



Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Northamptonshire

Fenland District Council Cemetery Sites

Management Statement 2019 to 2029 (for review after 5 years in 2024)

Station Road Cemetery, March

**Report prepared for Fenland District Council
by the Wildlife Trust**

June 2019

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1 Introduction

Fenland District Council (FDC) approached the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire (the Wildlife Trust) to write maintenance plans for two cemetery sites under their management to support the Friends of Groups and to assist with improving the biodiversity value of the two sites:

- 1) Station Road Cemetery, March
- 2) Wisbech General Cemetery, also known as Leverington Road Cemetery, Wisbech

Both cemeteries are on FDC's grounds maintenance contracts, and volunteers carry out additional work on each site.

A Management Plan for Wisbech General Cemetery exists, but is in need of updating (Tim Bennett, Wayside and Wildlife, December 2000 – see appendix). Station Road Cemetery has no management plan, but has a maintenance schedule as part of FDC's grounds maintenance programme.

There is an active Friends of Group for Wisbech General Cemetery, and three active volunteers for Station Road Cemetery, March. There is potential to engage more volunteers for each of the sites, and possibly to set up a more formal Friends of Group for Station Road, March.

The first step in the process is the surveying and writing of management statements for the two sites, followed by second visits in late spring / early summer 2019 to gather more ecological data, and to meet with the site volunteers.

2 Methodology

1) A desk search was carried out for Station Road Cemetery including:

- Fenland District Council site files
- Wildlife Trust site files
- CPERC records
- Maps produced using MapInfo showing site boundaries

2) A site visit and meeting was carried out in March 2019 by the Wildlife Trust's Community Wildlife Officer and the Cambridgeshire Conservation Manager, meeting with Rebecca Robinett, Street Pride Coordinator for Fenland District Council, and Kevin Wilkins, Horticultural Officer for FDC.

During the visits the following information was gathered:

- FDC's current maintenance regimes
- Priorities for the site; both ecological and for the local community
- Current volunteer activity, along with potential activities
- A description of the main physical features of the site and surrounding areas, together with notes on the current condition and management
- A list of plants found along with other incidental records of mammals/signs and birds/calls

3) A second site visit was carried out on 19th June 2019 by the Wildlife Trust's Community Wildlife Officer to carry out site surveys.

References:

Phase 1 habitat survey for Cambridgeshire – 1997 (The Wildlife Trust BCN)

3 Site description

Station Road Cemetery in March is a relatively large Victorian town cemetery, dating back to 1867. There is also a chapel towards the middle of the site, dating from the same period, which has, in the past, suffered some vandalism and anti-social behaviour. It is now a closed cemetery, with no further burials planned. There is evidence to suggest that some graves are still visited and tendered by the bereaved.

There is open access to the site, entrance is free, and is open to visitors from 8am until dusk every day of the week. The site lies with Station Road, March, to the east, with residential houses and shops on the opposite side of the road. Originally surrounded by fields, the cemetery is now bounded by houses to the south, west and north. There are access points to the land through the main gate on Station Road, and from a path in the north-east corner. FDC byelaws apply, and are posted at each of the entrances.

The site contains many old trees, including some large beech trees, Holm oaks and old yews, giving the site a feeling of an arboretum, which has great aesthetic appeal. A full tree survey was carried out recently on behalf of FDC, and a copy is to be appended to this plan by FDC.

The site comprises a mix of ages of planted trees, self-set trees, areas of open grassland and remnant meadow, scrub and blackthorn ticket. There are boundary privet hedges to the east and south, yew hedge with pollard limes to the west, and a stand of mature chestnut trees and scrub to the north.

4 Key features

The key features of Station Road Cemetery are:

- Mature, arboretum-like trees
- Lichen-covered old limestone gravestones
- Remnant meadow and areas of semi-improved grassland
- Areas of bramble thicket, scrub and hedges for breeding birds
- Possible bat roots – surveys should be carried out
- A well-known and important historical burial site and chapel
- Good, easy access from nearby housing, and a major greenspace for the residents of March
- Good access around the site
- Active and keen local residents who volunteer their time to helping to look after the site

5 Management Objectives & Rationale

Objective 1: To co-ordinate the efforts of FDC and local volunteers

FDC carries out grounds maintenance on site, which includes:

- Grassland mowing – 16 cuts per year; every two weeks throughout the growing season
- Tree surveys, including annual health checks
- Gravestone clearance and repairs
- Annual hedge cutting
- Removal of smaller seedling trees
- In addition, the Street Scene officers carry out grave checks for damage and safety

Volunteers carry out a number of activities that include:

- An annual Open Day as part of March Society's Heritage Weekend in September each year, which includes the opening of the chapel
- Removal of ivy from gravestones
- Clearing of some bramble thickets
- Checking of gravestones
- Some scrub management

In order to maximise and support volunteer efforts, a meeting should be held with the existing volunteers, who were unfortunately not available at the time of the 19th June site visit and survey. A draft annotated map has been produced and appended to this plan to focus efforts to maintain the wildlife interest of the site alongside the historical interest, however this may be subject to review depending on feedback from the volunteers.

Objective 2: To increase knowledge of the existing wildlife interest of the site through the surveys of the old trees (for bats), scrub, remnant grassland and lichen-covered stones

The older trees are one of the key areas of interest on site and should be maintained to extend their healthy life span for as long as possible. Regular health-checks will ensure any remedial works can be carried out in a timely fashion to prevent more rapid deterioration. A survey to establish the presence of deadwood, rot holes and other features, and the presence and location of bats should be carried out. This should be undertaken by a licenced bat worker. Important features should be retained during remedial tree works, subject to any overriding safety issues. If bats are present and works would damage a roost, a Natural England licence will be required to undertake the tree work, under the supervision of a licenced bat worker. Additional information on the presence of other plants, lichens, fungi, birds, small mammals and invertebrates could also be recorded.

A survey to establish the botanical interest of the areas of remnant grassland, along with the areas of semi-improved grassland, was carried out in June 2019 to determine the optimum mowing regime for the grassland areas. The results are in the appendix. This survey should be repeated in 10 years.

A survey to identify the lichen interest of the site could be carried out by an amateur local lichenologist. The existing scrub and thicket should be mapped highlighting the best areas for breeding birds.

Objective 3: To maintain a mosaic of old trees, other trees, scrub and hedgerow, thicket, remnant grassland and lichen habitat within the site to provide breeding, sheltering and foraging habitats for a range of birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, and invertebrates

The aim should be to maintain a balance of habitats around the site including old and other trees, scrub and hedgerows, grassland and lichen-covered stones. This can be achieved through maintaining the existing trees and removing any seedlings encroaching on the open grassland areas. Regular health surveys of the trees, and ongoing appropriate remedial works, should be carried out to ensure the old trees are not lost.

The existing areas of scrub should be maintained by occasional cutting back (every 5-10 years) to maintain breeding, sheltering and foraging sites for a wide range of garden birds, reptiles and amphibians, small mammals and invertebrates. New areas of scrub should be removed, either by mowing, or by cutting by hand, to maintain the existing area of open grassland. There is scope to do some selective clearing of scrub / thicket, cutting into the larger areas, to retrieve information on hidden gravestones – see attached plan.

Many of the exposed graves accommodate interesting stonecrop and lichens. These should be maintained by ensuring bramble does not take over. Bramble taking hold on new gravestones should be removed by cutting, or digging out where possible.

The early summer botanical survey of the grassland areas informs the optimum mowing regime for the remnant meadow and other grassland areas. The focus should be on the more open areas to the south-west and, in particular, the south-east of the site (see plan). A relatively diverse sward exists in the more open areas, including carpets of Bird's-foot Trefoil, Red and White Clover, Lady's Bedstraw, Creeping Cinquefoil, Self-heal, Ox-eye Daisy, Herb Robert, Field Bindweed and Germander Speedwell. The current cutting regime is 16 cuts per year, with a cut every two weeks throughout the growing season. These flower-rich areas would benefit from a less frequent mowing regime; cutting the sward every two weeks until May, then leaving to grow and only cutting every 4 weeks from mid-May to mid-August to allow some flowers to set seed, after which the area can be regularly mown again until the following May. Paths should be cut through the meadow to ensure access through the site.

There is tree regeneration on site, including in the meadow areas. The ash is spreading, and numerous sycamores are taking hold. Ash and sycamore seedlings should be removed. This will be achieved through mowing of new seedlings, but numerous sycamores have taken hold in the north and central areas to the east of the site, and should be removed, and the stumps treated with herbicide.

The north-east and north-west of the site is more shaded, with a more woodland-like feel. These areas should be left; just the paths maintained, and trees checked for bats (see objective 2)

Monitoring would be best undertaken through fixed-point photography and an extended phase 1 habitat survey every 10 years. The Cambridgeshire Bat Group should be engaged to check for and monitor any bat roosts, and there is scope to recruit and train local volunteers to help with species surveys for bats, lichens, flora and other wildlife.

Objective 4: To promote public access to the site for quiet enjoyment of the landscape and wildlife and to encourage an increased team of locally based volunteers to support Fenland District Council's management and monitoring programme

Station Road Cemetery is owned and managed by Fenland District Council. It is maintained as open access for local people to visit graves and to enjoy local history, quiet green space and wildlife. It is essential that good access and interpretation be maintained on site. The paths and many (but not all) of the graves should be kept clear, and the buildings, entrances, gates and interpretation boards maintained in a clean and undamaged condition.

An open day / volunteer day event, and / or a community consultation in the local area could assess how well known the site is within the local community, and how people feel about it. Such activities could be used to further raise awareness of the importance of the site, and to recruit volunteers to help with management.

There are three active volunteers currently carrying out practical work and running an annual event, whose contribution is highly valued by FDC. There is scope to build up the number of volunteers. There may be scope to establish a 'Friends Of' group who could manage the work parties, run survey days and occasional events on site, as well as strengthening partnerships between FDC and all interested parties. There may alternatively be scope to set up a volunteer-led team to carry out some of the week-to-week and month-to-month work through a regular work party. FDC has the resources to supply training and tools for volunteers and the Wildlife Trust can assist with risk assessments for all activities likely to be carried out.

There may be other local groups interested in getting involved; the March Society, the In Bloom and the Street Pride Groups are all very active in their local area and may be willing to help. Equally, Cambridgeshire Bat Group should be engaged to carry out a survey of potential roost sites, and a local lichenologist to carry out a lichen survey. There is scope to recruit local volunteers to assist with bat surveys as well as invertebrate, botanical and other wildlife surveys.

Objective 5: To maintain site structures including paths, bridges and fences and meet all legal and health and safety obligations associated with the site.

The entrances, buildings and paths are in a relatively good state of repair. However, it is essential to maintain the site infrastructure in a good state of repair with a range of weekly, monthly or annual checks as appropriate. The fence boundaries also need to be maintained to prevent unauthorised access (an informal access point to the north-west of the site was noted in the June visit). Fenland District Council will arrange such checks in accordance with their policies and procedures. Likewise, site risk assessments and other safety procedures will be followed.

Site signage related to health and safety needs to be regularly inspected and maintained.

Safety checks should be carried out on the older trees, buildings and gravestones, and recommended work undertaken in accordance with FDC policies and procedures. Grass paths should be mown throughout the growing season, the frequency depending on the speed and amount of vegetation growth. Likewise, any overhanging bramble or other woody vegetation needs to be cut back from paths as required.

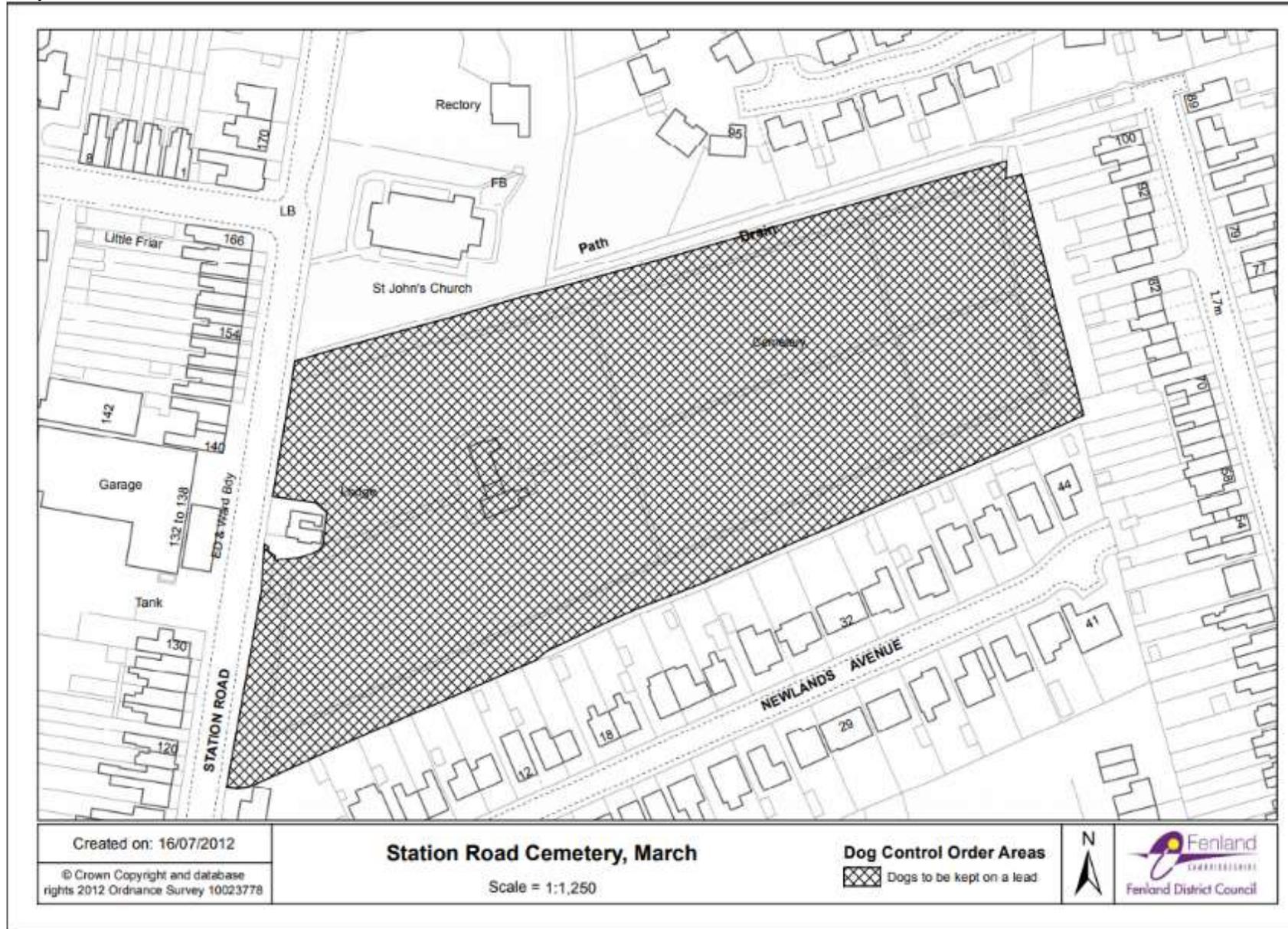
Some fly-tipping and dog mess exists. Litter picking must be undertaken regularly.

6 Management Actions

(see table below)

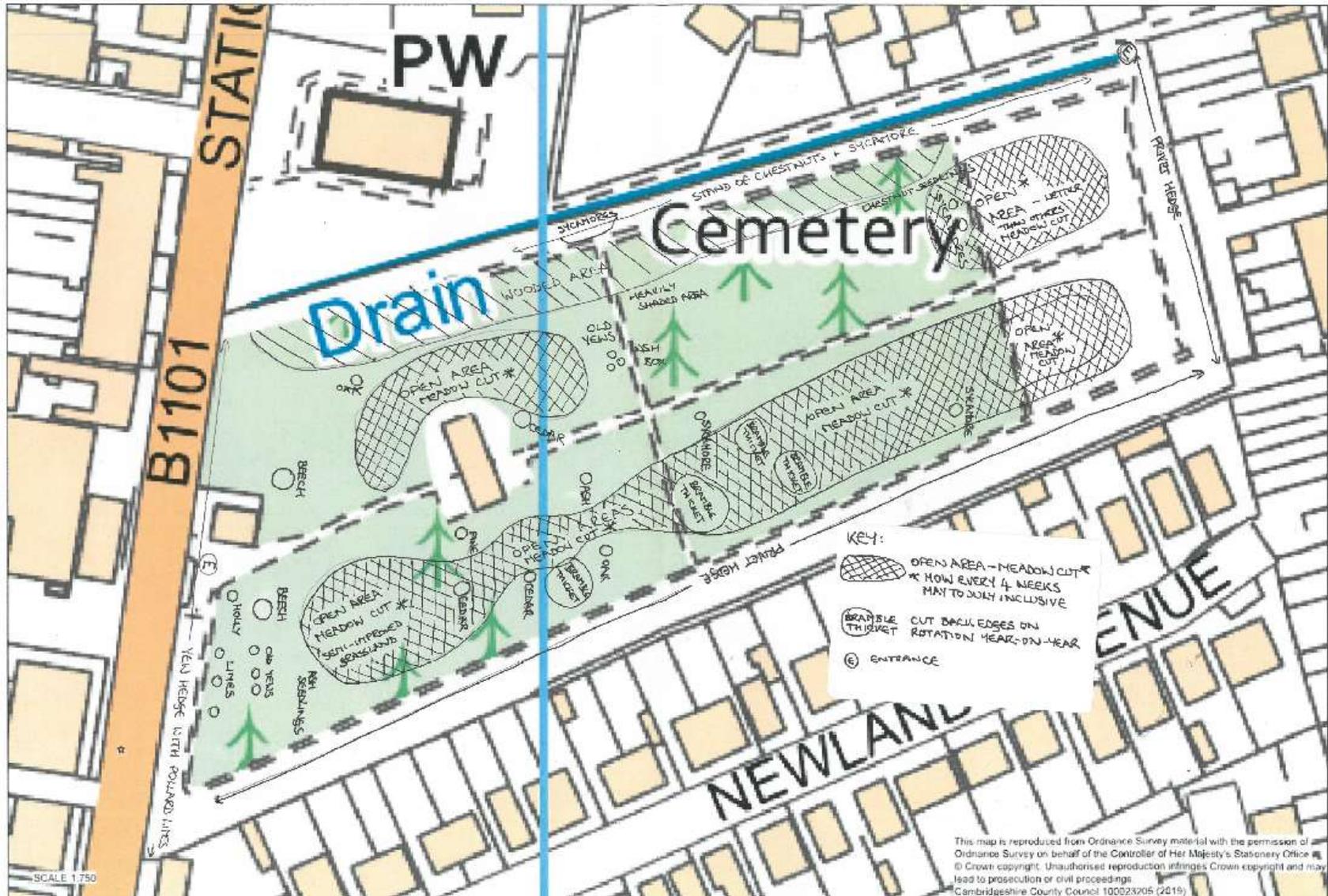
STATION ROAD CEMETERY, MARCH MANAGEMENT ACTIONS TABLE						
	Key: FDC Fenland District Council					
Task	Action	Location	Frequency	Month / season	Current Responsibility	Potential Future Responsibility
Objective 1: To coordinate the efforts of FDC and local volunteers						
1	Meet with volunteers (this was not possible)	Whole site	May / June 2019	Spring / Summer	The Wildlife Trust	
2	Finalise maintenance plan to include annotated maps	Whole site	Once in June 2019	Summer 2019	The Wildlife Trust	
Objective 2: To increase knowledge of the existing wildlife interest of the site through the surveys of the old trees, scrub, remnant grassland and lichen-covered stones. Carry out bat surveys; monitor presence, numbers and species every year.						
3	Tree health checks	Whole site	Annually	Spring	FDC	
4	Carry out phase 1 habitat survey including grassland survey	Whole site	Every 10 years from 2019	Spring / summer	The Wildlife Trust (year 1 2019)	
5	Carry out bat surveys. Monitor presence, numbers and species every year.	See map	Annually	Autumn	Cambs Bat Group	
6	Lichen survey of gravestones	Whole site	Once in summer 2020	Summer	FDC	
Objective 3: To maintain a mosaic of old trees, other trees, scrub and hedgerow, thicket, remnant grassland and lichen habitat within the site to provide breeding, sheltering and foraging habitats for a range of birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, and invertebrates						
7	Mow areas of remnant and semi-improved grassland on a reduced frequency of mowing every 4 weeks during May-July inclusive to allow some species to flower	Whole site (see maps for specific areas)	Every 4 weeks	May to July	FDC	
8	Remove tree seedlings, new areas of and encroaching scrub, in particular new areas of bramble appearing on / near graves.	Whole site	Annually	Ongoing	FDC / volunteers	
9	On rotation, cut edges of scrub / thicket to prevent further spread, one thicket per year.	Whole site (see maps for specific areas)	Annually, one per year	Late Autumn / early winter	FDC / volunteers	
10	On rotation, cut into scrub / thicket to retrieve gravestone information.	Whole site (see maps for specific areas)	Annually, one per year	Late Autumn / early winter	FDC / volunteers	
11	Carry out tree health checks and instigate remedial works	Whole site	Annually	Autumn	FDC	
Objective 4: To promote public access to the site for quiet enjoyment of the landscape and wildlife and to encourage an increased team of locally based volunteers to support Fenland District Council's management and monitoring programme						
12	Maintain the current paths, entrances, interpretation boards and currently clear gravestones in good order	Whole site	Ongoing		FDC	
13	Run an engagement event/s to raise awareness of the site and recruit local support		One off	Summer	FDC	
14	Re-establish / set up a Friends Of Group				FDC	
15	Recruit, support and train new / existing volunteers.		Ongoing		FDC (with support from the Wildlife Trust)	
16	Set up and manage regular work parties. Manage volunteers		Ongoing		FDC	Friends of Group
17	Set up monitoring programme and advertise for volunteers to help. Train, support and manage volunteers.		Ongoing		FDC (with support from the Wildlife Trust)	Friends of Group
18	Investigate and, where appropriate, set up partnerships with the March History Society, the In Bloom and the Street Pride Groups		Ongoing			FDC
Objective 5: To maintain site structures including paths, bridges and fences and meet all legal and health and safety obligations associated with the site.						
19	Keep all footpaths clear – mow grass paths	All footpaths	As required	Summer	FDC	
20	Keep all footpaths clear – cut back overhanging vegetation and bramble	All footpaths	As required	Summer	FDC	
21	Check all trees close to path for health. Make safe (prune / remove) as necessary	Whole site	Winter / as required		FDC	
22	Keep all structures in good repair, including chapel and exposed gravestones		Ongoing		FDC	
23	Report and criminal damage / behaviour to the police / PCSO		Ongoing		Volunteers	
24	Report any damage impacting on health and safety to FDCSO		Ongoing		Volunteers	
25	Monitor fly tipping and dog fouling, and post noticed as required	Whole site	Ongoing		FDC	
26	Litter pick	Whole site	Ongoing		Volunteers	

7 a) SITE MAP



7 b) SITE PLAN

STATION ROAD CEMETERY, MARCH



- Appendix

Species list

GRASSES

Annual Meadow-grass	Poa annua
Cock's-foot	Dactylis glomerata
Common Couch	Elytrigia repens
False Oat-grass	Arrhenatherum elatius
Yorkshire-fog	Holcus lanatus
Wall Barley	Hordeum murinum
Yorkshire-fog	Holcus lanatus
Wall Barley	Hordeum murinum

WILDFLOWERS

Black Medick	Medicago lupulina
Blackthorn	Prunus spinosa
Black Nightshade	Solanum nigrum
Bramble	Rubus fruticosus agg.
Broad-leaved Dock	Rumex obtusifolius
Cat's-ear	Hypochaeris radicata
Cleavers	Galium aparine
Common Bird's-foot-trefoil	Lotus corniculatus
Common Dog-violet	Viola riviniana
Common Nettle	Urtica dioica
Common Poppy	Papaver rhoeas
Common Ragwort	Senecio jacobaea
Cow Parsley	Anthriscus sylvestris
Creeping Buttercup	Ranunculus repens
Creeping Cinquefoil	Potentilla reptans
Creeping Thistle	Cirsium arvense
Cut-leaved Crane's-bill	Geranium dissectum
Daisy	Bellis perennis
Dandelion	Taraxacum officinale agg.
Dog Rose	Canina agg
Dogwood	Cornus sanguinea
Elder	Sambucus nigra
English Stonecrop	Sedum anglicum
Field Bindweed	Convolvulus arvensis
Field Forget-me-not	Myosotis arvensis
Germander Speedwell	Veronica chamaedrys
Grape Hyacinth	Muscari atlanticum
Great Mullein	Verbascum thapsus
Great Willowherb	Epilobium hirsutum
Ground-ivy	Glechoma hederacea

Hairy Bittercress	Cardamine hirsuta
Hawthorn	Crataegus monogyna
Hedge Mustard	Sisymbrium officinale
Herb-robert	Geranium robertianum
Ivy	Hedra helix
Lady's Bedstraw	Galium verum
Lesser Celandine	Ranunculus ficaria
Meadow Buttercup	Ranunculus acris
Oxeye Daisy	Leucanthemum vulgare
Prickly Sow-thistle	Sonchus asper
Red Clover	Trifolium pratense
Ribwort Plantain	Plantago lanceolata
Rough Hawkbit	Leontodon hispidus
Rough Hawk's-beard	Crepis biennis
Selfheal	Prunella vulgaris
Spear Thistle	Cirsium vulgare
Trifid Bur-marigold	Bidens tripartita
White bryony	Bryonia dioica
White Clover	Trifolium repens
Yarrow	Achillea millefolium

TREES / WOODY SPECIES

Buddleia	
Privet spp	Ligustrum
Cotoneaster spp	
Sycamore	Acer pseudoplatanus
Horse Chestnut	Acer hippocastanum
Box	Buxus
Monkey-puzzle	Araucaria araucana
Common Ash	Fraxinus excelsior
English Oak	Quercus robur
Cedar	
Pine spp	Pinus
Common Yew	Taxus baccata
Common Beech	Fagus sylvatica
Common Holly	Ilex aquifolium
Lime	Tilia
Silver Birch	Betula pendula
Common Hawthorn	Crataegus monogyna
Hazel	Corylus avellana

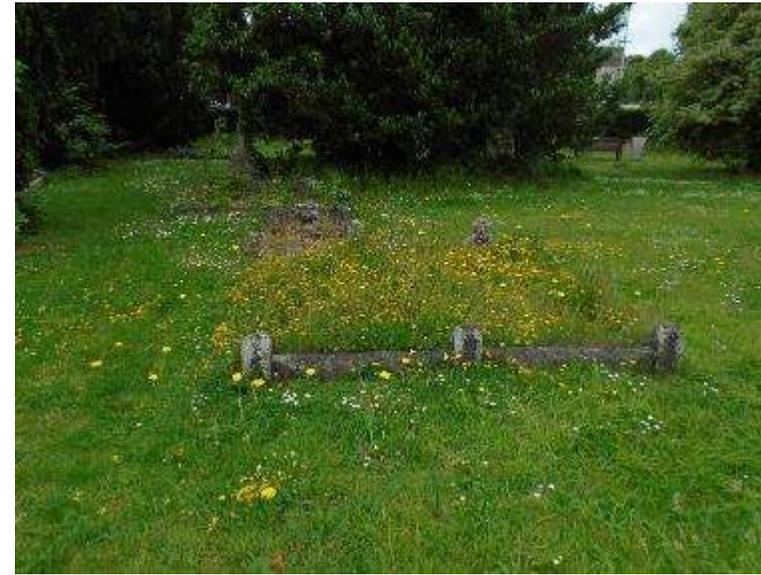
FAUNA RECORDED

Blackbird
Songthrush
Goldfinch
Woodpigeon
Wren
Crow
Hoverfly spp
Red-tailed bumble bee
Honey bee
Black ants nest
7-spot ladybird larva
Meadow brown butterfly
Mullein moth caterpillar
Common blue damselfly

- **Appendix**
Site photos



Looking east at the main entrance



Showing Bird's-foot-trefoil on grave



Showing open aspect to the south-west



Showing open aspect to the south-east



Bramble thicket to the south east



Encroaching bramble on gravestones



Grave with stonecrop



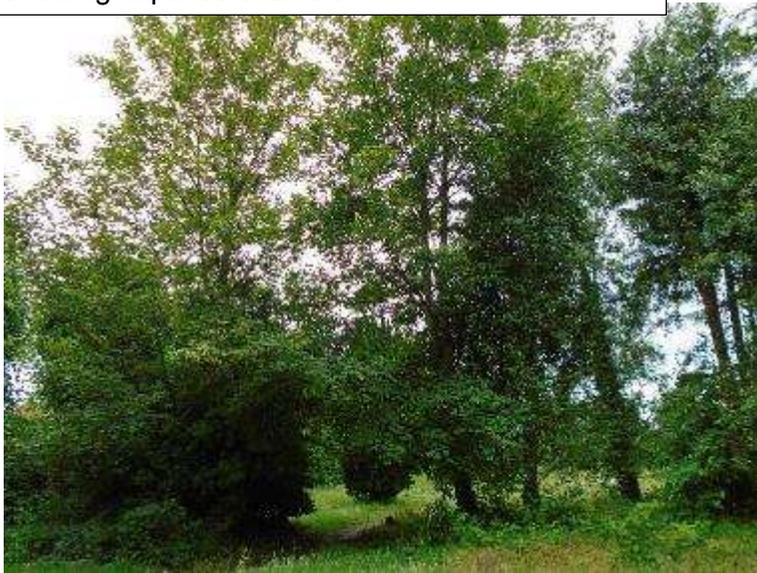
Grave with stonecrop



Showing expanse of Bird's-foot Trefoil



Open aspect to the north-east



Sycamores taking hold in the north-east section



Open area to the north-east



Wooded area stretching out from northern boundary to the west



Open areas to the north-west section