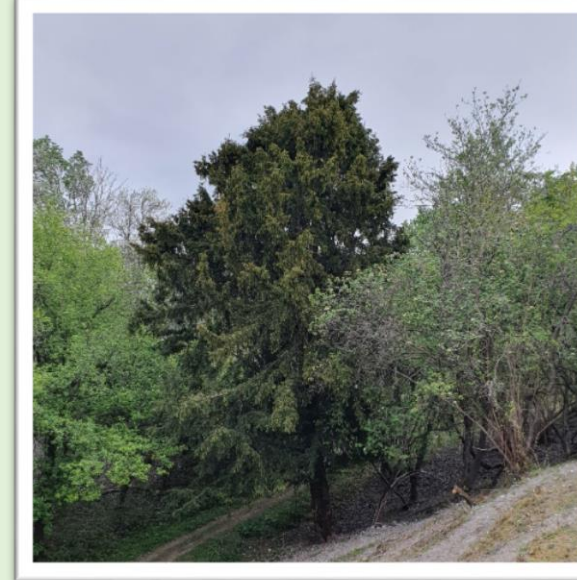


The Watlington Chalk Pit Local Nature Reserve

The Watlington Chalk Pit Local Nature Reserve is located on the site of a former chalk pit and subsequent landfill site. Today it is a mosaic of scrub and open areas, containing various specialist mosses and fungi, and patches of chalk grassland. It is managed by Watlington Environment Group (WEG) on behalf of Watlington Parish Council and other landowners and sits as part of a larger Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).



Flora

The flora present on the site is characteristic of chalklands.

In the areas of grassland, plants such as Yellow-wort, Eyebright and Wild Basil can be found along with Pyramidal and Common Twayblade orchids. Fungi such as Earth-tongue, Winter Stalk-ball, Earth-cup and Waxcaps thrive in these low-nutrient chalk grasslands.

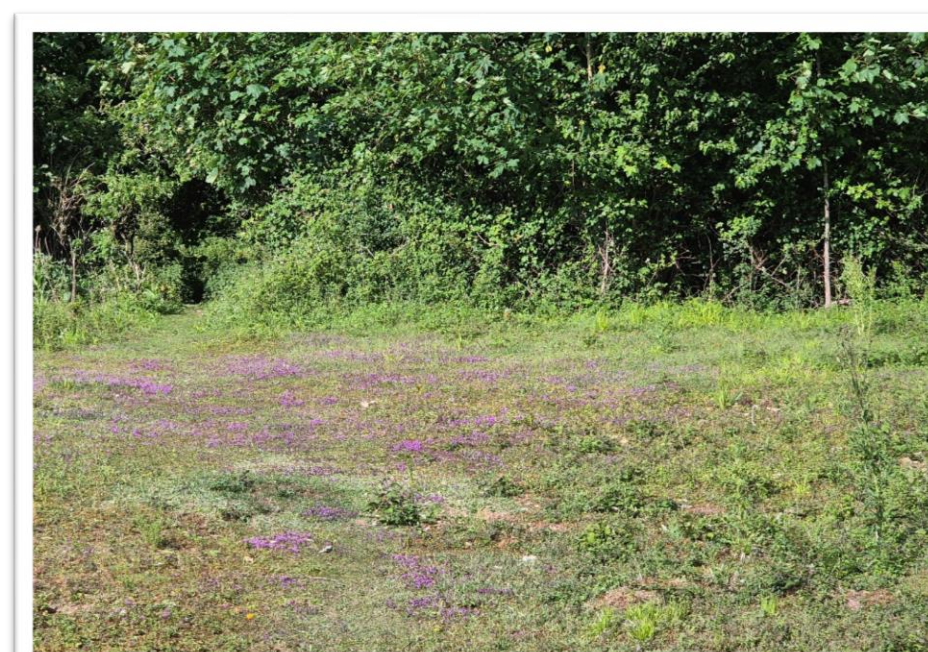
The mixed scrub includes Hawthorn, Whitebeam, Wayfaring-tree, Purging Buckthorn, Dogwood, Elder, Blackthorn, Spindle and a single Juniper.

Tree species include Yew, Whitebeam, Ash, Sycamore, Goat Willow and Silver Birch.

The Entrance Glade

This section is the former landfill site which was levelled and capped with chalk, and, although not part of the SSSI, is becoming an area of important short chalk grassland, and rare mosses, lichens and fungi. Notice how small the plants are, this is because the soil is so thin. Near the Hill Road entrance is a small hollow, where Star Jelly accumulates when wet.

Ongoing work to prevent encroachment by brambles and woody species into this area is undertaken regularly by WEG volunteers.



The Juniper Bank

A remnant population of shade-sensitive juniper on the site has sadly declined over the last 20 years, with one tree remaining. Clearance has taken place to re-expose a north-facing slope, valuable for specialist grasses and mosses and allowing more light to reach the Juniper.



The Central Glade

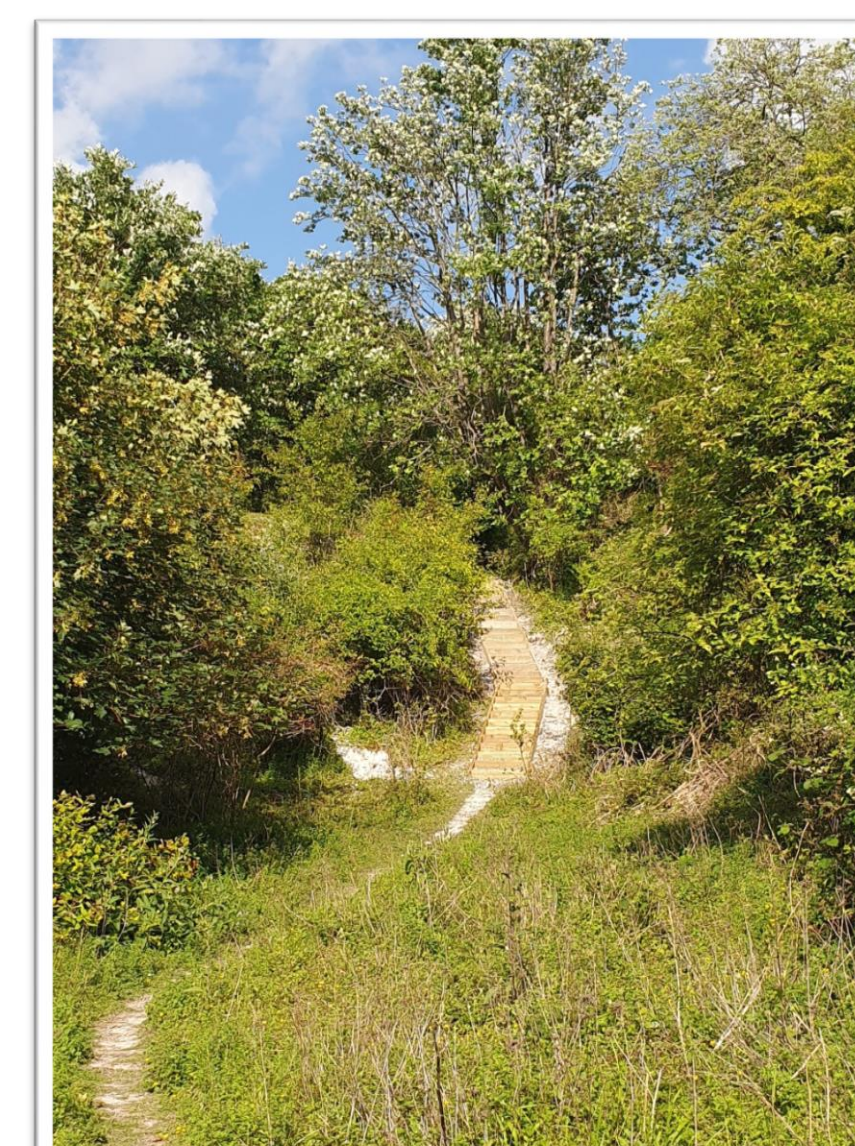
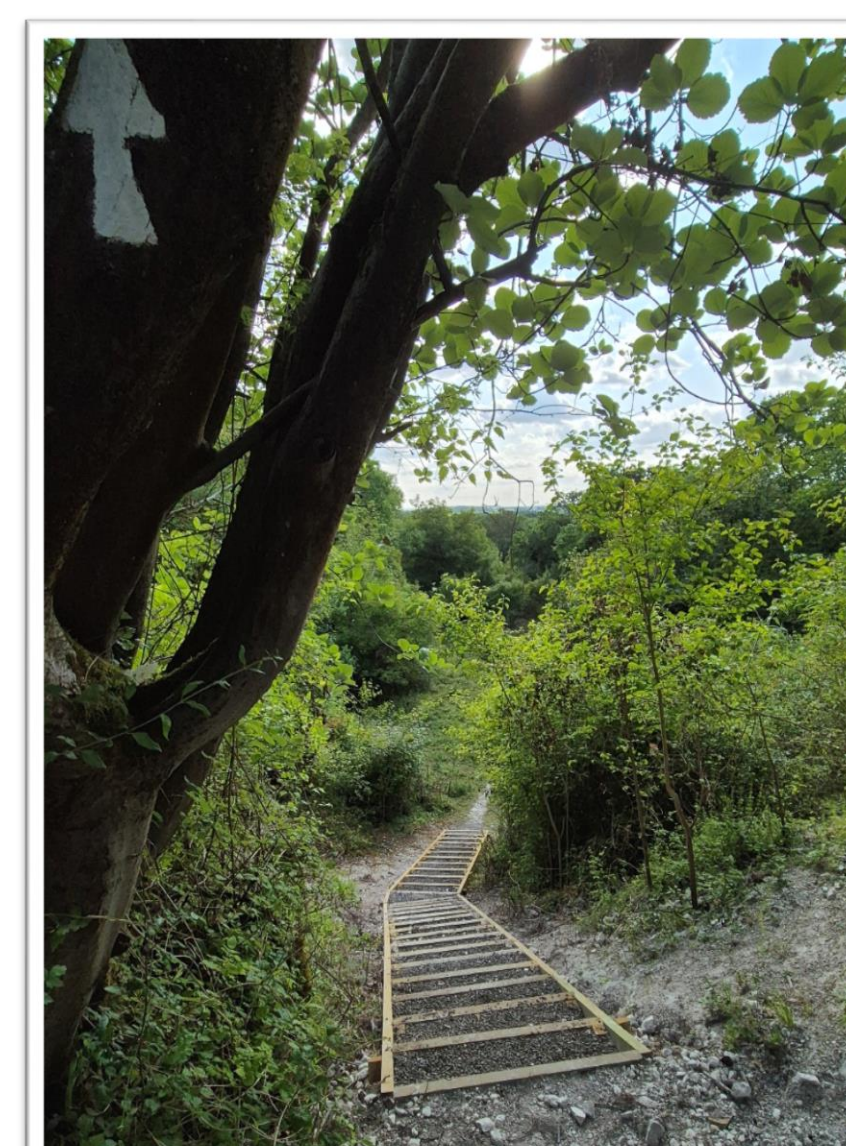
Part of a network of linked open grass areas that have been maintained and expanded, and are home to a recovering chalk grassland flora, including gentians and mosses.



Volunteer Work parties

Management of this special site is dependent on volunteer efforts. Tasks are carried out based on the recommendations set out in a management plan and at the appropriate times of the year. Tasks involve removing invasive species in order to improve the habitat for the more sensitive species.

If you would like to help us manage this site, along with other conservation work WEG does around the parish, please e-mail : info@watlington-environment-group.org.uk.



The Southern Glade

This area of scrub and grassland is enclosed by steep banks, evidence of the former chalk pit workings. The newly-renovated steps climb up what was once the face of the former chalk pit. This is another area being safeguarded from encroaching scrub.