

# **Jacob Smith Park**

## **Management and Maintenance Plan**



**2021 – 2025**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

### **1.1 Purpose of Management and Maintenance Plan**

The purpose of this Management and Maintenance Plan is to:

- Ensure the longevity of this locally important green space
- Provide a clear vision for the policy, direction and development of Jacob Smith Park
- Ensure community involvement and ownership relating to Jacob Smith Park
- Act as a basis for identifying priorities for action within Jacob Smith Park
- Set continuous aims through the action plan that address issues relating to the needs of the park, community and visitors

This management plan is designed to outline the way forward with regard to long-term improvement and maintenance.

This document has been produced with the support and input of the Friends of Jacob Smith Park; this group will continue to play an important role in the delivery of the vision for the site.

It is designed to be a working document, which will enable staff and the local community to monitor and review on-going management and maintenance.

## 2.0 Location plan and details

### Location Map



### Plan of Jacob Smith Park



## 3.0 Jacob Smith Park Overview and History

### **3.1 Site Overview**

Jacob Smith Park is situated approximately 1 mile from the centre of Knaresborough. The gate to its 30 acres of walled parkland, in Scriven near Knaresborough, was opened on the 11 January 2008 following completion of safety work by Harrogate Borough Council. Miss Winifred Jacob Smith, who was the last surviving member of a prominent farming family, bequeathed the parkland for "people to enjoy the freedom and beauty that public parks bring". The site offers informal recreational opportunities and provides a home to a variety of flora and fauna. This makes Jacob Smith Park a valuable asset to local residents of Knaresborough.

### **3.2 History**

Scriven Hall, was partially rebuilt in the late 1600s and again c.1730, and was the seat of the Slingsbys. This was the administrative centre of Scriven Manor and was supported by rents from tenant farmers and the proceeds of timber production and any quarrying in the manor. The status, wealth and lifestyle of the former lords of Scriven is shown in the buildings and structures in the village, the large area of parkland associated with the Hall, the survival of eighteenth century kennels for the hunting pack, and an icehouse. Tellingly the manor's sawmill was located near the Hall, allowing close monitoring of the production of lumber.

In the late medieval period the manor had three principal farms: Home Farm, Oak View and Corner Cottage, each on one side of the triangular Green. Agriculture and forestry remained the main local activity into the nineteenth century by which time more farmhouses and cottages had been built around the Green and the lands around the green used as market gardens, plus a large area of allotments at Market Flat Lane.

During the Second World War the Hall was requisitioned and then, in 1952, destroyed by fire. The Hall's coach house and stable block were converted into a new Hall. The Scriven Estate was finally split up with the sale of individual buildings and plots of land in 1965-66. Miss Winifred Jacob Smith and her sister, Dorothy, acquired Scriven Park, part of Scriven Hall from the Slingsby Estate and the park was home to their pedigree Ayrshire cattle herd.

Miss Winifred Jacob Smith was the last survivor of the Jacob Smith family and following her death in 2003 the land was bequeathed to Harrogate Borough Council in 2006 on the condition that it is used as a public park. The renamed Jacob Smith Park is now open to the public.

### **3.3 Archaeology**

Kevin Earl of the Claro Community Archaeology Group, based in Knaresborough, undertook a research study into the history of Scriven which included Jacob Smith Park. Their findings were published in 2013 and showed that this parkland has local archaeological importance and is a relic of a much older landscape associated with the village of Scriven.

Some of the trees within the park are likely to be about 500 years old and Low Wood at the western edge of the park was planted as part of the landscaping of the estate by the Slingsby family in the 18th century. Having landscaped their fields, the Slingsbys then enclosed their new parkland by building the estate wall which still runs along



Scriven Road and Scotch George Lane.

Guiseley Hill within the park is the possible site of an Iron Age settlement with the remains of a bank and ditch and there is some evidence of hut circles there within an enclosure. Like all other archaeological remains within the park, there has been no excavation work undertaken and the ground still remains undisturbed.

There is some ridge and furrow here which is evidence of medieval farming and which is still visible when the grass is short. A map dated 1629 shows that a farmstead once stood in what is now the park, close to Scotch George Lane. The ponds within the park may be associated with small-scale iron smelting in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and there is evidence of a water management system in the fields; again no detailed investigations have yet been undertaken. In more recent times, the park was used to train tank crews and infantry during WW2 when Scriven Hall was requisitioned as an army camp. The park also served as the village cricket pitch.

### **3.4 Landscape**

Jacob Smith Park is approximately 12 Hectares in size and is a mixture of amenity grassland, hay meadows, mature trees and new plantations. There are individual mature trees across the site as well as along the South Eastern Boundary. There have been a number of new planting schemes in the last 10 years. In 2009 and 2011 planting took place on the North Eastern and Southern boundaries. In 2015 a further boundary enhancement scheme was carried out on the North Eastern and Eastern margins.

### **3.5 Structures within the Park**

Jacob Smith Park is enclosed by a wall. The wall had fallen into a state of disrepair. Initial urgent repairs were made in 2010 but the wall may require further work. The wall is to be inspected in 2016 and a programme of works to be established if required. The wall is the responsibility of HBC Building Services however an annual visual check will be made by HBC & FOG.

There are no buildings within the park – and the covenant gifting the park to the Council precludes the construction of buildings within the park. Further details of the covenants placed on the park can be found in the [appendices](#) of this document.

### **3.6 Ecological Value**

Jacob Smiths Park position on the edge of Knaresborough makes it an important site in terms of ecological value. The Park has four distinct habitat compartments; Woodland, Grassland, Wetland as well as large areas of scrub comprising of species such as thistle, nettle and willow herb.

In 2013 Lobo Ecology carried out a botanical survey of the park and a number of observations from that report feed into this section of the management plan. A copy of the report can be found on [www.jacobsmithpark.co.uk](http://www.jacobsmithpark.co.uk)

The woodland of Jacob Smith Park comprises '*secondary woodland*', secondary woodland is the term given to woodlands that have regrown on abandoned or neglected ground that had previously been used for agriculture, grazing or

development of towns, villages, industry and roads. The secondary woodland of Jacob Smith Park is a combination of naturally regenerated trees and other trees that have been planted i.e. the avenue of Limes to the boundary running parallel with Scotch George Way and those trees recently planted to the periphery of the park.

The grassland across Jacob Smith Park is largely homogenous in nature characterised by more common grasses and a lack of wildflowers. Grasses identified include those species associated with agriculture, but equally there is a good diversity of grasses including those species associated with minimal 'intervention.

There is one permanent pond and two areas which hold seasonal water and where the resident plant species indicate a high water table. The pond was fenced in 2018.

The boundary of the park contains a number of areas of scrub. These are areas which aren't taken as a part of the hay cut and contain species such as thistle and nettle which provide great habitat for a number of birds and invertebrates.

This mosaic of habitats enhances the ecological value of the park. Most species require a range of elements within a site or a wider landscape in order to complete their life cycle. Many of these elements, such as small patches of bare ground, tall flower-rich vegetation, or scattered trees and scrub, are often absent from the English landscape. This has contributed to serious declines in many species, with some now close to extinction.

Providing a mosaic of these elements in the landscape would go a long way towards meeting the needs of many of these species, enabling them to thrive once again

Everything practical will be done to encourage further biodiversity within the site.

### **3.7 Recreation**

Jacob Smith Park consists of small areas of amenity grass for informal play and recreation, mature and newly planted woodland, grassland and scrub. This landscape allows users to appreciate the wildlife of the area in semi natural surroundings.

Since it was opened to the public Jacob Smith Park has become a well-used and popular communal space. The site is used by a variety of users including dog walkers, children, runners and walkers.

### **3.8 Community Safety**

The Community Beat Officer used to attend the Friends' group meetings and respond to issues but no longer attends. There is not an ongoing need for their attendance, but the Friends Group will re-establish contact with the PCSO to ensure there is a relationship and ability to respond swiftly to any issues.

### **3.9 Access**

There is one pedestrian entry point next to which there is also a service gate to allow machinery access.

All site paths are mown grass. Improvements to the footpath surface are restricted by

covenants placed on the site when it was bequeathed to Harrogate Borough Council in 2008 .

### **3.10 Furniture**

Covenants placed on the land when it was bequeathed to Harrogate Borough Council by Winifred Jacob Smith in 2006 place restrictions on what furniture can be present. Currently onsite are two dog waste bins, one notice board and an additional interpretation board will be added in 2022.

### **3.11 Seating**

Large logs have been used to provide four seating areas within the park. The covenants on the land restrict what type of seating can be used.

### **3.12 Consultation 2008/09**

Following on the gifting of Jacob Smith Park by Winifred Jacob Smith in 2008 Harrogate Borough Council carried out an extensive consultation process with the entire community not only in close proximity of the park but also across Knaresborough as a whole. More details of this consultation are available in the [appendices](#).

## **4.0 Current Maintenance**

### **4.1 Staffing**

Whilst there are no site based staff Jacob Smith receives scheduled maintenance by mobile grass teams. Harrogate Borough Council's Countryside Education Officers are actively involved in the management and maintenance of the park.

### **4.2 Trees**

Jacob Smith Park has a large stock of mature trees, providing a wide range of foliage cover, spring and autumn interest. A tree survey was completed in 2011 showing 265 trees within the park boundary. This survey did not include tree planting that has taken place in 2009, 2011 and 2014. Further tree surveys were scheduled for 2016/2017. In September 2019 the majority of the trees were surveyed by HBC, and there have been subsequent surveys on the groups of trees on the perimeter in July 2020, and August 2021. In 2022 all newly planted trees were added to HBC inventory.

In the future, only the trees on the perimeter of JSP will be proactively surveyed. HBC will rely on passive survey by HBC staff and members of the public to identify any tree risk features on the trees within the park. This is part of the new risk/benefit strategy that will be adopted in HBC revised tree and woodland policy. The reason behind this is that it is not proportionate, or reasonably practicable to survey the trees in JSP every 5 years as we have done previously, as it is a low use area, with weather dependant occupancy rates.

There is no additional protection for the ancient and veteran trees on site, and this is not necessary, given that HBC own the site, and the trees within JSP are managed in



accordance with best arboricultural practices outlined in the HBC Tree & Woodland policy.

#### **4.3 Grass and footpaths**

Maintenance of amenity grass and the footpaths includes 6 cuts per year between April and October.

The remainder of the grass land should be cut for hay once a year July/ August by a contractor.

### **5.0 Partnerships**

#### **5.1 Friends of Jacob Smith Park**

The Friends of Jacob Smith Park was established in 2009 for the public benefit to act in collaboration with Harrogate Borough Council and in accordance with the covenants established by Miss Jacob Smith.

The Friends of Jacob Smith Park have a series of aims that support their primary objectives of helping to maintain the park in accordance with the history of the landscape and to seek to enhance the maintenance and management of the park to benefit the people of Knaresborough.

The Group are constituted, have a bank account and hold their own insurance, which allows them to undertake practical projects in Jacob Smith Park.

The group meet on a regular basis and hold work parties carrying out projects agreed by the group such as tree planting. The Friends of Jacob Smith Park have a website which is available on this link [www.jacobsmithpark.co.uk](http://www.jacobsmithpark.co.uk). The group also has a Facebook page and can be found by searching 'The Friends of Jacob Smith Park'.

#### **5.2 Youth Groups**

Jacob Smith Park is enjoyed by local schools and community groups, including Rainbow, Brownie, Cub and Scout packs, and local orienteering teams.

#### **5.3 Other Groups**

There are a number of other groups that have been involved in the park in a either a formal or informal way these include;

- Harrogate and District Naturalists Association
- Claro Community Archaeology Group
- Claro Orienteering Group
- The Rotary Club of Knaresborough

- Knaresborough in Bloom
- Scriven Area Residents Association
- Local Council representatives

## **6.0 Aims and Objectives**

### **6.1 Vision**

A managed wild space which is accessible for the local community to enjoy.

JSP will retain its 'parkland' characteristic with large open areas of grassland, single trees and copses. We will ensure that the park does not become further developed and that opportunities to increase 'naturalness' are realised where possible.

The majority of the park will be left to wild space with paths & open spaces mown and maintained periodically.

There will be selected control of plants to ensure balance retained and an increase in biodiversity by introducing and managing native species as appropriate to different areas:

- Woodland
- Grassland
- Wetland
- Scrub

Maintenance and enhancement of green corridors will be encouraged so wildlife has safe passage between different habitats in JSP.

JSP will remain accessible for people to enjoy with space for games, recreation & meeting.

### **6.2 Management Objectives**

- Ensure that Jacob Smith Park is appropriately developed with the support of the Friends of Jacob Smith Park and the local community, providing recreation opportunities for all users now and into the future within the restrictions of the covenants placed on the park when it was bequeathed to Harrogate Borough Council
- To work towards improved safe access for all to broaden participation and increase the number of groups enjoying the park's many recreational and educational benefits
- Make provision for environmental considerations (such as biodiversity) whilst developing the site
- Maintain informal spaces within the park providing areas for informal recreational activities
- To help maintain the park in accordance with the Covenants and history of the landscape

at all times

- To seek to enhance the maintenance and management of the park to benefit the people of Knaresborough
- To promote high standards of tidiness and care for the park's environment
- To work with the Friends of Jacob Smith Park to apply for grants and invite/receive contributions to further develop the park
- The Friends of Jacob Smith Park would like the boundaries of footpaths and 'rides' to be moved slightly each year, to reduce soil compaction and restrict the spread of undergrowth

## 7.0 Action plan

YEAR	WHEN	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	UPDATE/STATUS
Year 1 2021	Winter	Woodchip entrance	HBC	Completed January but area was still quite boggy due to high rainfall
	Spring/ Summer	Survey perimeter wall	HBC	Not completed
	May	Strim around signs, entrance and seating	HBC	
	July	Large areas of balsam to be cut back	HBC & FOG	50% Strimmed by Countryside Education Officer and pulled by FOG 15 <sup>th</sup> June – wasn't successful – now looking at contractor
	Summer	Hay cut	HBC	No contractor – escalated to estates team to find new contractor
	July	Balsam Bash – Volunteer event	FOG	Went ahead but numbers limited due to covid restrictions. Balsam has spread significantly and now plan to use contractor
	Winter	Tree Survey	HBC	Did not happen
	Winter	Survey Perimeter Wall – cut and spot tree stumps Litter pick and remove trees guards	HBC & FOG	Completed December

YEAR	WHEN	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	UPDATE/STATUS
Year 2 2022	Winter	Countryside Education Officer to meet with environmental health drainage officer to investigate drainage issues at park	HBC	Not possible to make any permanent solution to the drainage issues as cost would be prohibitive. Continue with annual wood chipping.

YEAR	WHE N	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILI TY	UPDATE/STATUS
	Wint er	Scrape off excess mud and wood chippings at entrance so main gate and open freely and room for fresh wood chipping next winter.	HBC & FOG	Volunteers cleared the area and additional wood chippings to be spread to help with waterlogging (estimate January'23)
	Marc h	Install bird and bat boxes	FOG	All boxes installed by the end of the summer period. Locations mapped for future reference.
	April	Replace seating that has rotted	HBC	Replacement bench style identified by committee and approved by the Trustee. Seven benches to be made over winter'22 and installed by spring'23.
	April	Install interpretation board near park entrance	FOG	Completed Spring'22
	May	Assess dock species cover and spot treat as required	HBC	Not required this year but will assess next year.
	May	Strim around signs, entrance and seating	HBC	Completed.
	June	Balsam bash by contractor	Contractor	Year 1 of 3 successfully completed. Some lessons to be incorporated into years 2 & 3.
	July	Strim around signs, entrance and seating	HBC	Completed.
	Late July	Hay cut	Contractor	Cut completed in October'22.
	July	Balsam Bash	FOG	Completed.
	Augu st	Strim round signs, entrance and seating	HBC	Not required.
	Wint er	Survey Perimeter Wall – cut and spot tree stumps	HBC & FOG	Carry forward to 2023 – due to lack of resource to organise volunteer event.

YEAR	WHEN	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	UPDATE/STATUS
Year 3 2023	Winter	Woodchip entrance	HBC &FOG	
	May	Assess dock species cover and spot treat as required	HBC	



YEAR	WHEN	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	UPDATE/STATUS
	May	Strim around signs, entrance and seating	HBC	
	May	Balsam bash by contractor (significant areas of balsam)	CONTRACTOR	
	June	Balsam Bash (isolated plants not caught by contractor)	HBC & FOG	
	July	Strim around signs, entrance and seating	HBC	
	Late July	Hay cut	Contractor	
	July	Balsam Bash	FOG	
	August	Strim round signs, entrance and seating	HBC	
	Winter	Survey Perimeter Wall – cut and spot tree stumps	HBC & FOG	

YEAR	WHEN	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	UPDATE/STATUS
Year 4 2024	Winter	Woodchip entrance	HBC & FOG	
	May	Assess dock species cover and spot treat as required	HBC	
	May	Strim around signs, entrance and seating	HBC	
	May	Balsam bash by contractor	CONTRACTOR	
	June	Balsam Bash (isolated plants not caught by contractor)	HBC & FOG	
	July	Strim around signs, entrance and seating	HBC	
	Late July	Hay cut	Contractor	
	July	Balsam Bash	FOG	
	August	Strim round signs, entrance and seating		
	Winter	Survey Perimeter Wall – cut and spot tree stumps	HBC & FOG	

YEAR	WHEN	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	UPDATE/STATUS
Year 5 2025	Winter	Woodchip entrance	HBC & FOG	

YEAR	WHEN	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	UPDATE/STATUS
2025	May	Assess dock species cover and spot treat as required	HBC	
	May	Strim around signs, entrance and seating	HBC	
	May	Balsam Bash	HBC & FOG	
	July	Strim around signs, entrance and seating	HBC	
	Late July	Hay cut	Contractor	
	July	Balsam Bash	FOG	
	August	Strim around signs, entrance and seating	HBC	
	Winter	Survey Perimeter Wall – cut and spot tree stumps	HBC & FOG	

## 8.0 Appendices

### 8.1 Consultation

Consultation 2008/09

Following on the gifting of Jacob Smith Park by Winifred Jacob Smith in 2008 Harrogate Borough Council carried out an extensive consultation process with the entire community not only in close proximity of the park but also across Knaresborough as a whole.

Consultation details

Consultation took place on January 26th, 2008, February 22nd 2008 and July 5th 2008. Following each phase of consultation (January and July), six weeks minimum were available in which to return comments. 299 surveys were returned during Phase One, which included a school visit. 192 surveys were returned during the second phase. Of these, over 41% did not attend the first consultation. In total, 378 different people of all ages took the opportunity to participate in the consultation about Jacob Smith Park.

Consultation recommendations

- That the current entrance is used purely for maintenance vehicle access only and will remain locked at all other times even for pedestrians
- That two pedestrian access points will be created through the wall (subject to planning permission due to its location in a conservation area)
- That dog waste and litterbins will be located at all entrances, within the park

- That mown footpaths be cut on a regular basis. These will be at least one and a half metres wide to allow people walking in opposite directions to pass
- That Wildlife Boxes are purchased and erected
- That work take place to set up a “Friends of Group” for the park
- That once a Friends of Jacob Smith Park Group is established all other features within the park are discussed
- That a number of areas are cut regularly, leaving longer grass to grow in other areas
- That the dog wardens be informed that Jacob Smith Park is a walled park and request they check the park occasionally to ensure that dogs within the walls are attended
- That notices be put up requesting that dog owners clean up after their dogs
- That the main large grass areas be cut three to four times per year

## **8.2 Restrictive Covenants**

The following is a list of restrictive covenants for within the parkland as imposed by the Transferee (originally these were outline in the will which bequeathed the land to Harrogate Borough Council.

- Not to erect any building or apply for any form of development
- Not to apply for planning permission to build a new swimming pool
- No more than 3 additional pedestrian accesses (these should have appropriate gates so as to prevent any form of vehicular access)
- Not to use the property for anything other than a permanent open green recreational space for the benefit of the general public
- Not to allow the property including the stonewall surrounding it to fall into disrepair and to maintain the same in good condition for the benefit and use of the General Public
- To take all reasonable steps to preserve the flora, fauna and wildlife on the Property
- Not to carry out any works which alter or add to the stonewall surrounding the property, without prior permission from the trustees managing the estate
- Not to open the Property to the General Public before it has been officially named “Jacob Smith Park”
- Not to keep poultry, pigs, rabbits, pigeons, ducks, dogs or other livestock on the land
- To keep the land in a neat and tidy condition