



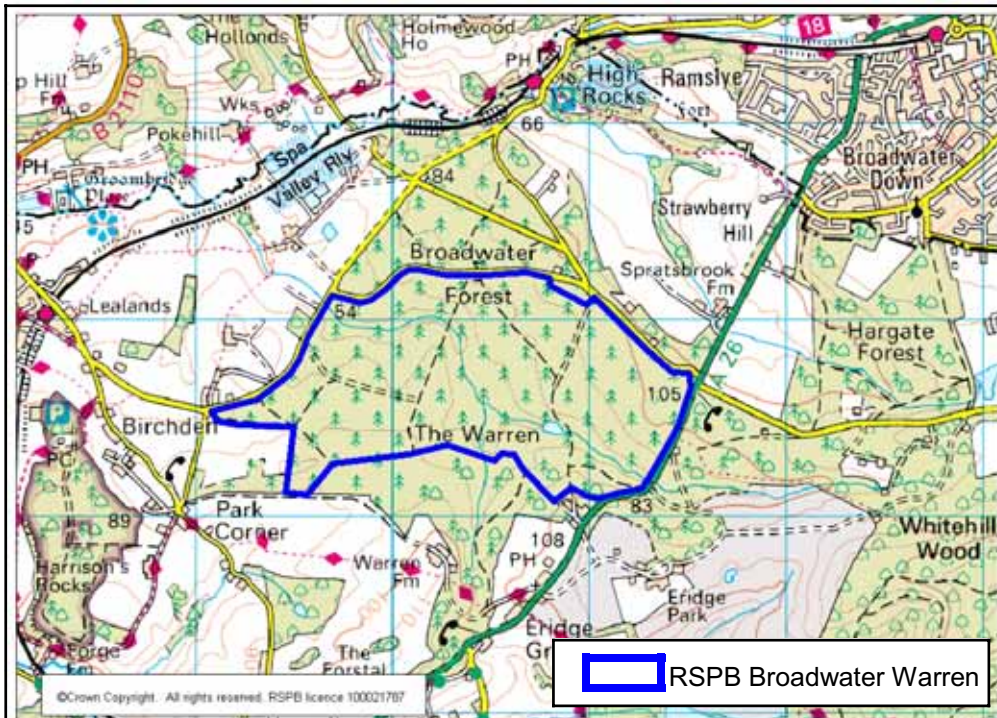
# Broadwater Warren: Introduction

## An exciting new nature reserve

On 5 January 2007, the RSPB announced that it had acquired a new nature reserve at Broadwater Warren, covering about 180 hectares (450 acres) of conifer plantation, heathland and ancient woodland.

The plan is to restore the area to its former glory, a mosaic of open heathlands with mature woodland, some clumps of pine trees and a rare valley mire. Our work will benefit rare wildlife, and provide an inspiring quiet place for people to visit.

The RSPB only acquire sites which are very special - or have the potential to be! Heathland restoration is one of the biggest priorities for nature conservation, and Broadwater Warren presents a rare opportunity as it is the largest and best potential heathland restoration site in the Weald.



## Where is the reserve?

Broadwater Warren is just south of Tunbridge Wells, between the A26 and the village of Groombridge. The site is continuous with the Sussex Wildlife Trust reserve of Eridge Rocks to the south.

## Choosing the name

You won't find the name 'Broadwater Warren' on any Ordnance Survey map, but we do have a good reason for it! Our reserve covers part of Broadwater Forest, and also part of an area called The Warren.



A Thomas (RSPB)

## So what will the reserve be like?

The restoration will take ten years to complete, but it will already be well on course after only a couple of years. Visitors will be able to enjoy long walks in one of the most varied and natural of Wealden landscapes.

There will be something to see at every season, including Wood Larks and Tree Pipits in spring, Nightjars and Woodcocks on warm summer evenings, beds of purple Heather in late summer, autumn colour, and winter finches.

## RSPB track-record

The RSPB manages over 200 nature reserves covering over 120,000 hectares. We have extensive experience of managing heathlands, including several restoration projects in the South East, such as at Farnham Heath in Surrey.

## Can you come and take a look at the reserve now?

Yes...but there is no car parking at present so we are not yet promoting the site. Complete the form on Sheet 6 to be kept informed of progress.

The purchase of Broadwater Warren has only been possible with the support of a great many organisations and individuals. In particular, the RSPB is grateful to the major funders:



This project is being part-financed by the European Community WARR Partnership Leader+ 2002-2008 Programme, supported by:

- The European Agriculture Guidance and Guarantee Fund of the EU
- The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs





# History of Broadwater Warren

## Royal hunting grounds

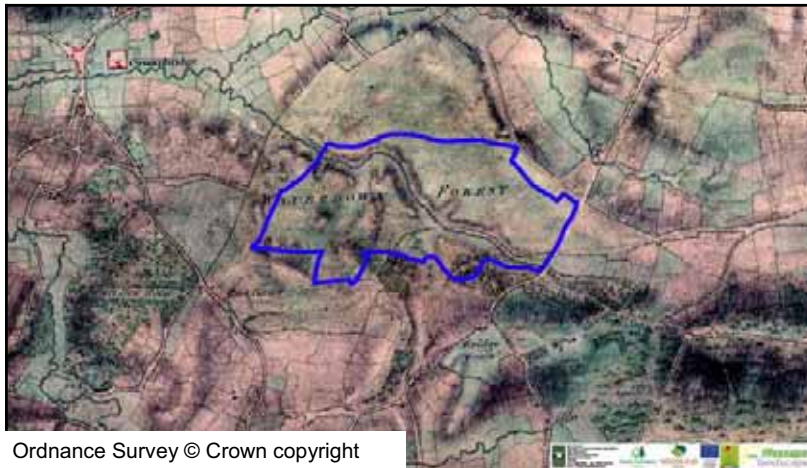
Broadwater Warren is a remnant of the old Waterdown Forest, one of the five great forests of the High Weald, along with St Leonard's, Tilgate, Worth, and Ashdown.

The word 'forest' in this context does not mean what most of us might think. Instead of being an area covered with trees, a 'forest' was a huge area of wild terrain set aside by the Norman kings almost a thousand years ago for hunting deer and wild boar.

Here in the south east, these forests were on poor soils on the higher ground and would have been an open mix of trees and heath, and it is likely that these were little changed from how they had looked for two or three thousand years before that.

## Waterdown Forest

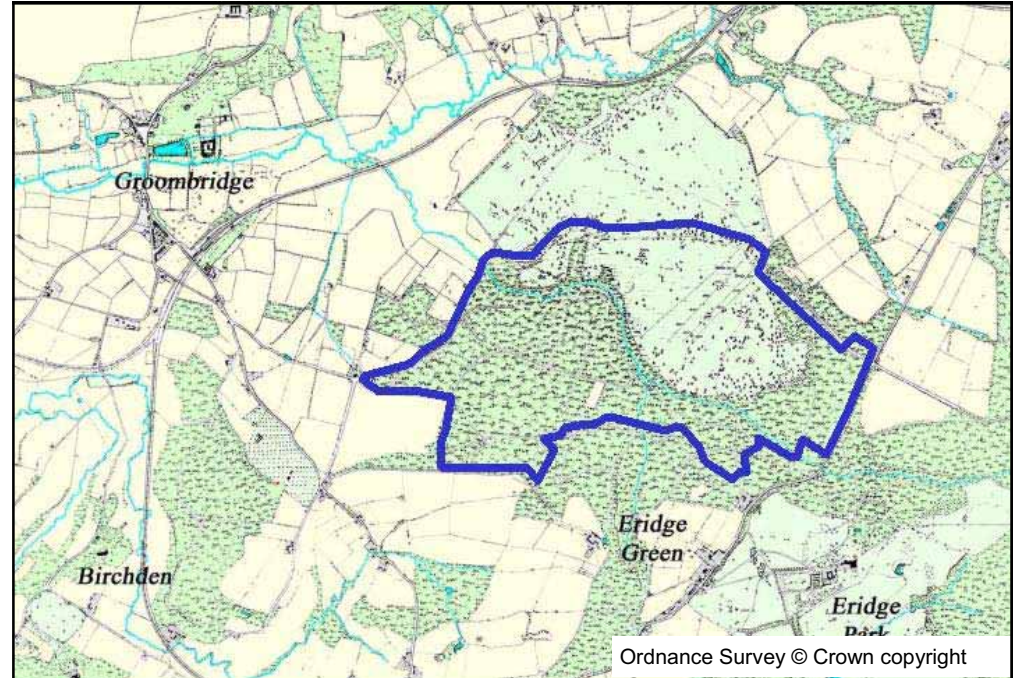
By 1800, when the Ordnance Survey draft was done (below; the blue marks the approximate boundary of the RSPB reserve), Waterdown Forest was still very much an open landscape with the stream flowing through its heart. Indeed, a map from 1793 shows 12 county army regiments lined up in camp on the heathland north of the stream.



Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright

## Encroaching woodlands

By the late 19th century, the Ordnance Survey maps show that the northern half Broadwater Warren was still open ground; some of it is marked as a 'volunteer rifle range'. However, much of the south of the site had now been planted with conifers, possibly from as early as 1820.



## More and more conifers!

From the 1950s onwards, commercial forestry was at full pace across the whole of Broadwater Warren. With the exception of Ashdown Forest, all the ancient Forests of the Weald had now disappeared under this conifer crop.

## Modern threats

In 1991, local residents sought the help of the RSPB to prevent Broadwater Warren being turned into a landfill site. Our investigations helped show the potential it has for heathland wildlife. The campaign was successful and the landfill plans were rejected, but the threat remained that the land would be sold into small parcels of land and its value lost. In 2007, we finally achieved our goal of purchasing the site, a major triumph. Now we look forward to uncovering the ancient landscape here.

With thanks to Mike Chapman at High Weald AONB for helping to source and prepare the maps



# Heathlands

## What is heathland?

Lowland heathland is one of those easily recognisable habitats - an open landscape carpeted with purple Heather, with patches of yellow-flowered Gorse, clumps of Birch trees and some Pines. Heaths tend to occur on warm, sandy soils which are acidic and low in nutrients.

Heaths are an ancient landscape that probably started as natural clearings maintained by wild grazing animals, but was then enhanced by our Bronze and Iron Age ancestors when they cleared woodland. The heaths were used for fuel, bedding, and grazing for their animals. Perhaps the most famous heaths are the New Forest and the Ashdown Forest.

If world's surface was the size of this piece of paper, the total area of heathland would be half the size of this dot!

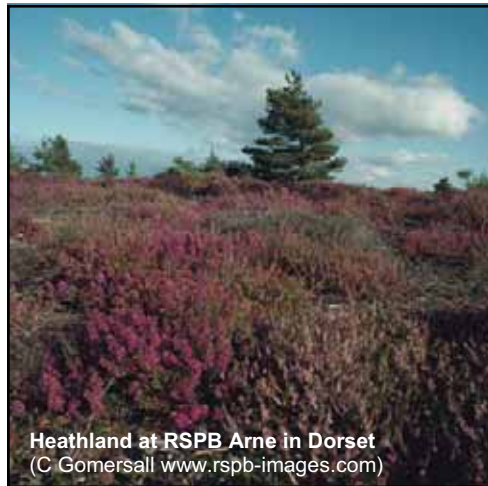
## Why is heathland important?

Heathland is globally an astonishingly rare habitat, and the UK is fortunate enough to hold about a fifth of the total world area. The unique environment of a heath is home to wildlife found nowhere else. There are charismatic species such as Nightjars and Dartford Warblers, as well as rare butterflies such as Silver-studded Blues, plus reptiles and unusual beetles, plants and lichens.

## Heathland in decline

In the last two hundred years, about 85% of the heaths in this country have been destroyed.

Some has been turned into farmland, some has been built upon, some has been left unmanaged and reverted to scrubby woodland, while huge areas have been planted with non-native conifer plantations as a timber crop.



Heathland at RSPB Arne in Dorset  
(C Gomersall www.rspb-images.com)

## How is heathland managed?

The challenge with heathland is to stop it becoming overrun with Birch and Pine seedlings. The main way to ensure this is to replicate the management of the past by using small numbers of grazing animals to hold the invasive saplings in check.

## How is heathland 're-created'?

The best place to 'recreate' heathland is on the very sites where it once existed - you restore it, rather than creating it. The Heather seeds and those of other heathland plants lie dormant in the soil, just waiting for sunlight to reawaken them. At a place like Broadwater Warren, you can see the heathland clinging on along the sunny edges of the paths, and with it tiny remnant populations of the special heathland wildlife. All it takes is to remove the trees, let in the sunlight, and the heathland returns. (Well, it's almost that simple!)



The restoration of heathland can be very quick - this is the RSPB's Farnham Heath Project in Surrey, just 18 months after the conifers were removed, and already the heather seeds have germinated and are flowering. Photo: A Thomas, RSPB



# The 10-year Plan

The RSPB has written a detailed and costed plan of what we would like to do at Broadwater Warren. The following summary gives an approximate indication of the timetable we hope to follow.

- 2007-08 Recruit Project Manager  
Prepare Environmental Impact Assessment, in consultation with local people and interested parties  
Organise surveys and collate all background information  
Establish volunteering programme  
Clear Rhododendron from valley
- 2008-09 Clear 34 hectares of conifer scrub  
Clear 32 hectares of conifers  
Begin grazing project  
Install car park  
Produce reserve leaflet and welcome information  
Formally launch reserve  
Begin to control Bracken and scrub
- 2009-10 Clear-fell 10 hectares of conifers
- 2010-11 Clear-fell 8 hectares of conifers  
Restore the valley mire
- 2011-12 Clear-fell 10 hectares of conifers  
Install boardwalks into mire
- 2012-13 Clear-fell 10 hectares of conifers
- 2013-14 Clear-fell 10 hectares of conifers

### What will Broadwater Warren be like when restoration is complete?

Open areas of Heather will merge into clumps of Birch and Pine trees, and then into ancient woodland, making a glorious jigsaw of habitats, more intimate than the big vistas of the Ashdown Forest, and with hardly a building or road in view.

### Who will do the work?

The work will be led by a Project Manager, Caroline FitzGerald, although for much of the heavy work in we will employ specialist contractors. Advice and support will come from RSPB staff across the RSPB, including Martin Allison, our South East England Woods and Heaths Manager.

### What will the impacts of the work be?

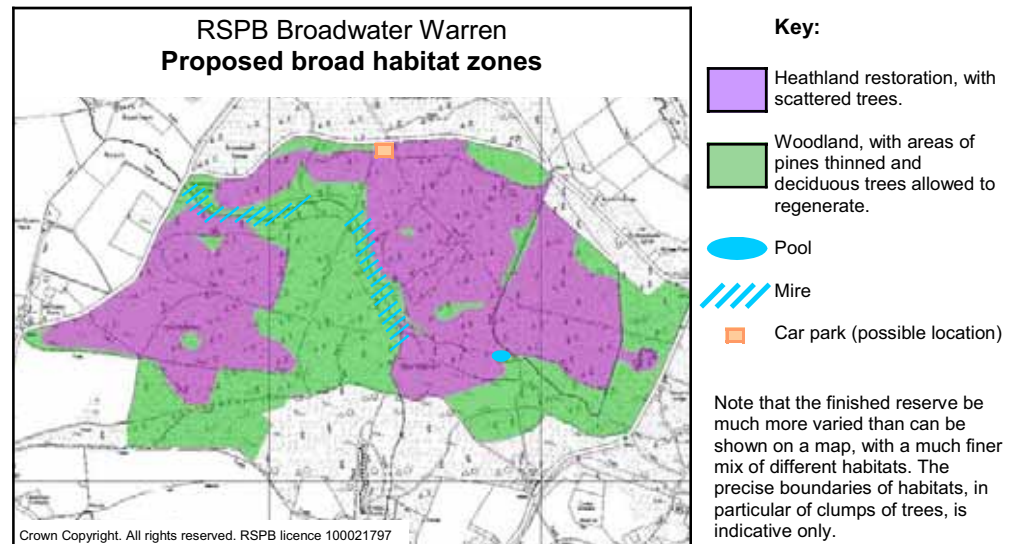
We will try our best to ensure that there is minimal impact and maximum benefit for everyone during the restoration process. However, the process has to start by removing the timber crop, exactly what they were planted for.

It means that during the felling operations, which will be in winter, some areas will have to be cordoned off for visitors' safety, there will be machinery on site, and there may be some temporary path damage. There will also be a small increase in traffic on the access roads, although the areas being felled each year are not huge in forestry terms and the impact should be low. Almost 50% of the clearance will be in year one.

Everyone should be prepared that land after clear-fell looks a mess: that is normal and unavoidable. Fortunately, recovery to heathland is swift, and our plans mean an end to the cycle of forestry - no more planting means no more large-scale forestry work in the future.

Once we have a car park in place, there will be some increase in the number of visitors, but there will be no centre building or toilets - this will be what we term a 'Quiet enjoyment' site - so the increase in traffic should be small.

The introduction of low-density grazing will mean that the site will need to have some areas of stock-proof fencing, but we will work hard to ensure that this is unobtrusive, and, apart from requesting responsible dog control, there should be little implication for visitors.





## Environmental Impact Assessment

### What is an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)?

An EIA identifies the environmental effects (both negative and positive) of a proposal. It aims to prevent, reduce and offset any adverse impacts.

EIA are usually required for complex projects which have a wide range of environmental effects. They often are necessary for extensive sites and/ or sensitive locations.

### Screening Meeting

On 7 March 2007, the Forestry Commission hosted what is called a Screening Meeting at Broadwater Warren, to establish whether the RSPB's proposals require an EIA. Local interest groups, national agencies and direct neighbours to the site were all invited to come, see the site, hear the plans, and identify issues they would like taken into account.

Here is a summary of the key issues identified so far by the RSPB, including those raised at the Screening Meeting:

- **Access for dog walking, horse-riding, mountain biking.** Dog walkers will be welcome, but we will ask for responsible dog control so as to protect ground-nesting birds and livestock, and for the benefit of other visitors. Horseriding will continue on a restricted permit system. No access is planned for bike use because of the environmental impact.
- **Access for the less-able.** We hope to provide a considerable length of trail suitable for wheelchair users.
- **Impact on wildlife that uses the conifers.** There will be enough retained conifers that we don't expect to lose any species from the reserve. Comprehensive surveys will take place before any work starts so that we can monitor this.
- **Ancient woodland.** Ancient woodland will be an important component of this varied reserve. We are undertaking a detailed assessment on which parts of the reserve are ancient woodland.
- **Archaeological interests.** Full surveys will be undertaken.
- **Visual impact.** Assessments will be done to ensure that neighbouring residential properties are adequately screened from visitors.

- **Visitor infrastructure.** This will be restricted to a sensitively-landscaped car park, nature trails, and interpretation. No Visitor Centre or toilet facilities are planned, and they are not appropriate for this kind of site.
- **Road use.** The level of facilities that are planned will attract only modest numbers of visitors which should not create road-use issues. There will be a small amount of haulage traffic during felling operations, but again at a relatively low level.
- **Unsocial activity.** The car park will be carefully monitored and measures put in place such as overnight locked gates to avoid this occurring.
- **Fencing and livestock.** We intend to use small numbers of livestock to help manage the heathland, and so we will need to sensitively fence parts of the site.
- **Tree-felling and drainage.** The watercourse through the reserve is small and has a small catchment, and it is not thought that the changes will pose any threat in terms of drainage issues downstream.
- **Valued landscapes.** An area of mature Pines has been identified as being highly-appreciated aesthetically by existing visitors, and we will permanently retain some trees here as a result. The pond and mire, currently barely accessible, will be opened up for people to enjoy.

### Scoping Meetings

The next stage in the EIA process is to hold Scoping Meetings at which anyone can comment on these or any issue where they think our plans could be an environmental impact. The Forestry Commission have a leaflet which explains more, although having already held the Screening Meeting, our Scoping process is more informal and aims to reach many more people.

The RSPB will then compile an Environmental Statement (ES) which is submitted to the planning authorities who evaluate the statement, seeking further information if necessary before the planning application is determined.



Dartford Warbler  
(C Gomersall www.rspb-images.com)



# What can you do?

**Scoping Meetings:** As part of the EIA Process, the RSPB will be holding meetings in the local communities to explain the plans and invite comment, so come along, find out more, and let us know what you think.

**Guided walks:** Come along on guided walks to see first-hand what we intend to do.

**Volunteering:** We will develop a wide range of ways for you to get involved with the reserve, from practical conservation tasks, to surveying, to helping run walks and events, to helping inspire others about what we are doing.

**Share your memories:** Do you remember the site in the past or have old photos? We'd love to hear about it.

**Financial support:** The RSPB is a charity and is only able to do the huge range of work it does through the generous support of people like you.

**If you would like to be kept informed** about RSPB Broadwater Warren, please complete the slip below, detach, and send to RSPB, 42 Frederick Place, Brighton, BN1 4EA.

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Please keep me up to date with all developments at RSPB Broadwater Warren

Mr/Mrs/Ms  Surname

Initials  Address

Postcode

Are you an RSPB/ Wildlife Explorers member? Yes  No

Date of birth (if under 18)

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