About Old Down

Old Down is about 12 hectares of ex farm land with a narrow strip of mature beech wood part owned by Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council. The mature woodland is classed as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). The wildlife group manages wildlife aspects of Old Down for the benefit of the community and for wildlife.

Wildflower rich chalk downland is a priority habitat in the Hampshire County Council Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). In 2009 Old Down had 155 species of trees shrubs, plants and grasses. We want to encourage more species and in increasing numbers.

Aims of the Group

The aims of the group are to;

- Restore or protect valuable & fragile wildlife habitats such as grassland and woodland.
- Increase the diversity and distribution of wildflowers and dependent species of birds, butterflies, small mammals.
- Offer learning opportunities through training, practical work, talks & visits.

What do we do?

- Monitor wildflowers, birds, butterflies, moths, other insects and mammals.
- Remove scrub and control weeds.
- Thin trees and coppice hazel.
- Organise annual grass cutting to encourage wildflowers.
- Expand areas of wildflowers by conducting seed and plant trials.
- Make presentations, provide educational material and lead walks.
- Have fun and enjoy what we do!

How can you help?

Do you enjoy fresh air and light exercise? Do you enjoy walking and observing things around you?
Are you artistic and enjoy photography or painting?
Do you have an interest in birds, insects or plants that you would like to indulge?
Would you simply like to learn more about our wildlife?

If you would like to get involved or simply require more information then please contact: paul_beevers@tiscali.co.uk or on 01256 475944

Where is Old Down?

Old Down is located beside the A30 on the west side of Basingstoke about 1 mile from Junction 7 of the M3. See map.

Public Transport?

For public transport call: 0845 121 0180

Painted Lady on Marjoram, Old Down July

OLD DOWN & BEGGARWOOD
WILDLIFE GROUP

Discover

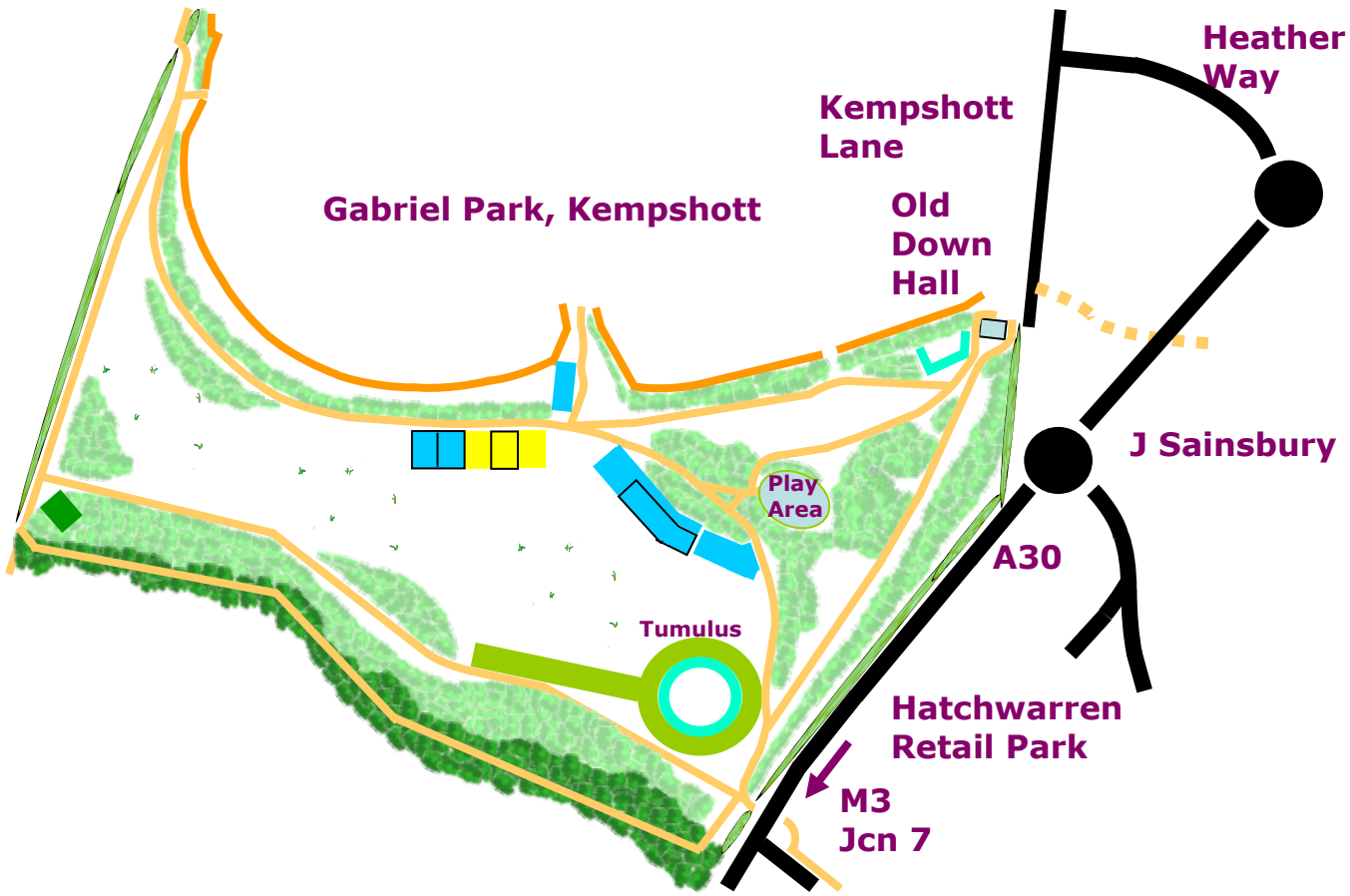
Old Down Woodland Park

Bringing back our wildlife

Cowslips, Tumulus area of Old Down late April

Assisted by Basingstoke and Deane

Old Down Woodland Park



Key

Mature Wood	Young Shrub & Tree Planting	Hedge	Bank	Existing Wild-flower Area	Seed Trials 2008	Seed Trials 2009	Compost Habitat	Main Paths	Under pass

An Opportunity For Nature

When taken into public ownership half of the farmland was sown with grasses and half with trees and shrubs. An area around the Tumulus was sown with wildflowers and the group is working to increase wildflowers, to increase interest and colour for people, and food, nesting, roosting and hiding places for insects (including butterflies and bees), birds and small mammals. To have a healthy wildlife we need healthy populations of wildflowers. Birdsfoot Trefoil, for example, is food for 50 species of insect.

Management

Woods and Shrubs

New wood and shrub areas are being managed to create sheltered glades for butterflies and hazel coppiced on a cycle to create a more open structure that lets in light. This will, in time, encourage woodland wildflowers to colonise. Coppiced hazel will benefit birds by creating thickets for birds as they grow back, and the coppicing prolongs the life of the hazel too. Scrub, while valuable for wildlife, is kept in check and managed to discourage rabbits. Rabbits kill young trees by eating the bark and overgrazing of wildflowers prevents plants from producing flowers and nectar for insects, or seed for new plants or food for birds.

Grassland

Grassland needs to be cut and cleared annually as an alternative to grazing so that wildflowers can compete with grasses. Removing seasonal growth allows new seed to make soil contact and receive light and warmth to germinate. The trials in fenced and unfenced areas are testing different approaches to reseeding and to see which plants do well. Wildflowers are mostly perennials and can take several years to flower. The time to cut and the height is key and has to take account of the species of grasses and plants that grow in an area.