woodland and contains some areas of gorse scrub and hazel coppice (TN 1). It is bordered by a wet ditch on the south and east boundary. It is approached along a narrow track leading up to Gorse Farm, with a second track splitting off in a north-easterly direction through the wooded area of the site, towards grazing marshes beyond. The northern section of the site is incorporated into the garden of the owner at Gorse Farm; it is regularly mown and maintained as lawn, with some willows to the eastern boundary bordering the wet ditch. There is a section of very dense bramble scrub on the western boundary of the site, west of the track to the rear of some stables (which are situated outside of the Common boundary). The site contains some notable veteran oak trees (TN 2,3 & 4), particularly on the south-eastern edge, where they represent a potential former hedge line, but also on the western side of the site.

Protected species seen or known:
European otter and European Water Vole have been recorded in the River Ore to the north of this site (1996-2007).

Protected species potential:
Bats

Priority habitats present:
Broad-leaved woodland

Priority species seen or known:
-

Priority species potential:
Common toad, white letter hairstreak butterfly, stag beetle

Connectivity:
This site has relatively good connectivity with a network of vegetated wet ditches providing wildlife corridors to the east and south. There are also several hedgerows connected to the site and the railway to the north provides an excellent wildlife corridor across the wider countryside.

Structural diversity:
Workhouse common has good structural diversity, albeit limited by the small size of the site. The tall trees, scrubby understorey and ditches provide a range of habitats for a variety of taxonomic groups,

Flora:
The mature woodland consisted mainly of oak, but had a block of mature hazel in the south-east corner. The ground flora is mainly dominated by bracken and nettle, which have died back throughout the winter months. The boundaries comprise stands of bramble, gorse and hawthorn, and there are also some gorse thickets bordering the "garden" area. The dense scrub in the west of the site is comprised of leggy elder, dense bramble and bracken with two ancient oaks along the fence line. Elm was noted along the approach track.

Avifauna:
The dense bramble scrub and mature trees provide good opportunities for nesting birds, including spring migrant species. A tree creeper, robin and a flock of long-tailed tits were seen on site during the survey. The veteran oaks with cracks, crevices and rot holes provide ideal nesting opportunities for tree creepers and other hole-nesting birds (TN 2& 3).

Invertebrates:
This site is likely to support a good range of invertebrates with plenty of deadwood, both standing and fallen. The diversity of habitats on site, including a substantial number of mature, native trees should provide a high terrestrial invertebrate biomass and diversity; complemented by other aquatic invertebrate species associated with the wet ditches. Oak trees support a particularly high insect biomass. Many spiders were noted on site and a brimstone butterfly was seen during the survey (an

early-flying species). Elm within the site could support white letter hairstreak butterfly, a UK Priority species.

Herpetofauna:

The fallen deadwood throughout the site could provide a refuge or over-wintering site for reptiles and amphibians. In particular, common toad (UK Priority Species) and also frog and common newt are likely to be present in the surrounding ditches and the woodland provides good hibernation and terrestrial habitat opportunities. Stag beetle may be present if there is subterranean deadwood suitable for their larvae.

Mammals:

There are several mature/ancient oak trees with high bat roosting potential (TN 2 & 3), with cracks, crevices and peeling bark and the adjacent grazing marshes provide excellent foraging habitat. This site is especially suitable for bat species which favour roosting in such places, including barbastelle, noctule, Daubenton's and natterers bats.

Common species of mammal such as fox, rabbit, muntjac deer and fallow deer are likely to forage on this site. Small mammals such as mice, voles and shrews are also likely to be present in the rough grassland areas and scrub on the boundaries of the site. Hedgehog may also be present as the presence of both woodland and grassland provides excellent shelter/hibernation and foraging opportunities, although this species is becoming increasingly scarce.

Comments and recommendations for management:

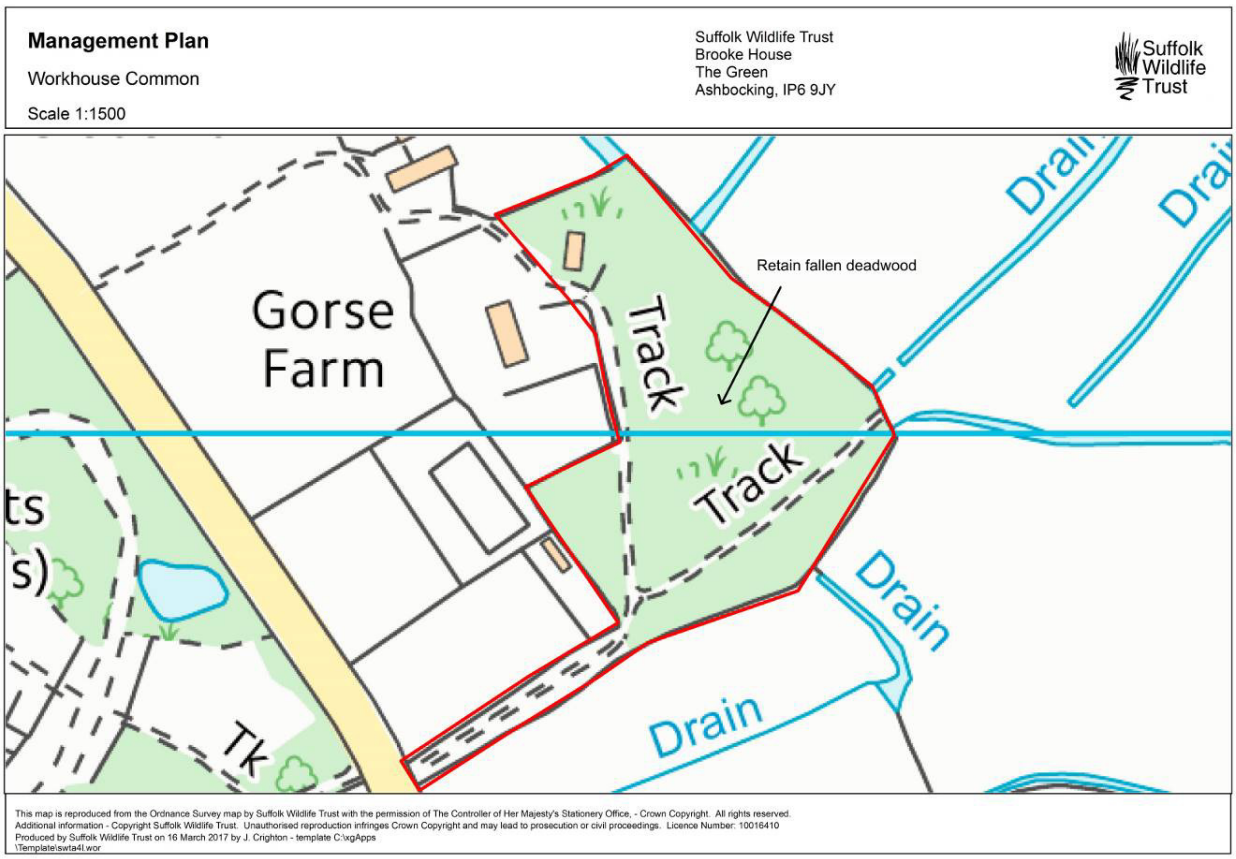
Although this common was once open, it has now, through the process of ecological succession, developed into dry oak woodland. Such habitats are valuable in their own right, so it is recommended that this habitat is retained without any immediate need for management.

It should be noted that this survey did not consider the health of any individual trees and consequently assessing tree health or tree safety is outside the scope of this survey.

Notwithstanding the above, both fallen and standing deadwood provide a valuable microhabitat for invertebrate species, which in turn support other ecological groups such as birds and amphibians. Consequently, it is recommended that both standing and fallen deadwood is retained where practicable, for biodiversity purposes.

Individual hazels in the north-east corner could be coppiced during successive winters, to create a more varied age structure. However, there is a strong likelihood that any new regrowth would be suppressed by deer activity and this would ultimately kill the stools. Consequently, this management practice is not recommended at the current time unless the coppiced stools could be protected from deer damage such as by fencing or covering the cut stools with brash.

The presence of obvious roosting potential in the veteran oak trees means that a bat survey could reveal interesting results. Suffolk Wildlife Trust have some bat detectors which could be available to borrow if local supporters of the common were interested in finding out is bats are active in the wood.


Management Plan
Workhouse Common
Scale 1:1500
Suffolk Wildlife Trust
Brooke House
The Green
Ashbocking, IP6 9JY
Suffolk Wildlife Trust
Gorse Farm
Track
Retain fallen deadwood
Track
Drain
Drain
Drain
Drain
Tk
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