

Riverside Walk – draft vision

Liss Riverside Walk is a well-used path connecting Liss centre and Liss Forest. It has the status of a Public Footpath and Permissive Cycleway. The walk follows part of the old Longmoor Military Railway, dismantled in 1972 and now holds the status of a local nature reserve. The entire walk is divided into 10 compartments.

Compartment 10 (from the entrance on Station Road to just past the picnic and play area) is owned by and managed by Liss Parish Council (LPC) and covers approximately 1.2 hectares. There are 10 allotment plots growing fruits, vegetable and flowers covering an area of approximately 0.2 hectares. The remainder of the Riverside Walk (running to the junction with Forest Road) is the responsibility of East Hampshire District Council (EHDC).

The Riverside Walk site is predominantly broadleaved deciduous woodland with the footpath dissecting the site and a small area of amenity grassland with picnic benches and a play area. The River Rother runs south to north throughout the woodland. The woodland is generally heavily shaded with high proportion of nettles alongside the footpath, limiting the opportunity for woodland flora to flourish. Invasive species such as Himalayan balsam and American skunk cabbage are present just outside of the site boundary. LPC is committed to the monitoring and removal of these plants as they spread rapidly and outcompete native species.

The Riverside Walk is recognised for its great potential for informal recreation - walking and cycling in a natural environment. Dogs are welcome, but owners are expected to clear up after them and keep them under close control. LPC will continue to manage the Walk as a green and open space, offering an attractive and accessible place for those living in, or visiting the area, to enjoy the outdoors and nature. LPC will look to maintain and enhance the 'green corridor' of the Riverside Walk, and try to mitigate against the detrimental effects that a long distance footpath can have on the environment.

A Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) of the LPC owned section of the Walk was carried out by Arcadian Ecology in 2024 - it did not make any specific recommendations with regards to enhancing or protecting anything on site of ecological value as a Biodiversity Management Plan (developed by SDNPA/EHDC?) was already in existence. Any improvements LPC takes to enhance the biodiversity of the Walk and informal recreation of the area in the future, or to reduce the flooding risk, will be in line with the objectives set in the Biodiversity Management Plan, and LPC will look to follow good environmental practice working alongside EHDC and the South Downs National Park Authority to establish a seamless transition through the entirety of the Walk.

The PEA commissioned by LPC recommended that the management of the allotments should continue as is with any derelict sections brought back to functional use. Allotment tenants could be encouraged to use organic fertilisers, grow native species and not use pesticides. In addition, companion planting, (growing certain plants together) could help to reduce attack by pests and disease, and holes at the bottom of boundary fences would allow hedgehogs to roam the landscape. The creation of a small pond could attract amphibians, which together with hedgehogs, feed on snails and slugs.

Mill Road Community Garden – draft vision

Mill Road Community Garden is a public amenity space of approximately 0.5 hectares between Woodbourne Close and The Oval. The site is bordered to the north by a railway line with the remaining adjacent landscape consisting of housing. Hedgerows mark the boundary lines to the west, north and east, with Mill Road forming the southern boundary. Liss Parish Council (LPC) formally took over management of this previously unloved area of green space from East Hampshire District Council in Summer 2023.

Following consultation with local residents and using funding from developers, LPC transformed the site into a vibrant Community Garden and informal play area. Designed to be a socially inclusive and inviting open space, an accessible pathway links the surrounding housing to the road. The space offers informal recreation areas for all. Features include a natural play mound with tunnel, wildflowers, a trim trail, sociable seating, an information board, additional bins and a dog poo bag dispenser to encourage dog walkers to use the space responsibly. In partnership with The Hampshire Forest Partnership and The Tree Council, a Community Orchard, planted and maintained by volunteers, on site contains a variety of apple, pear, plum, medlar, damson and cherry trees. Additional non-fruit trees, including rowan, hornbeam and hazel, have been planted alongside a new hedgerow on the adjacent side of the Community Garden.

LPC will look to continue its use of volunteers to help to enhance the area, and continue to develop the area in a way that increases its bio diversity – such as the addition of bug hotels, and the creation of a spur from the Riverside Walk (the main green corridor in the village) to the allotment site at Kelseys (Mill Road).

A preliminary ecological assessment was carried out in 2024 to establish if there was anything which could be enhanced or protected on site. It found that, whilst increases to the biodiversity have already been achieved with a wildflower area and orchard, there is the potential for it to be increased further, including the following options:

- Manage the area of amenity grassland to the northwest of the wildflower area to create a meadow - longer sward height can be achieved by cutting twice a year, once in the spring with a second cut in early autumn. Avoid cutting during the summer when wildflowers are blooming. Mowing access paths through the meadow will create a mosaic of habitat and still allow public access.
- Allow longer grass sward height around the boundary hedgerows.
- Remove Virginia creeper *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* from the eastern hedgerow.