

Sevenoaks Common



Sevenoaks Common lies south of the town on the Greensand ridge which runs from Haslemere in Surrey down to Ham Street in Kent; it is an area of common land which had developed into woodland through lack of grazing. Between 1949 and 1961 the Sevenoaks Urban District Council purchased 39 acres of the common land which is now owned and managed by Sevenoaks Town Council.

The Common is a natural woodland preserve open to all on the edge of a busy town providing an excellent dog walking area and permissive bridleways for horse riders.

The age of the trees, mainly beech, oak and ash, suggests that it has been woodland for at least 150 years.

It was badly damaged by the October 1987 storm when approximately 50 per cent of the trees were lost, although regeneration and replanting has resulted in strong recovery. There are still some large trees remaining but particularly at the western end, nearly all the trees are young seedlings or trees planted in the years after 1987 through to around 1992.

The soils are light and sandy but with shattered stone or beds of sandstone close to the surface, this forms an acid soil and plants here are typical of acid woodland, including bluebells, creeping hair grass, woodrush, wood sorrel, primrose, wild garlic, wood spurge and yellow archangel.



Sevenoaks Common is covered by a woodland management plan. Esus acting as our advisors created the management plan in 1995, with the first 5 Year grant scheme starting in 1997. Although the initial funding has been exhausted, the Council budgets every year for maintenance and amelioration work. In 2017 a one-off grant for treework on the Common was received from Cllr Parry in his capacity as a Kent County Councillor. Treework is carried out by professionally recognised arborists.

In 2017 the Town Council also drew up a Five Year Management and Improvement Plan for Sevenoaks Common.

In the summer of 2017 Sevenoaks Town Council became a Charter Branch of the Tree Charter organised by the Woodland Trust.

On 6 November 2017, on the 800th anniversary of the 1217 Charter of the Forest, the new Charter for Trees, Woods and People was launched.

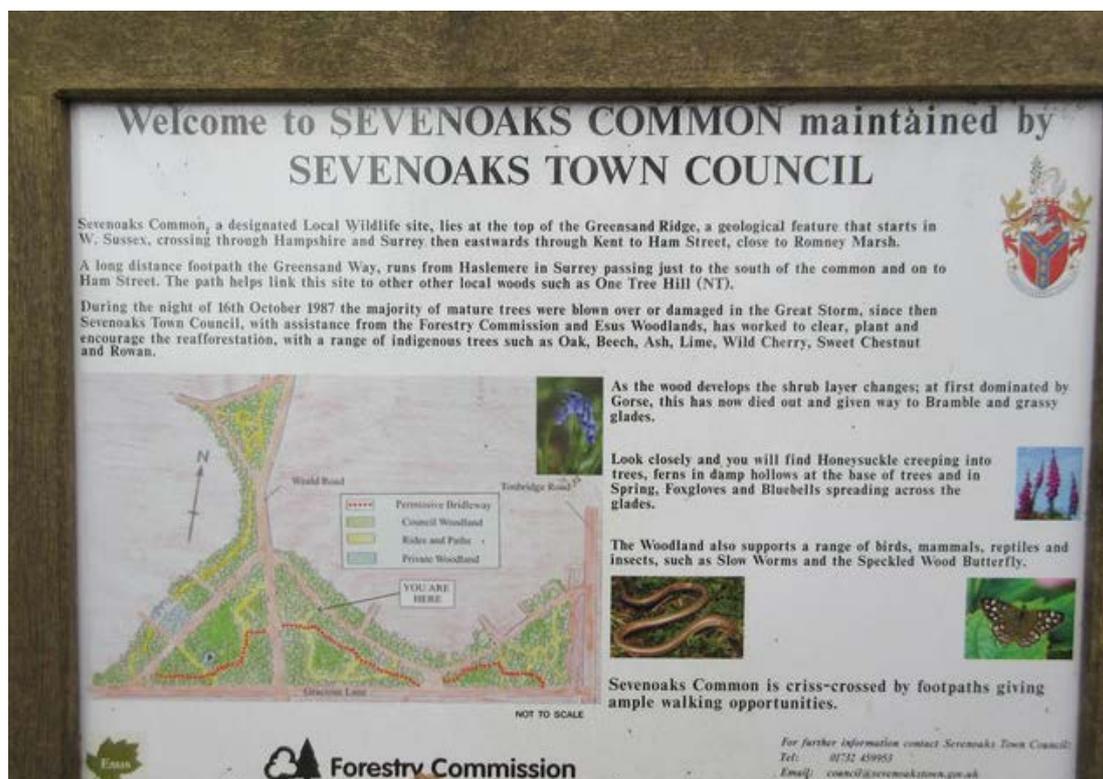
During 2017 The Woodland Trust reached out to all sections of UK society to define this new charter, and to build a people-powered movement for trees. Sevenoaks Town Council gathered a considerable number of signatures in support of the Charter from local residents and with the help of Sevenoaks Society.

In recognition of the Council's work a tree was given to the Council by the Woodland Trust. The tree is a Sessile Oak and was planted on the Common on 30 November 2017.

It was the first of seven Charter Oaks to be planted on Sevenoaks Common during National Tree week and was followed by the rededication of three semi-mature oaks. There will be planting of further oak trees over the next six years to create a new group of 'Seven Oaks'.

The Common was chosen for this celebration of tree planting as it is thought that there was an original planting of seven oaks during the time of William Sevenoke in the 15th century.

Sevenoaks Town Council has thinned, coppiced some species, removed Rhododendron, widened and reshaped paths and installed Information boards. The paths are maintained and kept open to provide an extensive number of paths through the woodland.



Unauthorised activities on the Common are carefully monitored by the Town Council and legal action is taken against any persons felling trees or creating vehicular access through the woodland.

Regular inspection is undertaken to deter fly tipping which is promptly removed and again where possible legal action is taken

Sevenoaks Common is part of a lottery bid being submitted by Sevenoaks District Council, together with the Kent Wildlife Trust. The aim of the bid is to reinvigorate interest in the Greensand Commons which cover over 300ha which are connect by the Greensand Way path which runs

along the ridge and joins the National Trust properties of Chartwell, Knole and Ightham Mote. The project includes the following Commons: Hosey, Farley, Crockhamhill, Bitche Fawke Seal Chart Sevenoaks and Weald.

An ecology report is being prepared as part of the Heritage Lottery bid and this information will help inform the future and betterment of Sevenoaks Common.

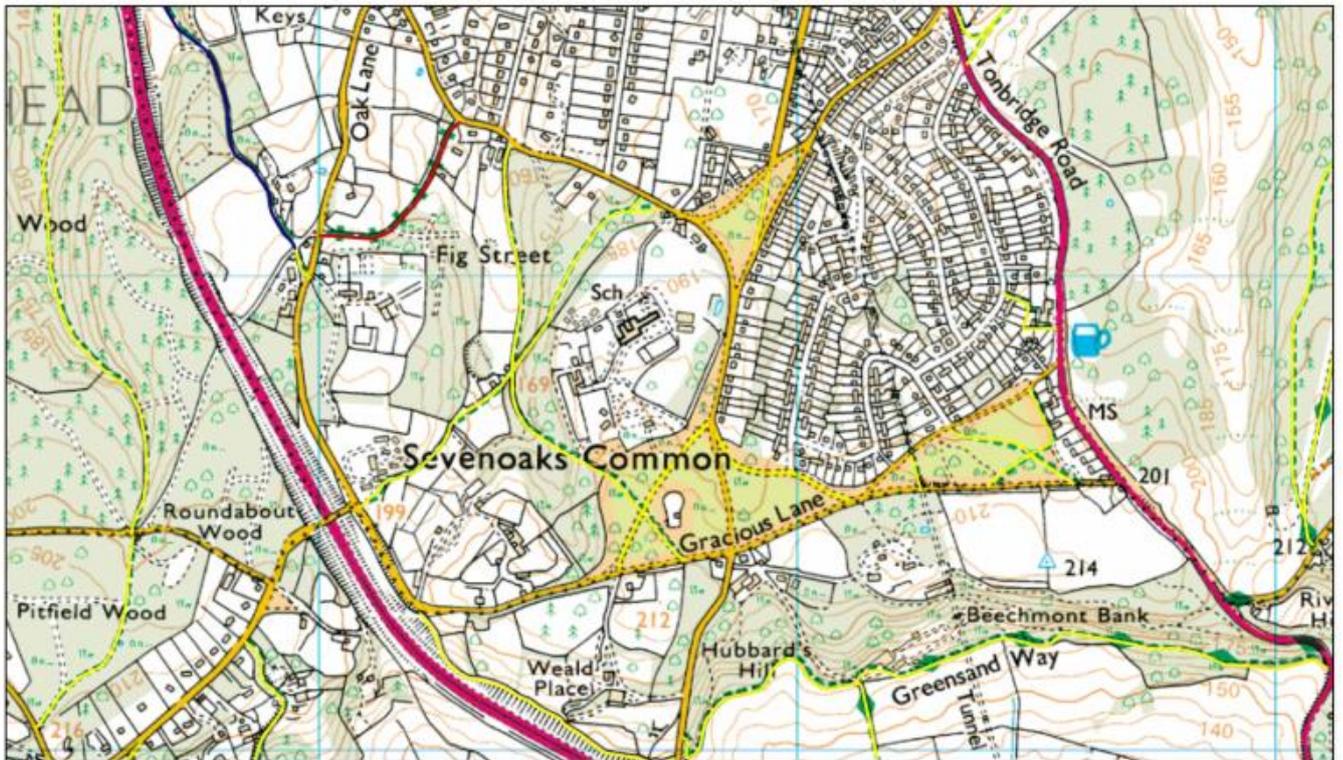
In October 2017 a Forest Skills Day organised by Kent Wildlife Trust was held on The Common. It was an extremely popular event attended by 8-12 year olds. They learnt how to build a fire, the need for and the implementation of health and safety in woods, how to build shelters and other items from branches and leaves.

A parent of children attending wrote afterwards: 'Just wanted to write and say how much we enjoyed the Forest Skills day. We thought it was very well organised, with an appropriate level of health and safety, getting everyone involved, with a great range of activities. The two boys we brought with us, aged 8 and 12, were probably the oldest pair there, but still enjoyed it at a level appropriate to them. The 12 year old particularly has asked if we can find more such events, as he liked it so much.'

The Council intends to build on this initial Forest Skills Day and hopes to work in partnership with Kent Wildlife Trust to provide further one day courses and potentially a Forest School in the future.

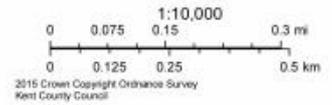


Sevenoaks Common Public Rights of Way



May 24, 2017

- Public Rights of Way**
- Public Footpath
 - Byway open to all traffic
 - Public Bridleway
 - Restricted Byway



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