

Pensford Field Management Plan 2024



Mary Smith, Sarah Atkins and Bob Gingell – June 2024

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. General Principles of Management	7
3. Land Management	10
4. Recreational Use	13
5. Short-term priorities	15

1. Introduction

It is a requirement under the lease from the Council that the Field is managed in accordance with the Management Plan (the Plan) and the charges for rent are abated to £1 in return for the fulfillment of undertakings in this Plan.

1.1 Site description

Pensford Field (the Field) is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) with an area of 0.7 hectares. The whole property including the tennis club is approx. 1.1 hectares (2.65 acres).

The site is a rectangular field surrounded by the houses of Pensford Avenue, Atwood Avenue, Nylands Avenue and North Road. In 1992 the site was made into a community wildlife area with woodland, dead wood (loggers), a pond, meadow, wildlife corridor and beehives. It is a good example of backland benefiting both local wildlife and the community. The site is visited by schools and other educational establishments.

The entrance to the Field is situated between 17 and 19 Pensford Avenue, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4HR. The Grid Reference is TQ 193 763 and what3words are pillow.kings.hidden.

The Freehold owner is the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (LBRuT / the Council).

The nature reserve is managed by Pensford Field Environment Trust Ltd (PFET / the Trust) which was formed by a group of local residents. The Field is subject to a 21-year lease dated 14 March 2007 (the Lease). The Trust manages the Field as a nature reserve for both people and wildlife and raises money for the promotion of nature conservation and environmental education.

The Trust is a company limited by guarantee (Company number 06007255). The secretary and chair are responsible for the completion of the return required by Companies House and the Charity Commission. The Trust organises public liability insurance for the premises. The Trust will ensure that the conditions of the Lease are complied with, including pointing out to visitors the limitations on the use of the Field such as no dogs, no fires and no ball games. The treasurer keeps the Accounts and presents them to the AGM, which is held within ten months after the year end. Reports are submitted as required by Companies

House and the Charity Commission. Independent audit is not necessary unless the turnover becomes larger.

Designations:

1. Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) from 1993 and ongoing – [link](#) to latest review.
2. Other Site of Nature Importance in the LBRuT – [link](#) to Local Plan 2018.
3. London in Bloom Gold Medal awarded in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020 2022 and 2023 – [link](#) for latest results.
4. Green Flag Award 2016, 2018, 2019, 2022 and 2023 - [link](#) for latest results.

Access

Site access is by a coded padlock at the main gate, shared with Pensford Tennis Club, which has a similar lease from the Council. This access is to protect the site, the tennis courts and the neighbouring gardens. The code is shared with tennis club members, friends of the Field and Trustees. A few neighbouring gardens have direct historic access to the Field.

1.2 History of Site

The Field was developed in 1992 from a playing field with a cricket pavilion (for Darell and Gainsborough Schools) to a community wildlife area. The site is a remnant of an old orchard and market garden from the late 18th and 19th centuries. The substrate is rich loam for about 18 inches with a layer of mainly sand underneath.

Wildlife corridor. With the proximity of the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Royal Botanic Gardens and the River Thames, the Field is a substantial part of the local wildlife corridor. Visiting animals include badgers, foxes and small mammals like mice and squirrels. A heron (which is often in the pond), starlings and occasional woodpecker, both green and spotted, (lesser/greater) and various small garden birds all find shelter in the Field. It is hoped that owls and other birds of prey will visit the Field and the overall biodiversity will increase. The more mature the wilderness, the more habitats it will encompass.

1.3 Aims of the Trust

1. To promote nature conservation and enhance the biodiversity value of Pensford Field for future generations through active and sustainable management.

2. To encourage environmental education through local school and community involvement by raising awareness of the site as a community wildlife and nature reserve.

1.4 Description of the Habitat

A variety of native tree species have been planted around the boundaries to create a woodland habitat, and a mixed hedgerow was planted along the boundary with the tennis club in September 1993. A wooden fence, gate and stile mark the entrance to the Field.

The pond, which was dug and lined, then backfilled with silt has a variety of wetland flora and fauna, such as soft rush and meadowsweet, frogs, newts and toads.

Some years ago, a loggery was created using decaying wood, which is a valuable habitat for stag beetles and a variety of other invertebrates, fungi & small mammals. It is just south of the western edge of the tennis courts.

The orchard was planted in 2002 on advice from fruit experts at Brogdale Fruit Station. It consists of a variety of apples, pears, plum and greengage, one medlar and one quince. These trees are likely to have been grown in the neighbourhood in previous times. A Cherry was planted in 2007. Two crab apples (one designated the 'Queen's Platinum tree') were planted in 2022 near to the orchard to aid pollination. A plum tree of unknown variety was planted in 2023 from a local garden – it may have originated from the market gardens in Kew. A list of trees in the Orchard is in Appendix I.

There are two areas of the field with hives to improve the pollination of the orchard with permission from LBRuT.

In 2017 a bug hotel was constructed using a tower of bricks and pipes filled with bamboo canes, straw, sticks, deadwood and shredded newspaper to provide homes for solitary bees, lacewings and other insects.

An area of 20m² of mixed native meadow turf was laid in March 2022 to the central part of the Field, which includes sheep's fescue, and flowers such as common vetch, lady's bedstraw and common knapweed. In Autumn 2023, yellow rattle was sown to dampen the strong grasses.

A Studio is situated in the area opposite the gate and stile. Created in 2007 on the footprint of an old cricket pavilion and built for local organisations subject to booking. It includes a ramp and accessible toilets. The Studio provides a

comfortable seating area and there is a small kitchen. The drive provides access for maintenance vehicles and emergency services. Parking of private cars is not allowed under the terms of the Lease.

1.5 Biodiversity value

In line with Richmond's Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) – follow [link](#) - the Field supports a wide range of flora and fauna, many species of which are of key importance on a local, regional and national scale.

1. Importance at national level: small population of stag beetles. Globally threatened and a LBAP priority species.
2. Characteristics of local area: neutral to acid grassland and supports a variety of wildflowers and invertebrates.
3. The pond area supports a variety of flora and fauna of local importance.

The grassland supports a number of butterflies and surveys have been undertaken to monitor their status. In 2016 and 2017 a total of 16 species of butterflies were recorded: Peacock, Red Admiral, Meadow Brown, Small White, Large White, Holly Blue, Speckled Wood, Small Skipper, Large Skipper, Painted Lady, Gatekeeper, Comma, Brimstone, Green Veined White, Essex Skipper.

The Field supports insects such as stag beetles and rose chafers, and wildflowers such as common storks-bill (cranes-bill), ox-eye daisy, poppy, common ragwort, toadflax and common vetch. It also supports an assorted bird population, with a dawn chorus outing in 2018 recording the following species: Great Tit, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Wood Pigeon, Rock Pigeon, Goldfinch, Robin, Wren, Blackcap, Blackbird, Dunnock, Song Thrush, Crow, Magpie, Parakeet, Heron, Mallard, Canada Goose, Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Herring Gull, Black Headed Gull, Lesser Black Backed Gull and Cormorant. Sparrow and Starling were not sighted but are regular visitors.

Several mammals are also present, including foxes and badgers - there are active badger setts throughout the Field. A camera was installed in the Field by Habitats and Heritage in 2022 and the badgers were extremely active.

A bat survey was undertaken in July 2022 by Habitats and Heritage close to the pond. The vast majority of the sightings over four days were soprano pipistrelle (around 2500) with around 300 sightings of the common pipistrelle. There were infrequent sightings of other species – Noctule, Leisler, Brown Long-eared Bat and Serotine. There are 6 species in the Field, and it is a significant site for bats in the borough. The bats are extremely active around the pond.

In 2024, the Trustees have agreed to participate in an orchard biodiversity project which will assess the role of urban orchards in supporting insect diversity and capturing and storing carbon.

In Spring 2024, friends of the Field are being encouraged to complete a survey on sightings of hedgehogs, foxes and badgers. This will be followed up by a talk on hedgehogs and we are planning to place cameras in the Field and in local gardens to establish if there are hedgehogs living locally.

1.6 Community and Environmental Education Value.

The site is of great value to the local community, as it is used as a community wildlife and nature reserve by local residents and as an environmental education resource for local schools. In previous years Queens and Darell schools have planted trees and bluebells in specific areas and one bank of the pond has been strengthened for pond dipping by children with small nets. Several local nursery schools make regular visits to the Field.

Wild Education runs Forest School activities for Darell school on Monday mornings and Friday mornings.

Monty's Nursery and Casa Montessori use the Field every week. Barn Nursery has recently started coming more frequently.

Dose of Nature uses the Field for various activities for three days a week but for half this time, it can be used by other groups with toilet access in the Studio.

The Trust has a programme of walks and talks for 2024 including ones on Butterflies, Bats, Hedgehogs, Reptiles and Amphibians and Resilient Gardening. A very successful Family Event was held in April 2024, and it is the intention to extend the activities available to children.

Regular events are run by the Trust including an annual Wassail at New Year, a Summer Party and a Friends' Afternoon Tea.

2. General Principles of Management

2.1 Community Access

Events are held in the Field throughout the year and the community is welcomed through the main gates. The events have historic, wildlife & artistic themes to raise awareness of the Field and to fundraise for the upkeep of the site. Working Parties are undertaken monthly during Spring and Summer

which attract about 10 volunteers each session. Notice of such days are emailed to Friends.

2.2 School, nursery and scout access

As described above, schools and nurseries are using the site for educational purposes. The Trust is keen to allow regular attendance by local schools and nurseries in accordance with the principal aim of encouraging environmental education. Given the constraints arising from standing bookings, the Trust is encouraging out-of-school hours bookings from groups such as scouts and community groups.

2.3 Interpretation

Interpretation boards explain the points of interest to the users of the Field to help them learn, understand and enjoy their visit to the Field. A sign is attached to the main gate on Pensford Avenue to raise awareness about the site. The Trust aims to make a visit to the Field as much of an education as a recreational activity. Details of what lives and thrives in the Field are of interest to all visitors. Several signs needed replacement and our application for a grant from Kew Fete in 2023 was successful – two new signs are now in place. There are plans to further improve signage in 2024.

2.4 Hedging and Fencing

The hedge between the Field and tennis club is maintained on a shared-cost basis when needed. Planted in 1993 it has a mix of native species and includes hawthorn, field maple, hazel, guelder roses, holly, ash spindle. This makes excellent habitat for nesting birds and screens the Field from the lights of the tennis club at night. Plants growing beneath are alkanet, nettles, dandelion, yarrow, germander speedwell, thistles and cleavers. The most recent cut back was done by the Trustees and volunteers in Spring 2024. Any chippings are retained to help delineate the paths in the Field and control growth under the fruit trees. The area next to the hedge has been cleared to improve the ability of volunteers to maintain the hedge.

The remaining perimeter fencing is the back garden fences of the adjacent properties. The Trust aims to maintain no overhanging branches or vegetation interfering with neighbouring gardens. Some neighbours allow holes in their fencing so that animals can enter and leave the Field.

A new hedge is to be planted near the beehive in the south-eastern corner in Autumn 24 thanks to a donation of planting from the Woodland Trust. This will require nurturing in the early years.

2.5 Wooden furniture

The wooden carved bench adjacent to the pond and the curved bench next to it are showing signs of weathering. The curved bench has been repaired and will be monitored for further deterioration. Consideration will be given as to how to prolong the life of the carved bench.

Old benches which were no longer usable were replaced with new benches in 2023. The wood from the old benches was retained on site for the benefit of invertebrates such as the stag beetle or to build a compost heap. Benches are regularly oiled to protect against weathering.

2.6 Gate and Fence

The entrance gate and stile onto the Field was replaced in 2022. The Trust was successful in its application to the Kew Fete 2022 for a grant to assist with the cost of replacement. The fence near the gate was replaced in 2023 at minimal cost thanks to a local fencer.

2.7 Access Drive

An easy-to-maintain, semi-formal, hedgerow, punctuated with small trees, was planted along the access drive. These hedges require a yearly cut, into a semi-formal style. Bulbs were planted along this drive in the winters of 2017, 2018, 2022 and 2023. Maintenance of the access drive is the responsibility of the Council although the Trust keeps the planting under control.

2.8 Surveys

The Trust encourages surveys of the nature reserve and any findings will be published on the website. The Trust arranged for a bat survey with Habitats and Heritage in 2022 as described above. The Trust encourages further surveys of wildlife using the Field and is delighted to be participating in the orchard biodiversity project described above.

2.9 Records

Records are kept of findings in the Field. There have been butterfly transects made in the Field since 2003. To encourage students to use the Field for project it is important to record mammals, birds, insects and flowers. Specific items like bat records are useful for local societies and students.

2.10 Website

A new website was set up in 2022 and is maintained to inform interested local people about events and workdays. Instagram and Facebook accounts have also been created to advertise events to locals. The Trust has been helped in promoting its online presence by photos taken by Brian Secrett.

2.11 Exchange of knowledge

The Trust has had extensive contact with the LBRuT Ecology Officers over the felling of the trees in 2024 and the proposed planting plan. The Trust has approached Habitats and Heritage and Kew Gardens for advice on future management of the Field. The Trustees have contact with various other local groups and the Council to exchange knowledge and experience.

2.12 Studio and Health and Safety

The Studio was in considerable need of external repair and painting this year and the work was completed in May 2024. The planking on the west facing wall was almost totally replaced. The Trust established a new Health and Safety File for the Studio and the Field in January 2024 which will be updated annually. General inspections are carried out monthly. A sparrow box was purchased for the east side of the studio in 2023.

3. Land Management

3.1 Meadow

This is the area inside the woodchip path which was laid in 2006. The area is rich in invertebrates and has many different species of flora. The meadow is sub-divided into two sections, one being for events and the other for wildlife.

The grass in the central area is cut throughout the summer leaving long grass around the borders to encourage butterflies, amphibians and small mammals. Various paths (such as to the pond and orchard) are also mown to encourage visitors not to tread on the long meadow.

Ragwort removal is no longer considered necessary in the summer (previously it was removed leaving a small area adjacent to the willow to provide a potential home for the cinnabar moth).

3.2 Orchard

Maintenance, such as weeding, pruning and mulching is done on a regular basis and it is the intention to add trees from time to time. Suppression of weeds is an issue and in May 2024, the Trust trialed the use of recycled woolen carpets around the trees. When the chipping has been completed, they will be scattered on top.

3.3 Pond Area

This was created in 1998. A new pond was created 2012. We were not happy with the original pond despite a lot of work and cost. Works to the pond in January 2017 included undertaking repairs to a leak and new planting. The

pond is now in much better shape with well-established lilies, oxygenating plants and clear water. It gets rainwater off the roof of the Studio via a pipe laid under the meadow, and from the rain. In drought conditions it can be topped-up with mains water via the same pipe – but it is understood that this should be avoided if possible.

In May 2023, volunteers removed significant quantities of non-native plants which were choking the pond. In Autumn 2023, pebbles were added to the margins of the pond to provide an enhanced habitat for the smaller creatures. However, the pebbles have rolled into the pond and are not providing the hoped for cover. It is the intention in 2024 to plant some native marginal plants to provide shelter for amphibians and invertebrates, for example, water mint. The Trust has received extremely helpful advice on pond management from John Salisbury who is the chair of the London Amphibian and Reptile Group.

3.4 Woodland

The woodland was planted in 1992 by school children and local residents. Broadleaved woodlands are LBAP (London Biodiversity Action Plan) priority habitat. It is intended to leave the trees to mature but control the brambles with regular workdays.

Tree saplings that are newly planted on site are watered regularly in the early years to promote growth. This includes our Queen's Platinum Jubilee crab apple.

The woodland includes many ash trees which are suffering from ash dieback. A tree survey was undertaken by a consultant, Kevin Martin, in late 2023 and he recommended that 50 infected trees should be removed over 5-7 years to allow the replanting of replacement trees to manage canopy loss. We were advised to fell 19 trees within 12 months. This initial work was completed in January/February 2024 ahead of the bird nesting season thanks to the incredibly hard work of members and volunteers, Mike Oxborrow, Dave Sapsford and Bob Gingell.

We were advised to plant replacement species that promote biodiversity and education. The recommended species are small leaved lime, large leaved lime, field maple, bird cherry and wild cherry.

There is now a plan for dealing with the felled trees – new loggeries, chipping for paths, logs to delineate paths etc. which we plan to complete in 2024. However, it was only possible to undertake new planting in Spring 2024 in relatively clear areas. It is the intention to replace each felled tree with two new trees of one of the species listed above. 26 new trees were planted in early

April 2024. The remainder will be planted in the Autumn. However, the trees ordered from the Woodland Trust are so small that it will be many years before they form part of the canopy in the Field. The intention is to apply for grants so that larger trees can be planted in the Autumn.

The Trustees have been successful in their application to the Woodland Trust for two free hedgerow packs for a hedge that will line the path on the eastern side of the Field.

It was the recommendation in the tree survey to repeat the survey in 12-18 months to assess the condition of the remaining ash trees and it is the intention to commission this in late 2024.

3.5 Stag beetle loggeries

The existing and new loggeries will be maintained once a year to preserve their form and function. A layer of chippings will also be applied to the loggeries.

3.6 Bulbs

Bulbs donated by Bulbs for London were planted along the edge of the entrance drive in late 2023. The Trustees purchased a selection of native bulbs for planting in the field in October 2023 at a cost of nearly £200 (bluebells next to the hive at the south-east corner, snowdrops near the entrance, wild daffodils in the meadow next to the orchard, snakeshead fritillaries under the willow, wood anemone next to the new dry hedge). In early 2024, we planted 500 native snowdrops in the green near the entrance to the field.

3.7 Bees

There are now several well-established hives owned by two beekeepers. The bees aid pollination of the orchard. The honey is available to buy. The beekeepers periodically provide talks about their work, for example at the May 2023 volunteer workday.

A dead hedge is maintained around the bee hives using cuttings from site. This is with the aim of encouraging bees to fly upwards when exiting the hive. Some of this is to be replaced by a living hedge following our successful application to the Woodland Trust as described above.

3.8 Bat boxes

It has been a long-term ambition to install bat boxes once the trees on site are of a suitable height and according to guidelines from the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) - “where bats are known to feed close to hedges and tree lines; ideally at least 4m above the ground and sheltered from strong winds and exposed to the sun for part of the day (usually south or south-west)”.

A bat survey was conducted in July 2022 by Habitats and Heritage to determine the needs of the bats. Subsequently two bat boxes have been erected by Habitats and Heritage in compliance with the above. We have now received advice on how to construct bat boxes and some of the felled trees will be used for this purpose in 2024.

3.9 Willow Circle

The willow circle had become overgrown and difficult to use as a shady area. Fantastic progress has been made in 2023 and 2024 to make this an ideal shelter for children. The trunks from the felled trees have been reused for seating.

4. Recreational Use

4.1 Events

To encourage local interest in the Field, a range of events are organised throughout the year. The Wassail takes place in January. The Summer Party, which has been held near Midsummer's Day, has been an annual event for several years. In 2018 a Friends' Afternoon Tea was introduced to encourage people to sign up to or continue their membership of Friends of Pensford Field. A gazebo is available as a shelter for such events.

4.2 Widening Participation

Broadening membership is supported by mailing lists, the website and social media. We have circa 460 people on the e-mailing list, over 150 of whom are Friends who contribute £5 a year (£10 a couple). We now have a corporate membership scheme, with our first member being Kew Gardens Rotary. Fliers are displayed locally for the Wassail and Summer Party and increasingly street WhatsApp groups and social media are the primary means of publicising events.

The Trustees are committed to improving access to the Field for educational purposes. The Trust is having to balance competing demands for usage of the Field and prioritises local state schools and nurseries with limited outdoor facilities of their own. We are delighted that Darell School now comes twice a week and that the Barn Nursery is showing increased interest in visiting the Field.

The Trustees also intend to facilitate short-term environmental projects requiring intensive access over short periods. In some instances, this may require shared use of the Field.

It is intended to encourage increased usage by scouts and community groups at weekends, in the evenings and in school holidays. The Trust has reinforced

links with the Kew Society who booked the Field and Studio for several events in 2023. Kew Rotary has also been very supportive of our events.

4.3 Therapeutic Use

The Field is used by Dose of Nature for 3 days a week but for half this time, other bookings are accepted for shared use.

The Trustees are keen to promote the use of the Field and the Studio for therapeutic and wellbeing activities such as yoga and Tai Chi. However, the Trustees do not wish to erode further the time available for educational establishments during term time and weekdays.

4.4 Code of Conduct

A code of conduct has been drawn up (see Appendix 2) and will be issued to any group hiring the Studio or booking the Field and to anyone given the code to the main gate. It sets out activities which can and which cannot take place in the Field. For example: no dogs, ball games, music, fires etc.

5. Short-term priorities

The following activities will be prioritised for completion in the next 12-18 months.

- build on links with LBRuT Ecology team, Habitats and Heritage, Kew Gardens, the London Amphibian and Reptile Group and other organisations to provide advice on ecological management
- encourage use of the Field for more supervised educational visits by schools, nurseries, scouts etc.
- continue an education programme on birds, bees, bats, fungi and wildlife
- arrange events for children in school holidays
- champion ecological surveys of insects, fungi, bats, butterflies, birds, wildflowers, reptiles and invertebrates
- maintain dead hedges around bee hives and plant a new living hedge in Autumn 2024
- clear brushwood from felled trees and arrange for chipper so that chippings can be used on paths, loggery and in the orchard
- nurture new trees planted in Spring 2024
- develop and implement planting plan for Autumn 2024 to replace other felled trees
- plant more bulbs and woodland plants in Autumn 2024
- plant more marginal plants in the pond such as water mint in 2024

- continue programme of pruning fruit trees in the Orchard and clearing under the canopies
- monitor usage of recycled woolen carpet to suppress weeds under the Orchard
- commission a new tree survey in late 2024 or early 2025 to assess the condition of the remaining ash trees and implement recommended actions
- allow the wild meadow to self-seed or extend if required and sow yellow rattle to stop domination of strong grasses in Autumn
- reinforce the loggery and create one or two new loggeries
- maintain the new benches with teak oil as appropriate
- build and erect new bat boxes made out of felled trees
- refurbishment of first bug hotel to be completed
- second bug hotel to be moved and refurbished
- reuse old signs for new information signs on Bees and Bug Hotel and seek funding for a new pond safety sign
- seek funding from Kew Fete, Kew Market, Kew Rotary and Kew Horticultural Society for new planting in the Autumn and other requirements e.g. new bench and signs

Appendix 1.

Trees in the Orchard

Apples and Pears:

Bramley

Red Devil

Louise Bains

Orleans Reinette

Winter Nelis

Limelight

Rev Wilkes

Blenheim Orange

Oullins golden greengage

Vranja quince

Medlar Nottingham

Opal plum.

Sunburst Cherry

Wild crab apple

Plum tree – variety unknown

Appendix 2

Code of Conduct

Pensford Field Nature Reserve

We very much hope you enjoy your visit

Entering the site

Please make sure the gate is locked once your whole group has entered.

All children must be accompanied by an adult. No dogs save assistance dogs.

Boundaries

No running, climbing trees, hard ball games, bicycling round the field BBQ's, fires or picking flowers, berries or fruit. Please stay on the main paths as there are many species growing and breeding in the adjacent grasses, water and woodland. Show children how far they can explore and point or mark out any restricted or ecologically sensitive areas.

Seats are provided for your comfort. In addition, a small area with logs can be used as seats. No new areas can be made. No music without permission.

Pond

Remind children to stay at a safe distance from the edge of the pond. Throwing stones or sticks into the pond can harm pond life. Please do not collect frogspawn.

Leaving the Nature Site

You should 'leave no trace' when you depart from the nature site – shelters must be taken down and anything you brought onto site should be taken away, including all rubbish. Please do a sweep of the site before you leave to make sure you haven't left anything behind. Please ensure gates are locked on leaving.