RSPB update for Yateley Common Management Committee.

RSPB Warden Natalia Azzopardi- **02.11.2026**

Following the tree removal undertaken last winter, we will be continuously monitoring the areas where the felling took place to observe how they naturally regenerate. It is anticipated that heathland vegetation, such as heathers, will establish over the next few years but it is likely that we will need to undertake some intervention managing the vegetation. So far this seems to be the case in some areas, we have already seen heather growth which is encouraging. In other areas, scrub and bracken has sprouted which will require yearly intervention.

The map below highlights in green hatching the areas we looked at on the 26th June to determine what management which is being undertaken in the winter of 26/27. It we will be reducing some of the scrub, gorse and tree cover in these areas, but it will not be on the scale of the works undertaken last winter. This work will be undertaken on a much smaller scale by RSPB staff and volunteer work parties. The exception to this could be some of the densest gorse cover potentially being reduced by machine. Any areas covered will potentially be resown with heather cuttings & seeds cut from elsewhere onsite to encourage heather growth in areas where there is bare ground cover.

After the completion of the tree removal last winter, we improved the drainage and raised the track in three locations on the paths around the site in areas that were previously underwater in the winter. This should make visitor access easier going forward.

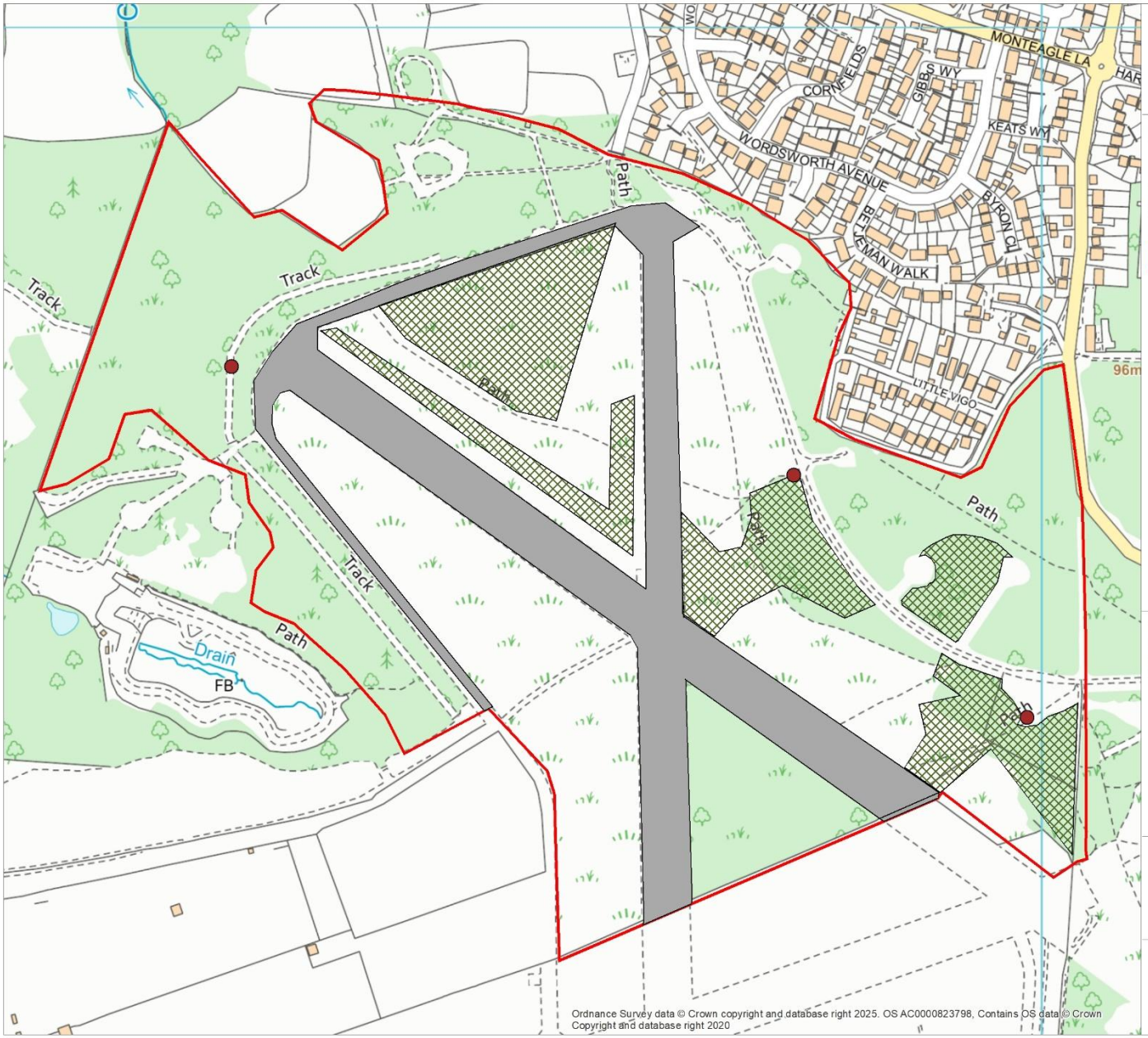
We have the data for this year's breeding bird populations 2Jays ecology have recorded 2 pairs of Nightjar, and 3 pairs of Dartford warbler. No breeding pairs of woodlark noted but ad-hoc sightings on informal bird surveys have noted their presence. Any breeding pairs of these species is surprising considering the state of the habitat but this shows a promising site to begin heathland restoration. The Hampshire & Isle of Wight Amphibian and Reptile Group visited the site in May and they were impressed with the initial restoration works. They spent 6 hours on site and found good populations of reptiles including 11 adders, which is a very impressive number for a species that is currently experiencing a significant national population decline. A good population of grass snake was also noted. Good butterfly numbers have been presented over the season, with key species such as greyling on site indicates there is ample food sources & bare ground cover. We hope that as the heather establishes we will begin to see some of the heathland specialist species such as silver studded blue beginning to utilise the pioneer stage heathers.

So what is new after summer?

Heather seedlings are appearing in the areas we have removed the conifers, it's starting to establish in certain areas which is very positive. Our main job in those compartments is to keep the other competing woody material at bay. An example of this is what we have carried out over summer with removing the poplar saplings from the newly felled areas of site.

We will also be recutting the stumps from the felled trees between now and Christmas & treating them with herbicide as they are sending up a lot of offshoots. This will prevent them from regrowing, something we do not particularly want as the areas we have felled will revert back to woodland with no intervention.

We will be actively maintaining the firebreaks that were installed last winter to provide access to the airports fire tender. We will also be carrying out in house scrub management to start clearing some new areas, including areas which have been damaged in fires to give the area a chance to regrow.



Legend:

- Track improvements
- Reducing scrub and tree cover
- Tarmac
- Boundary

Acknowledgements & Notes:

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Map scale = 1:3,491

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0 0.05 0.1 0.2 km

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