# COUNTRYSIDE ESTATE MANAGEMENT REVIEW



revised August 2015

# Key Facts and Figures

# Site Details

1.1 The countryside estate totals about 2426ha comprising:

- 6 main country parks;
- 12 picnic areas and other smaller sites;
- 3 greenways disused railway lines.

1.2 All of the main country parks have protected habitats and sites.

1.3 Cannock Chase Country Park is the largest of the main country parks and is designated a Special Area of Conservation and is located within the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

1.4 Approximately 3,000,000 million visits each year.

# Staffing Arrangements

1.5 The management, and maintenance, of the estate is mostly delivered in-house by:

- Rural Access Manager
- 2 Head Rangers
- 1 Works Unit Manager
- 14 Rangers
- 17 Estate Workers
- 1 Development Officer

1.6 The Works Unit Team is trained and skilled to carry out most of the practical work on the Estate and also, well-resourced in terms of plant and equipment. Therefore, external contractors are only employed for large-scale woodland management and engineering works.

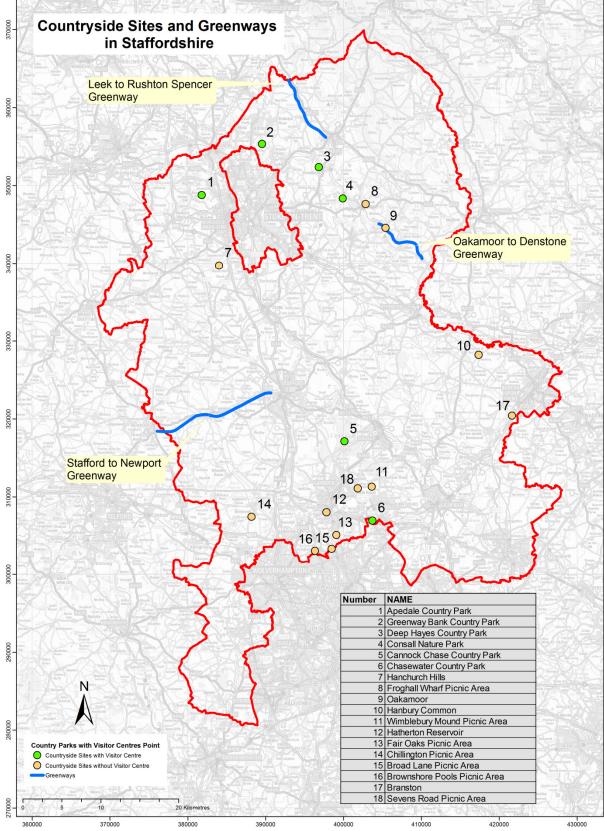
1.7 The Service Area is also supported by a team of Environmental Specialists and a significant voluntary contribution of about 25,000 hours per annum (equivalent to an additional 13 FTEs).

# **Financial Information**

The combined budget for running the countryside estate and rights of way service is: Capital -  $\pounds$ 180,000 per annum Net expenditure -  $\pounds$  1, 875,980 Income – C.  $\pounds$ 418,200 per annum (includes £185,000 from HLS schemes).

## Contract Arrangements

The cleaning and maintenance of the on-site buildings and the operation of the catering facilities at Cannock Chase and Chasewater Visitor Centres are under contract to Entrust.



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# LIST OF SITES

#### **Cannock Chase Country Park**

Electoral Wards:	Stafford Trent Valley	Members:	Len Bloomer
	Hednesford and Rawley Brereton and Ravenshill Etching Hill and Heath		Geoffrey Martin Alan Dudson George Adamson Christine Mitchell

## Parish Councils: Berkswich, Colwich, Brocton, and Brindley Heath.

#### Size: 1,311 ha

#### Description

Perhaps the largest Country Park in England, Cannock Chase Country Park lies within the smallest mainland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is the jewel within the Countryside Service. It has the highest international recognition as a wildlife site – a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). It is also nationally known and attracts over 2 million visitors each year. We are legally obliged to maintain the site in good condition. Its most important feature is the open heathland but it also contains Ancient Woodlands and some conifer plantations. Much of the associated wildlife is both rare and important.

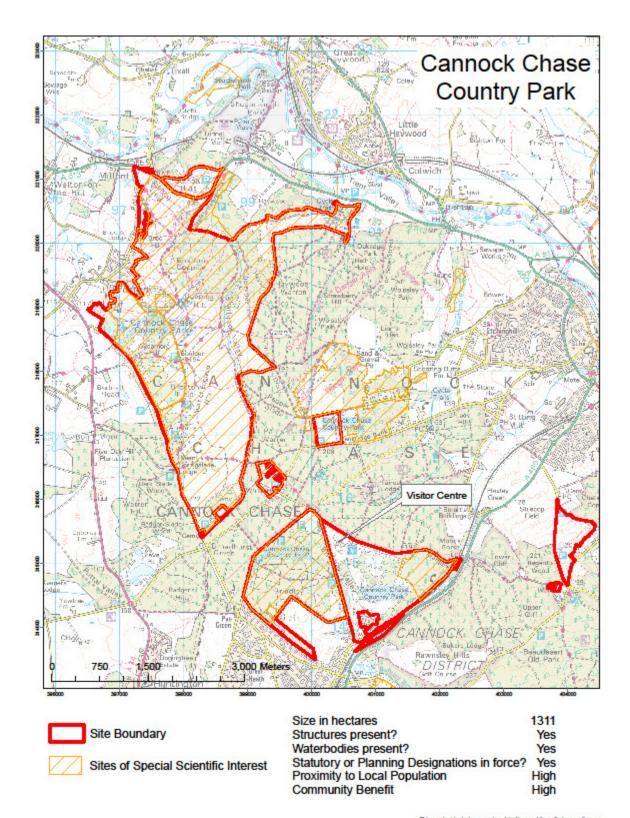
There is a thriving Visitor Centre and café at Marquis Drive attracting thousands of visitors. It is also the base for the Southern Ranger Service and depot for the Works Unit. Other buildings/features include the John O'Leary Education Centre, a reconstructed Great War Hut and children's play area. The whole site is heated by a wood burning boiler which is fuelled by timber from the Chase. We work closely with the Forestry Commission to manage visitors. We provide a full Ranger Service, including education provision, a guided walks and event programme and facilities for the disabled across the whole site.

## **Opportunities / Liabilities**

This is a high cost site to maintain but grant aid has been gained through Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) for the conservation works. Income is also generated through sales at the Visitor Centre.

The Phytophthora disease on the bilberry has been expensive to try to control and is subject to ongoing management and control. There are two pay and display car parks, one at the Centre and the other at Milford Common (the other main honey pot area). The cafe is managed by Entrust.

The ability to raise finance from the site has to be balanced against the potentially detrimental effect this would have on the wildlife and habitat and landscape. There are many of the usual liabilities associated with high public use, such as track, barrier and car park repairs, grass cutting etc. but also this area is subject to mining fissures and large scale heathland fires. The Chase also provides timber for other county council sites.



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# Apedale Community Country Park, Newcastle

Electoral Ward: Audley and Chesterton

Member: Ann Beech

Parish Councils: Audley Rural

Size: 154 ha

## Description

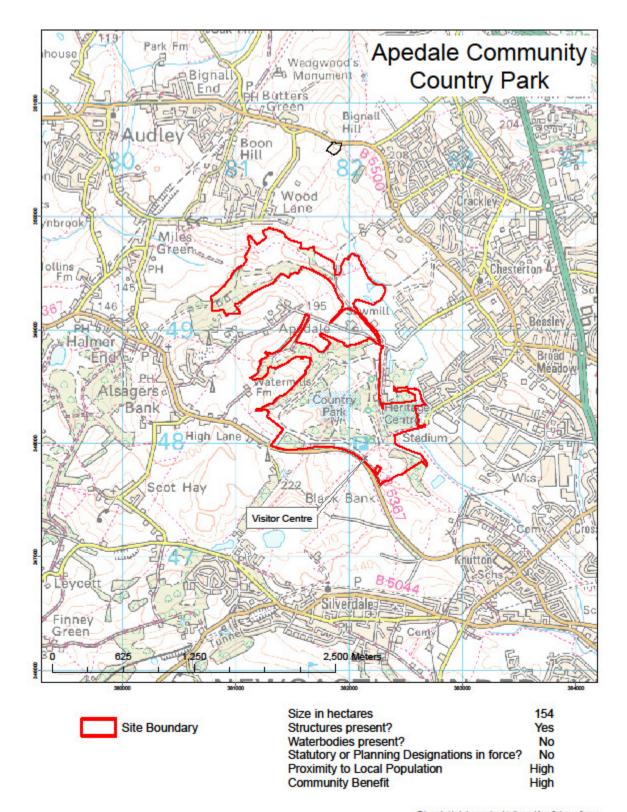
The Park is a reclaimed opencast site, and is a mixture of old and recently planted woodland, together with open grass pasture. It has great views over the Potteries and Cheshire Plain. A new Visitor Centre, Apedale Energy Station was erected in 2011; the old centre is still leased out as a workshop for groups with disabilities. It is on the edge of the large conurbations of Knutton and Chesterton and is heavily used by local people who walk onto the site. It is also popular with visitors, especially walking groups, who use the network of good tracks.

There are two rangers based on the site and also, the Newcastle Countryside Project (now managed by Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust) works in and around the park with volunteers, especially with groups with disabilities.

# **Opportunities / Liabilities**

Two new wind turbines generate electricity for the Centre and for sale to the grid. There is a listed structure (grade 2), Watermills Tower, which is in good condition. The paddocks are grazed with cattle which create excellent habitat for ground nesting birds such as lapwings. There are no protected areas but grant aid has been gained through HLS for some conservation works. Adjacent to the site, and sharing its access off Loomer Road, is the Apedale Heritage Centre and Moseley Railway Trust.





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# Consall Nature Park, Wetley Rocks, Cellarhead

## **Electoral Ward: Churnet Valley**

Member: Mike Worthington

Parish Councils: Consall, Kingsley

Size: 105 ha

## Description

Consall Nature Park was established in the heavily wooded Churnet Valley in the 1980s. It has a busy Visitor Centre which is popular with day visitors and school groups. Most of the park is part of the Churnet Valley SSSI noted for the semi-natural woodland. The difficult access along a single narrow track and its high conservation value has led to it being deliberately underpromoted. Nevertheless, visitors pack the car park most weekends and the lack of parking is an issue.

Two Rangers are based on site assisted by volunteers.

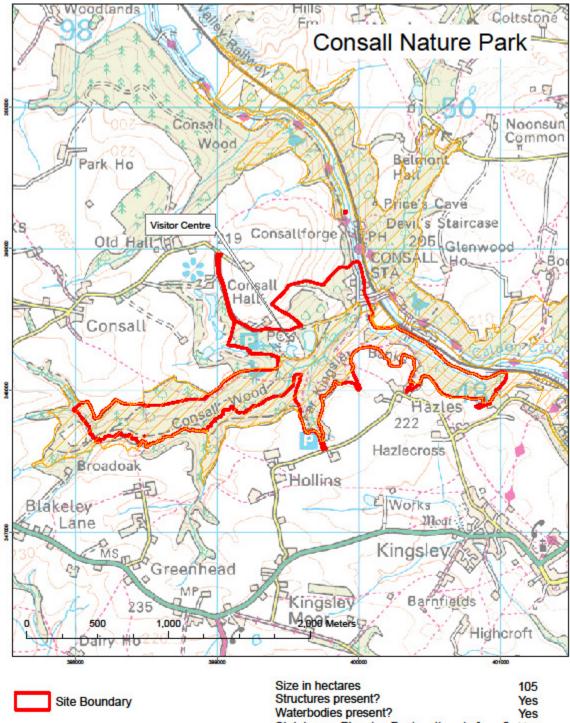
## **Opportunities / Liabilities**

The two pools on the site fall under the new Reservoir Legislation. Currently both are available for day fishing. The main track gives access to the Churnet Valley Railway, Black Lion Pub and a number of residential properties. The track has proved costly to maintain in the past but is now in reasonably good condition.

There is some coppice management but the woodland could be managed to produce wood fuel.

There is some scope for grant aid due to the SSSI status.





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Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Structures present? Yes Waterbodies present? Yes Statutory or Planning Designations in force? Yes Proximity to Local Population Low Community Benefit High

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# Deep Hayes Country Park, Cheddleton, Nr. Leek

**Electoral Ward: Cheddleton** 

Member: Mike Worthington

Parish Council: Cheddleton CP

Size: 61 ha

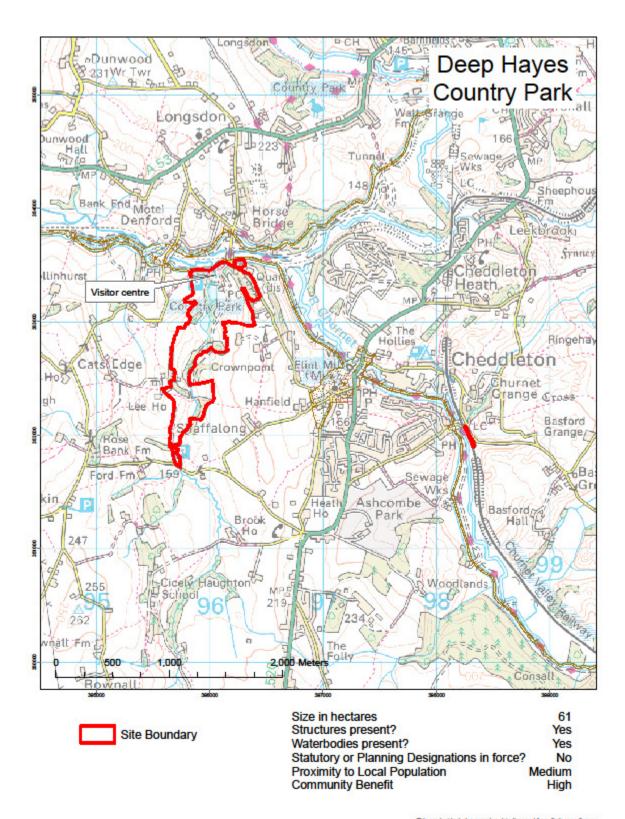
## Description

Deep Hayes Country Park was created in the 1970s when the single large reservoir was converted into three smaller pools for safety reasons. There are a number of trails inside and outside of the Park. One Ranger is based in the small Visitor Centre. There is a large surfaced car park and the Park is popular with local visitors. A thriving volunteer group assists with day to day management. There are high quality, flower rich meadows at the top of the site.

# **Opportunities / Liabilities**

The pools which do not fall under the new Reservoir legislation still require regular inspection and maintenance. There are no protected areas and limited scope to gain grant aid on this site. The larger pool is leased to a local angling club. The Park attracts large numbers of visitors for its size.





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# Greenway Bank Country Park, Knypersley, Nr. Biddulph

Electoral Ward: Biddulph and South Endon

Member: Kevin James Jackson

Parish Councils: Biddulph CP, Brown Edge CP

Size: 55 ha

# Description

Greenway Bank Country Park is based on an historical landscape and surrounds two reservoirs; the Serpentine (owned by SCC) and Knypersley Reservoir (owned by Canals & Rivers Trust). The water from these reservoirs feeds into the canal network. One Ranger is based at the newly refurbished Visitor Centre. There is also a small courtyard, play area and car park. The site is a popular and well established venue for visitors and numerous volunteers help with all aspects of the park.

# **Opportunities / Liabilities**

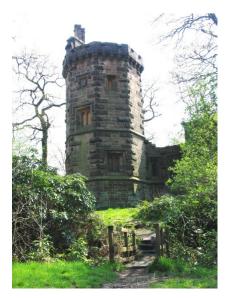
The Serpentine reservoir which is leased to a local angling club requires regular inspection and maintenance.

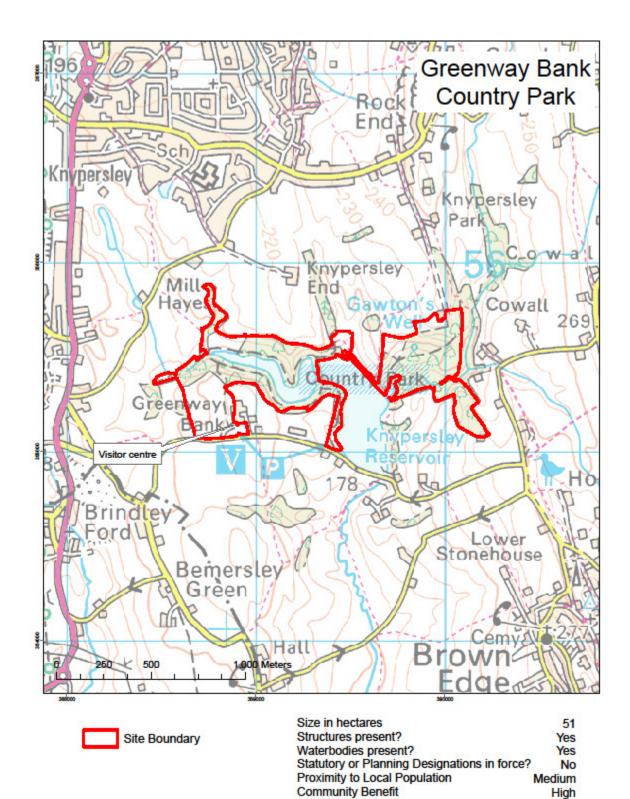
Phytophthora ramorum (a notifiable plant disease) has been found on the Rhododendrons and regular monitoring and treatment is required. Funding for this work has been met via a Forestry Commission Woodland Grant (WGS) to date. Apart from this WGS, there is little likelihood of further grant aid for the site.

There is a Grade II\* listed building, the Warders Tower, on the site and a use for this building is being sought. However, it requires extensive works which are likely to be costly.

The woodland could be managed to provide wood fuel.

Warders Tower





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# **Chasewater Country Park including Norton Bog**

## **Electoral Ward: Burntwood South**

Member: Jeffrey Sheriff

## Parish Council: Norton Canes, Burntwood

Size: 472 ha

## Description

The County Council assumed responsibility for Chasewater Country Park in 2011 following major repairs to the reservoir dam. Chasewater Innovation Centre is at the entrance to the Country Park. The Innovation Centre offers visitor information and conferencing facilities and a changing programme of exhibitions, activities and events. The Park also has a café, children's play area and a number of trails. The site supports a number of organisations offering power boating, sailing, a heritage steam railway and an outdoor education centre.

The Country Park links with land formerly known as Norton Bog which was established as a countryside site following reclamation of the slurry pits of old coal workings. The Norton Bog area contains a pool which falls under the Mines and Quarries legislation. There are no buildings or car parks on this part of the site and most visitors walk to it from Chasewater and Norton Canes. The water in the pool is high quality and the reclaimed landscape and tracks are developing well.

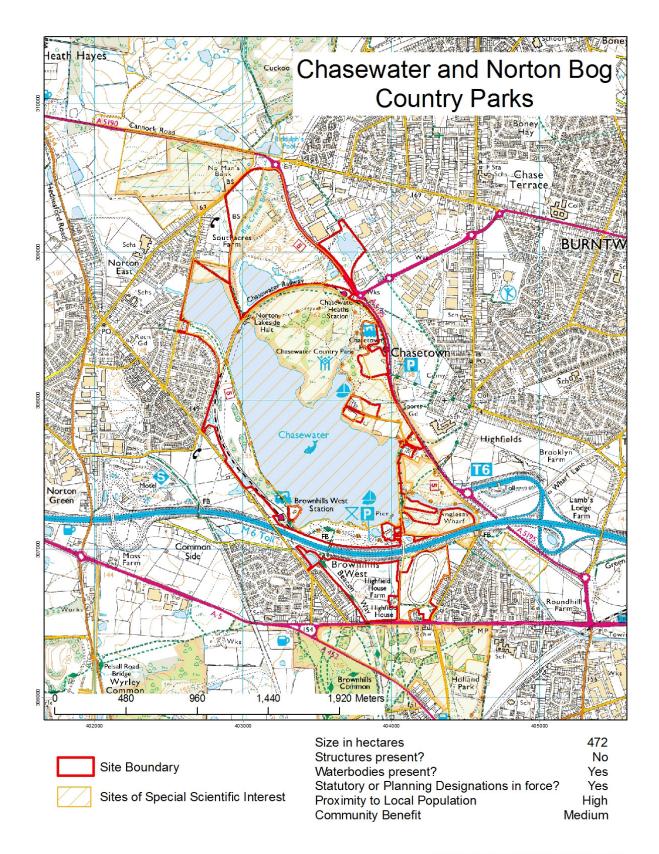
# **Opportunities / Liabilities**

The Reservoir dam was repaired in 2010 and the reservoir and pool on the land at Norton Bog require regular inspection and maintenance. Most of the land is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest but grant aid has been gained through HLS for the site conservation works.

Income is generated via the business interests and the Innovation Centre which help to offset the site's operating costs and there is a Development Plan in place.

The café is managed by Entrust.





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Froghall Picnic Area, Froghall

Electoral Wards: Churnet Valley Leek Rural Members: Gill Heath Mike Worthington

Parish Councils: Kingsley and Ipstones

Size: 3 ha

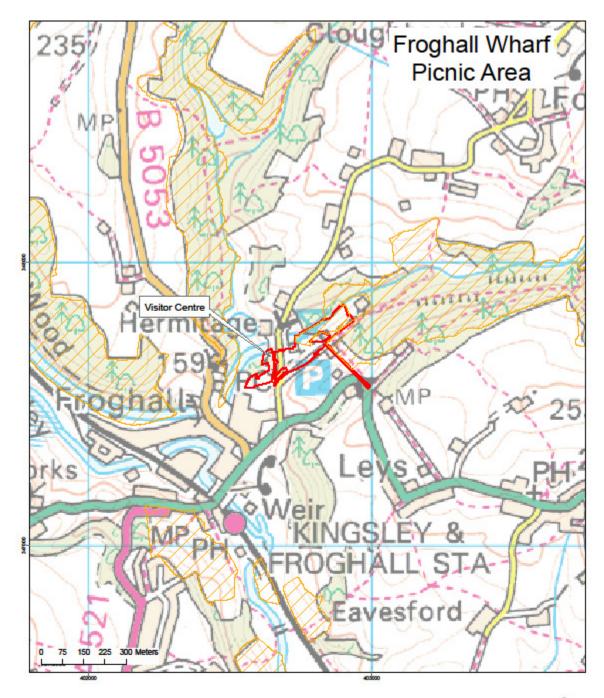
## Description

Two existing canal side buildings were converted into an interesting Visitor Centre on the renovated canal basin. There is a toilet block and large car park. Froghall lies in the heart of the Churnet Valley at the end of the Cauldon Branch Canal, and for the moment, the Churnet Valley Railway. It is ideally placed to tell the story of the development of the Industrial Revolution as it was the centre for coal, limestone and iron working. The trails from the Centre follow old plateways. There are two lime kilns from different ages.

## **Opportunities / Liabilities**

The large car park is well used by walkers as there are numerous routes along the canal and into the surrounding countryside. One Ranger is based at the Centre. The kilns are listed structures and a watercourse is culverted through one of them and under the site.





	Site Boundary
$\mathbb{Z}$	Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Size in hectares	3
Structures present?	Yes
Waterbodies present?	No
Statutory or Planning Designations in force?	No
Proximity to Local Population	Low
Community Benefit	Medium

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## Oakamoor Picnic Area

Electoral Ward: Churnet Valley

Member: Mike Worthington

Parish Council: Oakamoor CP

Size: 8ha

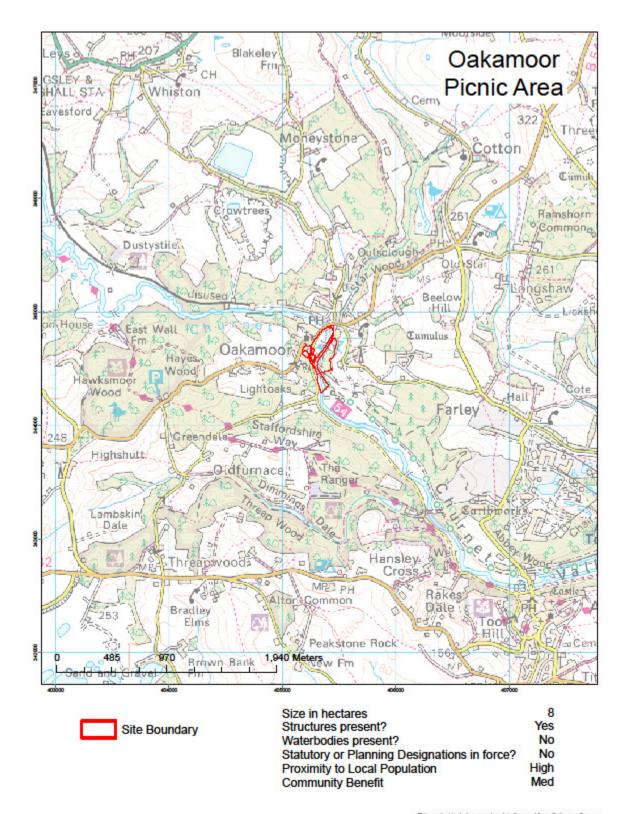
#### Description

This Picnic Area is located at the western end of the Oakamoor to Denstone railway line. It is very popular as a starting point for walkers wishing to visit other sites in the Churnet Valley owned by Forestry Commission, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and National Trust. At Oakamoor, there is an open grass area with picnic benches, a large car park and a toilet block. It is also well used by cyclists.

## **Opportunities / Liabilities**

The Oakamoor Tunnel is part of the site, although closed to public access. It is currently in good condition but requires routine structural inspections and could be expensive if repairs were required.

There are two bridges over the river which require routine inspection and maintenance and would be expensive if they needed repair.



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## Sevens Road Picnic Area, Cannock Wood

Electoral Ward: Hednesford & Rawnsley

Members: George Adamson Christine Mitchell

Parish Council: Unparished

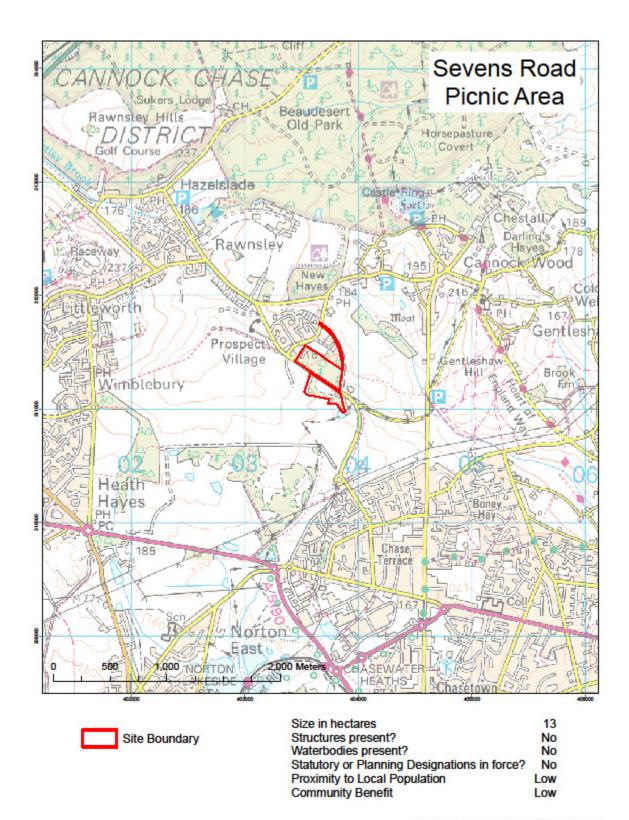
Size: 13 ha

## Description

The site is split by a road; one side was used as a demonstration woodland by the Forest of Mercia and is now quite heavily wooded. The other side is mainly open grassland which adjoined the former Bleak House Opencast Site; this side contains a car park which is closed because of anti-social behaviour problems and has often been used in the past by travellers.

## **Opportunities / Liabilities**

The site receives few visitors and is some distance from the nearest residential properties. There are no water bodies or structure on site.



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# Hanbury Common Picnic Area, Hanbury, East Staffordshire

Electoral Ward: Dove

Member: Bob Fraser

Parish Council: Hanbury

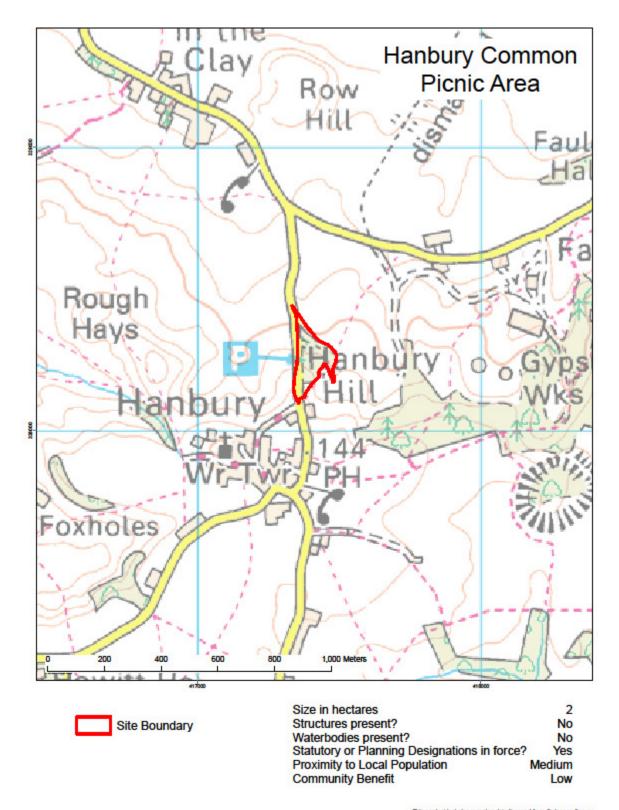
Size: 2 ha

Description

This small isolated site is on the side of a hill giving wonderful views over the Trent Valley. It is popular with the local community. The Parish Council has organised volunteer days to improve the site to create tracks, benches and viewpoints.

# **Opportunities / Liabilities**

There is no water or structures on the site and parking is limited.



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## Brownshore Lane Picnic Area, Essington

Electoral Ward: Cheslyn Hay Essington & Great Wyrley

Members: Kath Perry Mike Lawrence

Parish Council: Essington

Size: 10 ha

#### Description

This site is enclosed by housing on all sides. It was gifted to the County Council by the Vernon Estate for the benefit of the local community. It contains two pools which are managed in partnership with the parish council. The parish bailiff also acts to protect the site and clear litter. It is an extremely important feature in the village and is very well used. There is an area of close mown grass for games and a wildlife meadow.

#### **Opportunities / Liabilities**

The site is a local recreational resource and very well used by the local community.





Size in hectares10Structures present?NoWaterbodies present?NoStatutory or Planning Designations in force?YesProximity to Local PopulationHighCommunity BenefitHigh

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## **Chillington Car Parks**

Electoral Ward: Brewood

Member: Mark Sutton

Parish Councils: Brewood and Coven

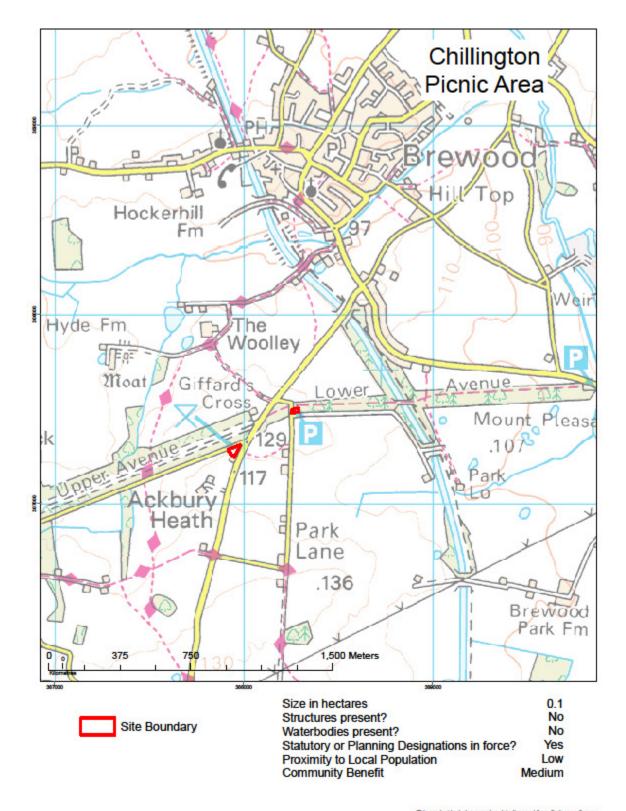
Size: 0.1 ha

## Description

This site consists of two small car parks which are leased to the County Council from the Chillington Estate. They were created to prevent the ad hoc parking in the local lanes by people walking the Staffordshire Way. The Estate carries out most of the routine management (litter picking, etc.). Very low scale works are required to keep these car parks in good order and they provide very useful facilities for walkers.

## **Opportunities / Liabilities**

These car parks have very few liabilities and are needed to ensure that the previous dangerous parking in the local lanes does not reoccur.



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#### Hanchurch Hills, Hanchurch, Newcastle

Electoral Ward: Eccleshall

Member: Frank Chapman

Parish Council: Swynnerton

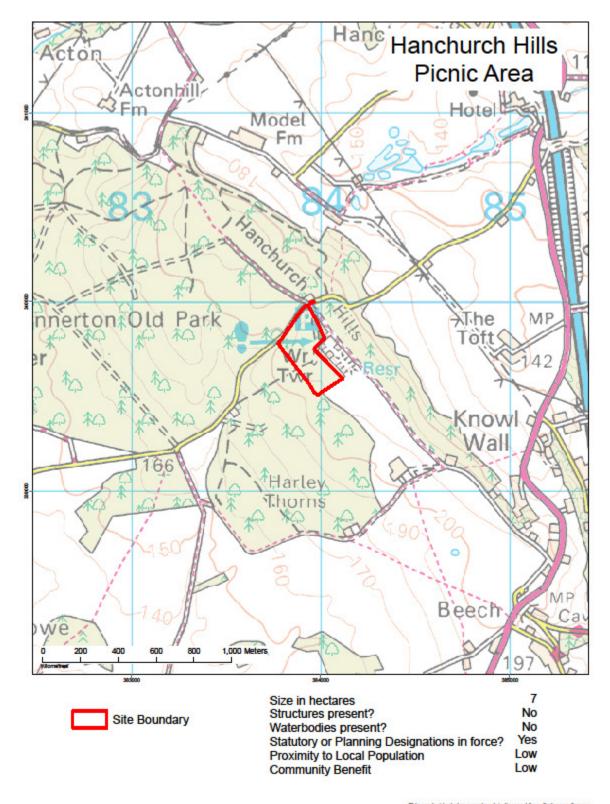
Size: 7 ha

Description

The site consists of a small picnic area within the conifer woodland of Hanchurch Hills. It is bounded by open Forestry Commission woodland and privately owned land. It has a long track to the only car park in that area. The wider site (including Forestry Commission land) is popular with walkers and horse-riders.

# **Opportunities / Liabilities**

The very few features make it relatively easy to maintain but the long track does require constant attention. The woodland could be managed to provide a limited mount of wood fuel.



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# Fair Oak, Essington

Electoral Ward: Cheslyn Hay, Essington & Great Members: Mike Lawrence Wyrley Kath Perry

Parish Councils: Essington and Great Wyrley

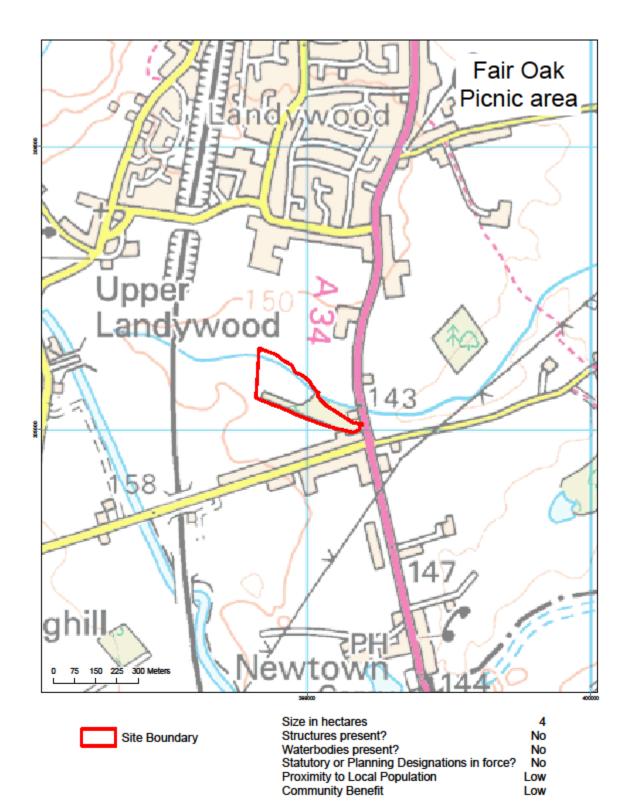
#### Size: 4 ha

#### Description

This site came to the County Council as part of some reclamation works in the1970s. The low hill gives views over the local countryside and the West Midlands beyond. The access to the site is shared with a travelling caravan site. It is some distance from residential properties and is therefore not well used.

#### **Opportunities / Liabilities**

None identified.



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## Hatherton Reservoir, Cheslyn Hay

Electoral Ward: Cheslyn Hay, Essington & Great Members: Mike Lawrence Wyrley Kath Perry

Parish Council: Cheslyn Hay

Size: 12 ha

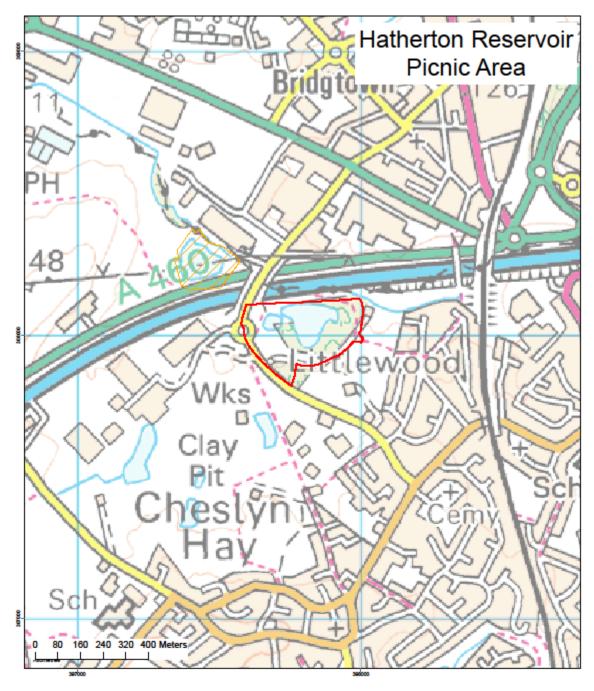
#### Description

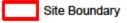
This small site on the edge of two villages comprises tracks and woodlands around a partially filled reservoir. The M6 Toll route has reduced the size of the site and the pool, making it less attractive to anglers). The pool falls under the new reservoir legislation, although it is considered to be low risk. The site is well used by local people and dog walkers. The Parish Council and a local volunteer group have been working to improve the site as it is prone to low level anti-social behaviour.

#### **Opportunities / Liabilities**

The water body requires routine inspection and maintenance.

The County Council will soon gain another adjacent area of land, Redland Clay Pit, as compensation for the land lost when building the M6 Toll. The Redland site is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.





Size in hectares11Structures present?NoWaterbodies present?YesStatutory or Planning Designations in force?YesProximity to Local PopulationHighCommunity BenefitHigh

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## Stafford to Newport Greenway

Electoral Ward: Gnosall and Doxey

Member: Mark Winnington

Parish Councils: Stafford Town, Hyde Lea, Seighford, Haughton, Gnosall and Forton.

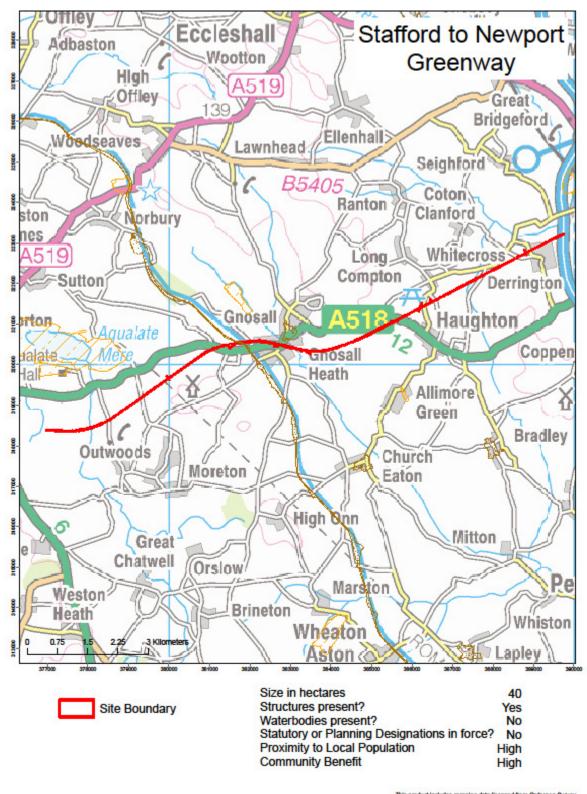
## Size: 40 ha, approximately 9 miles

## Description

The Greenway has been developed on the old Stafford to Newport railway line. It provides easy walking and riding for cyclists and horses through attractive countryside and is a very popular route. The route has been formally surfaced and now forms part of the National Cycle Network (NCN 55). It is also part of The Way for the Millennium which links Newport with Burton upon Trent. Access can be gained at a number of locations along its length.

There are many structures along the line; bridges, culverts, car parks etc. that need routine inspection and maintenance. The county council is responsible for maintenance of the fencing.

The surface, vegetation, car parks and routes onto the line require constant attention.



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## Oakamoor to Denstone Greenway

Electoral Ward: Uttoxeter Rural

## Members: Phillip Atkins

Mike Worthington

## Parish Councils: Denstone, Alton, Farley and Oakamoor.

## Size: Approximately 4.2 miles

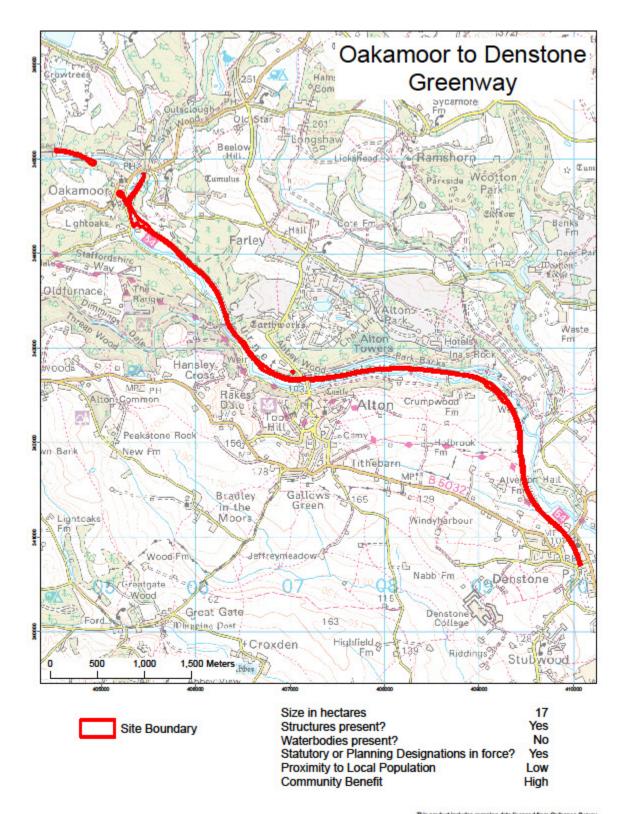
## Description

The disused railway line follows the attractive Churnet Valley for 4.2 miles. At Oakamoor, there are large car parks and a new toilet block. It is a very popular route for visitors. It is well used by cyclists and also part of the route is available to horse riders.

## **Opportunities / Liabilities**

There are many structures along the route which require routine inspection and regular maintenance. The county council is responsible for the fencing. The grass areas are regularly maintained.

The Oakamoor tunnel is part of the site, although closed to public access. It is currently in good condition but requires routine structural inspections. There has been some speculation for many years about the restoration of either, or both, the railway and canal along this route.



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Electoral Ward	Leek Rural Leek South	Members:	Gill Heath Charlotte Atkins

Parish Councils: Leek, Longsdon, Horton, Rushton

## Size: Approximately 5.6 miles

## Description

The Greenway runs for 5.6 miles from the north of Leek to the County boundary at the River Dane. It is used primarily by walkers and at low level by cyclists. Horse-riding is not encouraged as part of the route, along the side of Rudyard Lake, is shared with a mini-railway. Rudyard has been a tourist venue since Victorian times and many visitors use the car park to visit the Lake and surrounding venues.

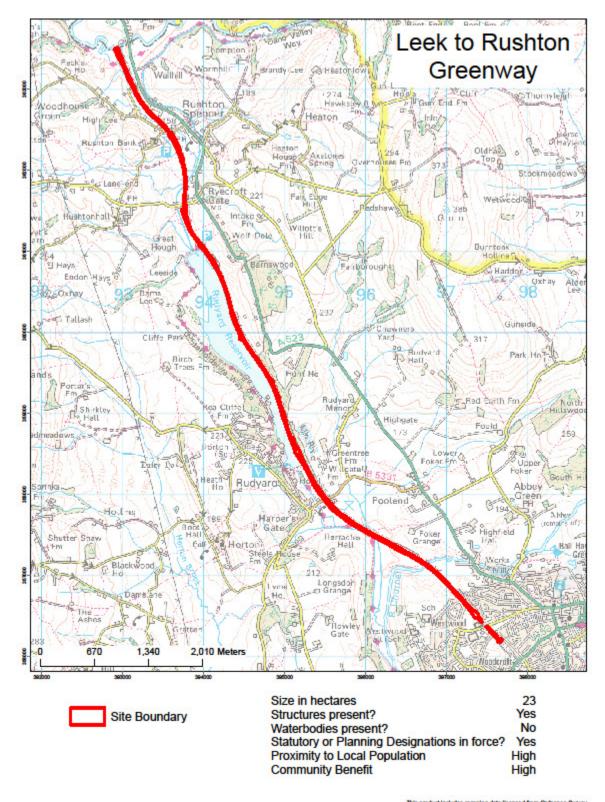
## **Opportunities / Liabilities**

This site also includes the old railway tunnel under Leek which is not accessible for the public but still requires routine safety inspections.

There is a large number of structures, bridges, culverts, etc. which require inspection and maintenance. The county council is responsible for the maintenance of the fencing.

The railway brings in many visitors.

The Rudyard area is a Conservation Area.



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## Broad Lane, Essington

Electoral Ward: Cheslyn Hay, Essington & Great Members: Kath Perry Wyrley Mike Lawrence

Parish Council: Essington

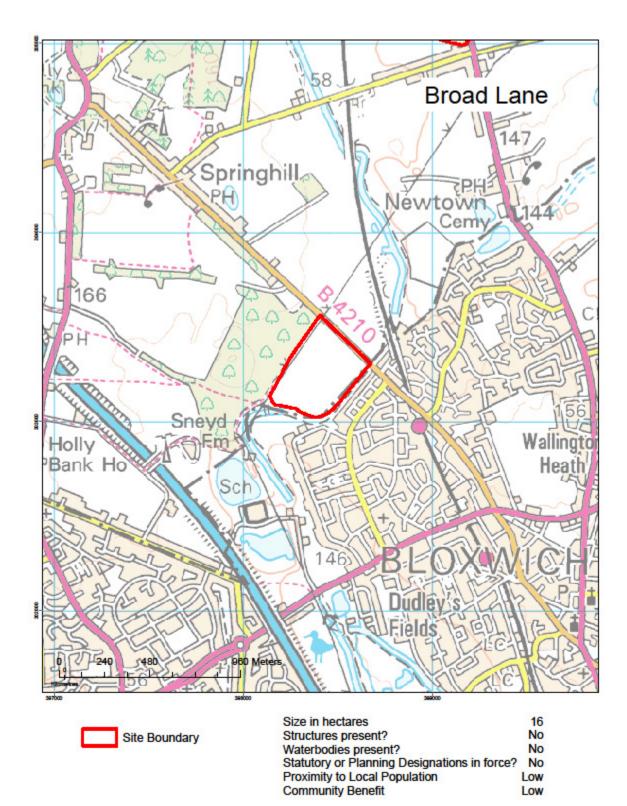
Size: 16 ha

## Description

The site was part of the Broad Lane Opencast Site and was managed by the Forest of Mercia until recently. It is on the very edge of the West Midlands border. It is a flat site with young tree plantations and a limited number of informal tracks. It suffers from anti-social behaviour.

## **Opportunities / Liabilities**

The site is in the Green Belt.



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## Wimblebury Road, Wimblebury

Electoral Ward: Cannock Villages

Member: Diane Todd

## Parish Council: Heath Hayes and Wimblebury

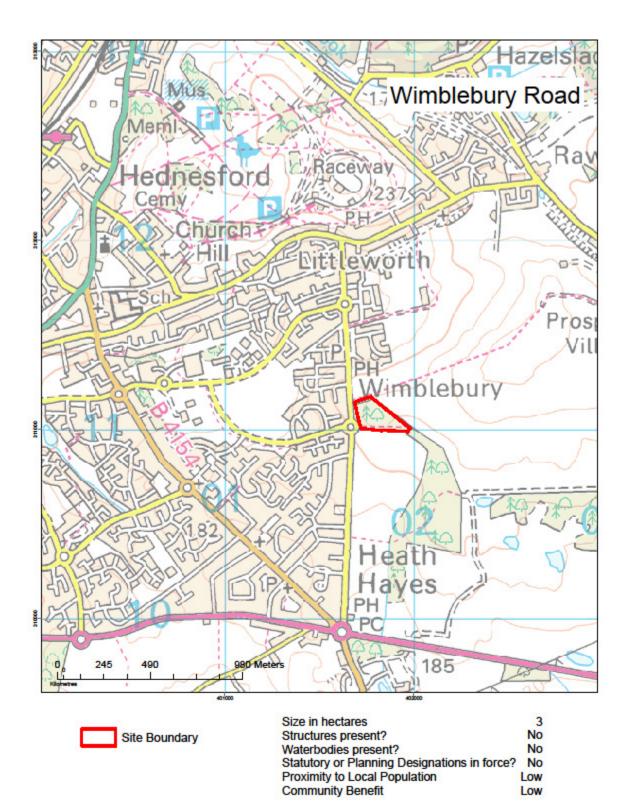
Size: 3 ha

## Description

This is a small wooded mound left largely untouched since the Bleak House Opencast Site closed. It was managed by the Forest of Mercia until recently for low level informal access and minor woodland management. There are no features of interest and access to the site is difficult. It is therefore not well used.

## **Opportunities / Liabilities**

Opportunity to develop this site is limited and there has been no interest by local people to assist with its maintenance. There are no major liabilities attached to the site..

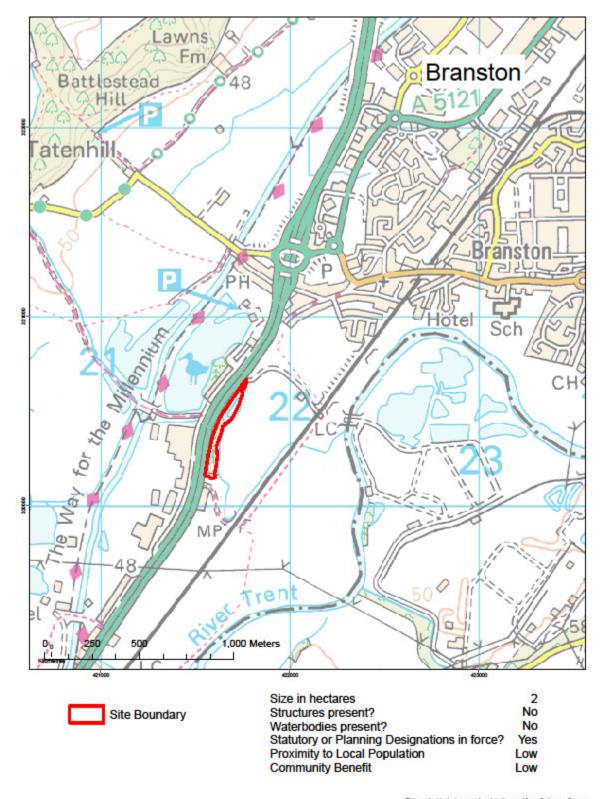


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Branston

Electoral Ward:	Needwood Forest	Member:	Tim Corbett					
Parish Council: B	Branston							
Size: 2 ha								
Description								
This is a very small area of land next to the busy A38 which is not accessible to the public.								
Opportunities / Li	abilities							

No opportunities for development. No works have been required or carried out for many years.



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Site Name	Size Facilities							of Vis (app		Main Management Aims									
	< 5ha	5 – 20ha	> 20 ha	Visitor centre	Car parks	Toilets	Information	Signs	Catering provision	Picnic area	< 50,000	50 – 250,000	> 250,000	Informal recreation	Nature conservation	Agricultural production	Forestry / Wood fuel	Other	Volunteer group on site
Cannock Chase Country Park			$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	✓			$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$
Apedale Country Park			$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	✓	$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$
Consall Country Park			$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$
Deep Hayes Country Park			$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$				$\checkmark$
Greenway Bank Country Park			$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$
Chasewater Country Park inc			$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$
Norton Bog																		•	•
Froghall Picnic Area	$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$					
Oakamoor Picnic Area		$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$					
Sevens Road Picnic Area		$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$					
Hanbury Common Picnic Area	$\checkmark$				$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$				$\checkmark$
Brownshore Lane Picnic Area		$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$					$\checkmark$
Chillington Picnic Area	$\checkmark$				$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$					
Hanchurch Hills Picnic Area		$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$								
Fair Oak Picnic Area	$\checkmark$							✓			$\checkmark$			✓					
Hatherton Reservoir		✓			$\checkmark$			✓		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$			✓					$\checkmark$
Stafford Newport Greenway		$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$					
Oakamoor Denstone Greenway		$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$					
Leek to Rushton Greenway		$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$		✓		✓					
Broad Lane, Essington		✓																$\checkmark$	
Wimblebury Mound,	✓													1				~	
Wimblebury	ľ								1									v	
Branston	$\checkmark$																	$\checkmark$	

# Appendix 1 – Summary Details of Countryside Sites