



Fernbrae Meadows

Proposed Local Nature Reserve
Management Statement

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Introduction

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are valuable places as they combine protection of the natural heritage with opportunities for people to enjoy, learn about and experience nature close to their homes. LNRs are:

- Statutory designations made under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
- Special places which are rich in wildlife.
- Generally, readily accessible and suitable for people to visit and enjoy.

In declaring these sites, South Lanarkshire Council (SLC) aims to:

- Protect them from unsuitable developments.
- Manage and enhance the habitats to help biodiversity flourish.
- Improve public access.
- Help people understand and become more aware of the importance of the LNR.
- Encourage community participation and volunteering.

SLC have identified fifteen new sites (and an extension to the existing LNR at Langlands Moss) to become designated as LNRs. These encompass a broad spectrum of habitats including ancient broadleaved woodland, open water, wetlands and grasslands. The site management statements are written in conjunction with the South Lanarkshire Biodiversity Strategy (2018-2022), SLC Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy (2017-22), SLC Local Development Plan (2013) and SLC Core Path Plan (2012).

Vision statement

Across South Lanarkshire, Local Nature Reserves are a resource for local communities that balance excellent recreational and educational opportunities with valuable habitats for wildlife that are rich in biodiversity.

General information

Location and site boundaries: Fernbrae Meadows is located on the far western edge of South Lanarkshire, next to the communities of Fernhill to the north and Cathkin to the east. The town of Castlemilk in Glasgow lies to the west of the site.

Site name: Fernbrae Meadows (formerly Blairbeth Urban Park)

Grid reference: NS 6192 5879

Site area: 37.8 ha

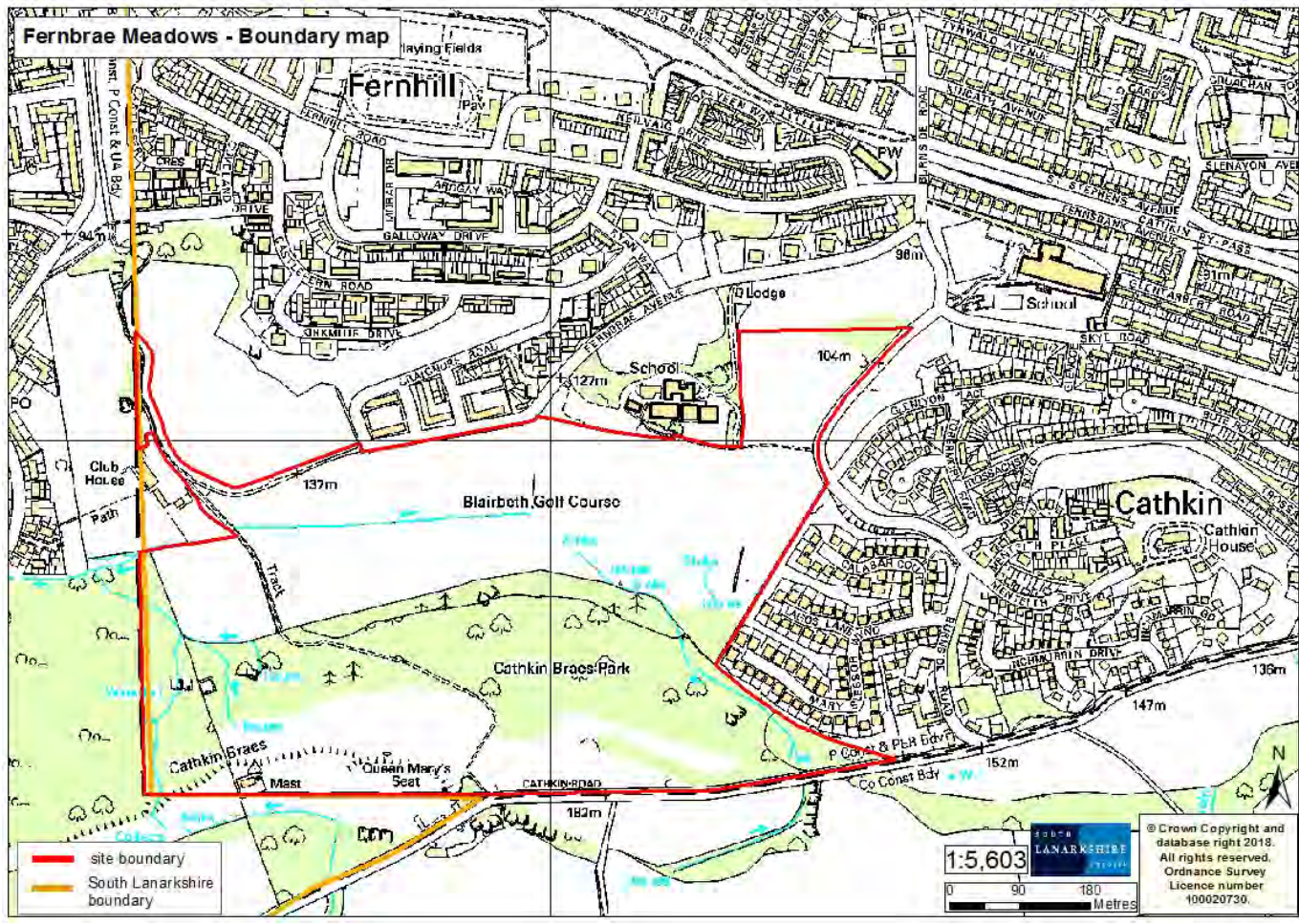
Site boundary: The boundaries of the reserve is based upon the extent of land owned by South Lanarkshire Council (SLC).

Site description: In late 2018 and early 2019 significant improvements were made to the former Blairbeth Golf course developing the area into a new public greenspace. The project was funded by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) through the European Regional Development Fund Green Infrastructure Programme. The main focus of the project was to provide accessible space for healthy activities, whilst protecting and preserving local biodiversity and creating a haven for wildlife. The development of the greenspace provides over twenty hectares of new urban, semi-natural, managed greenspace, paths and cycle-ways to the local community. In addition to the physical changes to the park, the employment of a project officer has seen the formation of a local community group “Friends of Fernbrae Meadows” who have promoted the use of the park through a wide range of events and activities, educational visits for schools and volunteering opportunities.



The project has created a variety of habitats throughout the proposed reserve, including wildflower meadow, woodland, wetlands and associated marshy grassland. The management and maintenance of the wetland areas within the site will create additional habitats, but also aims to reduce flood risk by creating a more natural watercourse.

The southern half of the proposed reserve is dominated by broadleaved woodland, which forms part of Cathkin Braes Country Park, and is managed by Glasgow City Council. Cathkin Braes CP covers around 199ha of a land and includes woodland, ancient woodland, heath and grassland. At 200m above sea level the park provides views over the city to the Campsie and Kilpatrick hills on a clear day. There are many paths linking the existing country park to the proposed LNR.



Habitats, flora and fauna

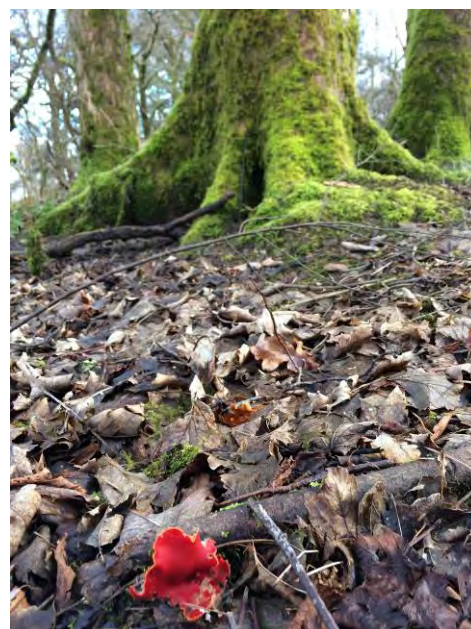
The grasslands of the former golf course are dominated by Yorkshire fog with red fescue, rough meadow grass, meadow foxtail, bush vetch, common hogweed, sweet vernal grass, meadow vetchling, broadleaved dock, field forget-me-not, common sorrel and patches of bracken. Wetter areas found in this part of the reserve host meadowsweet, soft rush, marsh thistle, common yellow sedge, sharp flowered rush, oval sedge, marsh bedstraw and marsh marigold.

In the centre of the former golf course a well-established hedgerow runs east to west adjacent to the burn. This incorporates several hawthorns of good age as well as willow, dog rose, beech and a few non-native species.

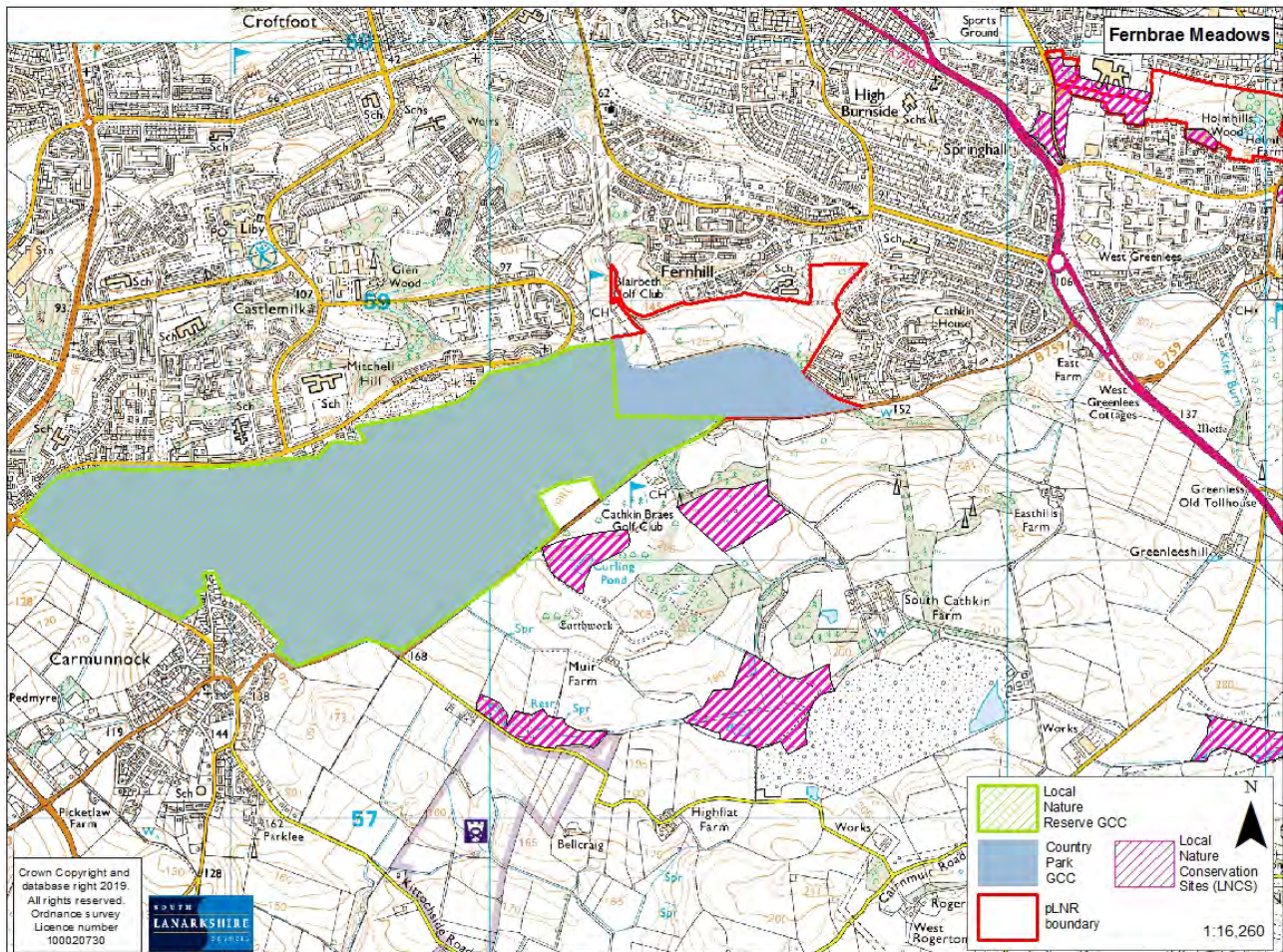
Mature broadleaved woodland dominates the north facing slopes of the braes and supports ash, beech, alder, larch, lime, oak, silver birch, sycamore and rowan. The scrub layer contains hawthorn, hazel, bramble, broom and gorse. The ground layer comprises species including bluebells, ramson, dog's mercury, herb Robert, ground elder, wood avens, wood sorrel, honeysuckle, foxglove, tormentil, blaeberry, male fern, lady fern and broad-buckler fern. Wetter areas gave rise to soft rush and wild angelica. Species of interest include broadleaved helleborine, northern marsh orchid and common spotted orchid.

In the latter part of 2018 and early 2019 the former golf course grasslands within the proposed reserve have undergone significant reconstruction and conservation management improvements. This included tree planting, hedge and woodland management and the creation of wildflower meadows and wetland habitats.

Habitat	Area (ha)	%
Broadleaved woodland	16.1	42
Planted trees	1.82	5
Semi-improved neutral grassland	3.77	10
Scattered trees	1.12	3
Former amenity ground recently managed for conservation (wetlands and meadows)	14.99	40
Total	37.8	100



Landscape



The above map shows the designated conservation sites in and around the proposed LNR. The woodland in the southern half of the reserve is designated as Cathkin Braes Country Park, the majority of which is within the boundary of Glasgow City Council (GCC). GCC have designated the Braes within Glasgow as a LNR; the designation of Fernbraes within South Lanarkshire would create a large, continuous reserve.

Further south lies large open areas of greenbelt and countryside separating Glasgow and Rutherglen from East Kilbride. The wider landscape and ecological setting also incorporates Cathkin Marshes (a Scottish Wildlife Trust Reserve), Coulter's Wood managed community woodland, Cathkin Braes Golf Club and Kirkhill Golf Club.

There are many pLNCS (potential Local Nature Conservation Sites) in the surrounding landscape including:

- Cathkin Quarry (0.25 miles)
- Cathkin Braes Nature Reserve (0.69 miles)
- Cathkin ponds (0.87 miles)
- Whitlaw burn (0.8 miles)
- Borgia Glen (1.2 miles)

Cultural information

Cultural heritage: past land use

Ordnance Survey maps were used to look at the history of Fernbraes and the surrounding area (available online from the [National Library of Scotland](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk)). The area was originally known as the Cathkin Hills and during the Iron Age a Celtic tribe known as the Damnonii lived in the area. Several cairns have been found in the location with many examples still in existence today. Queen Mary's Seat is one of the larger cairns in the location named for where Mary Queen of Scots is reputed to have observed the Battle of Langside on the 13th May 1558.

There are a number of features of archeological interest in the surrounding landscape:

- NS 61759 58981: cist/cinerary urn
- NS 62192 58911: medieval rig furrow
- NS 61841 58886: 18th Century Country House at Cathkin
- NS 61880 58500: Queen Mary's seat Farmstead
- NS 61841 58528: Cathkin Pavilion
- NS 61588 58403: prehistoric cup and ring marked stone

Further information can be found at <https://canmore.org.uk>

The Cathkin Braes Park wood appears on Military Survey maps of 1750, but it is thought that the mature woodlands are derived from later planting during estate ownership. The early maps show the remaining land as mainly open and in agricultural use, a condition which prevailed until some 40 years ago.

In more recent times Cathkin Braes has been utilised as a park. A park pavilion was built around 1890 and was used regularly until the early 1980s when it was demolished for structural reasons. At the beginning of the last century major events were held at the pavilion site including music concerts attracting crowds in excess of 10,000. In 1994 Cathkin Braes was developed as a Country Park including 72 acres of the land gifted by James Dick. A small portion in the east of the park was transferred to South Lanarkshire in a local government reorganisation in 1996.

Blairbeth Golf Course was opened in at the Fernbraes site in 1956, located at the foot of the Cathkin Braes, with panoramic views over Glasgow and beyond to the Campsie ranges, Kilpatrick hills and Gleniffer Braes. It closed in 2015.

Present land use

Predominantly used by dog walkers at first, Fernbrae Meadows has now gained a diversity of users, with leisure and health walkers, cycle riders, photographers and nature lovers. Local families, schools and nurseries have also discovered a new place for playing and learning. The Friends of Fernbrae Meadows were formed in 2018; they have organised numerous community events, promoting the use and development of the reserve.

Between July and August 2018 Community Links in partnership with Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) carried out a baseline survey to monitor the social benefits of Fernbrae Meadows. The top reasons why people visit Fernbrae Meadows were found to be: enjoyment of the scenery or wildlife; for fresh air; to exercise and for dog walking.



Site infrastructure

Fernbrae Meadows supports 1.67 miles of core path and wider network paths as defined in the SLC Core Path Plan. These paths connect nearby residential areas to the greenspace and link to Cathkin Braes Country Park to the south and west. A further 0.3 miles of whin dust footpaths have been recently improved and installed at the site, creating circular walks throughout the park. There are two large boardwalks and two bridges in the park allowing access over a burn and wetland areas. The paths within the woodland to the far south of the site are quite muddy and prone to water logging in parts.

Many of the entrances to the reserve have formal feature walls and metal gates. Fencing separates the pLNR from adjacent land including the grounds of Fernhill School and allotments to the north. There is also a junior mountain bike trail in the park.



Recreation and access

Access provisions to and within the site are in good condition with an extensive network of paths throughout the site. Vehicle access to the site is to the far north along Fernbrae Avenue, where there are spaces for approximately twelve vehicles with further parking on the roads. To the south, access can be gained at numerous points along Cathkin Road, with parking available in a couple of lay-bys along this road.

Access to the reserve can be found at the following points:

- Fernhill Drive: NS 6197 5903
- Fernhill Drive: NS 6175 5899
- Burnside Road: NS 6239 5907
- Burnside Road: NS 6234 5894
- Cathkin Road: NS 6231 5856
- Cathkin Road: NS 6208 5855
- Cathkin Road: NS 6191 5855

For further details refer to the access map in this report, which highlights the path network throughout the site and the access points.



Local community

As part of the Green Infrastructure fund a project officer was employed to oversee the development of the proposed reserve. A key objective was to develop a local community group for the site. In 2018 the Friends of Fernbrae Meadows was formed and from March to August 2018, a total of 29 community events were held on site, with 242 attendees. Events included health walks, social gatherings and craft workshops for groups, individuals, schools and families.

There are a number of local schools in close proximity to the pLNR:

- Fernhill School grounds are adjacent to the reserve
- Cathkin Primary school (0.2 miles)
- St Marks Primary school (0.7 miles)
- Burnside Primary (0.8 miles)
- Cathkin High, Rutherglen High school and Cathkin Community Nursery (all 0.82 miles north)
- Miller Primary (0.7 miles) and Castlemilk High school (0.9 miles) are located to the west of the reserve and are within Glasgow City Council.

Conclusion

It is the intention of SLC's Countryside and Greenspace team to work in partnership with the local community to ensure that the ecological quality of the reserve is maintained and managed. We aim to foster an understanding and facilitate the enjoyment of the natural heritage of the reserve, by improving access, interpretation, education and promotion of the site.

The management statement will meet these objectives by seeking to deliver a number of practical health, environmental education and community outcomes in partnership with other organisations and the local community.

Contacts

For more information on this site, or LNRs in South Lanarkshire, please contact:
Countryside and Greenspace Service, Facilities, Waste and Ground Services, Community and Enterprise, South Lanarkshire Council, 18 Forest Street, Blantyre G72 0JP.
Email: CAG@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs.

Phone: 0303 123 1015

Email: equalities@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk

Photographs provided by Joanna Birkin (SLC CAG)

Note that maps may not be to scale

Note that the boundaries of the pLNR are to be finalised.

Appendix 1: Objectives and actions

Objective 1: Maintain, enhance and monitor the biodiversity value of the reserve.

Actions:

- Monitor the development of the newly established habitats within the site.
- Contribute data to national and local biological recording schemes.
- Ensure appropriate management programmes improve and maintain biodiversity.

Objective 2: Maintain and increase the use of the access network.

Actions:

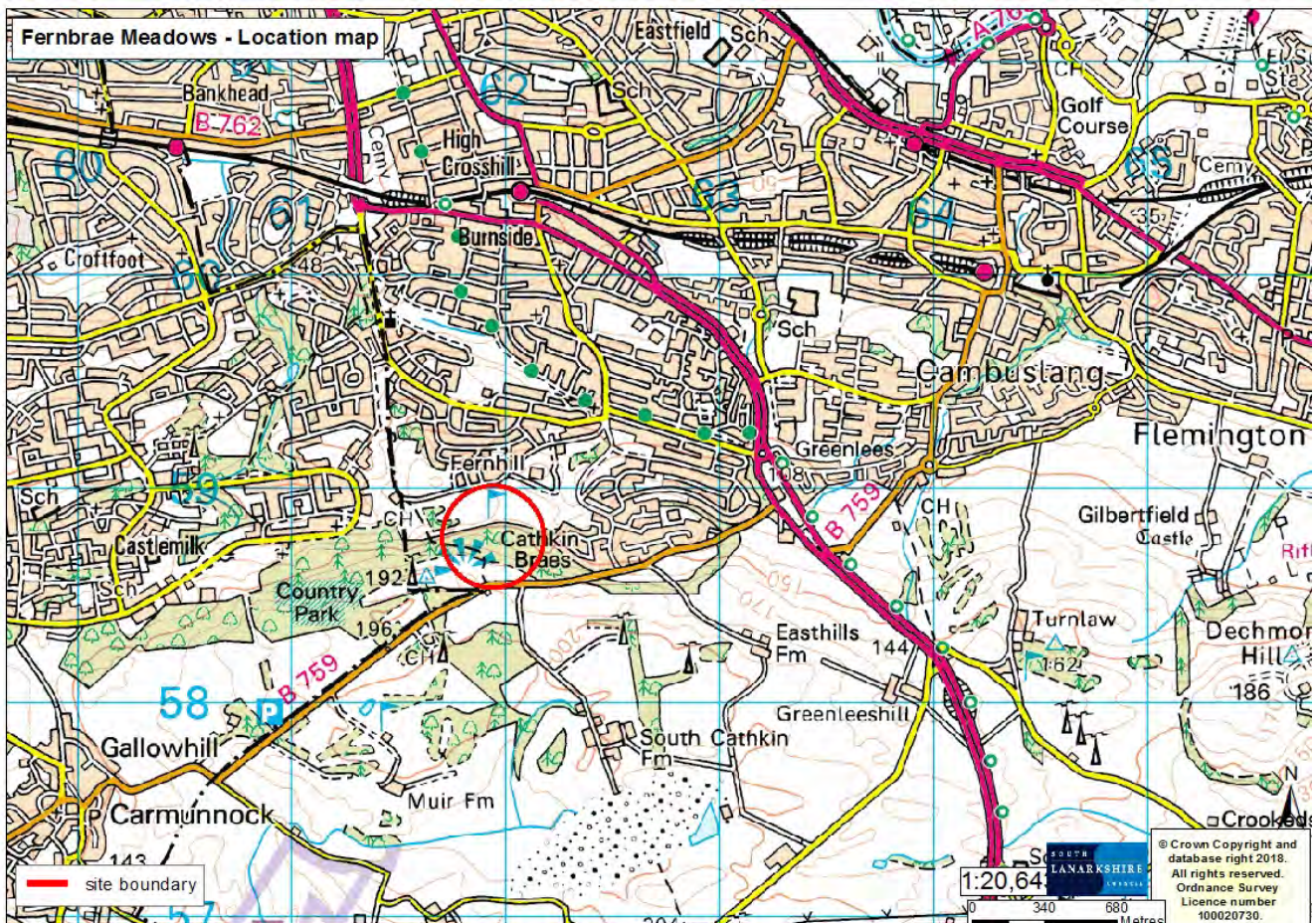
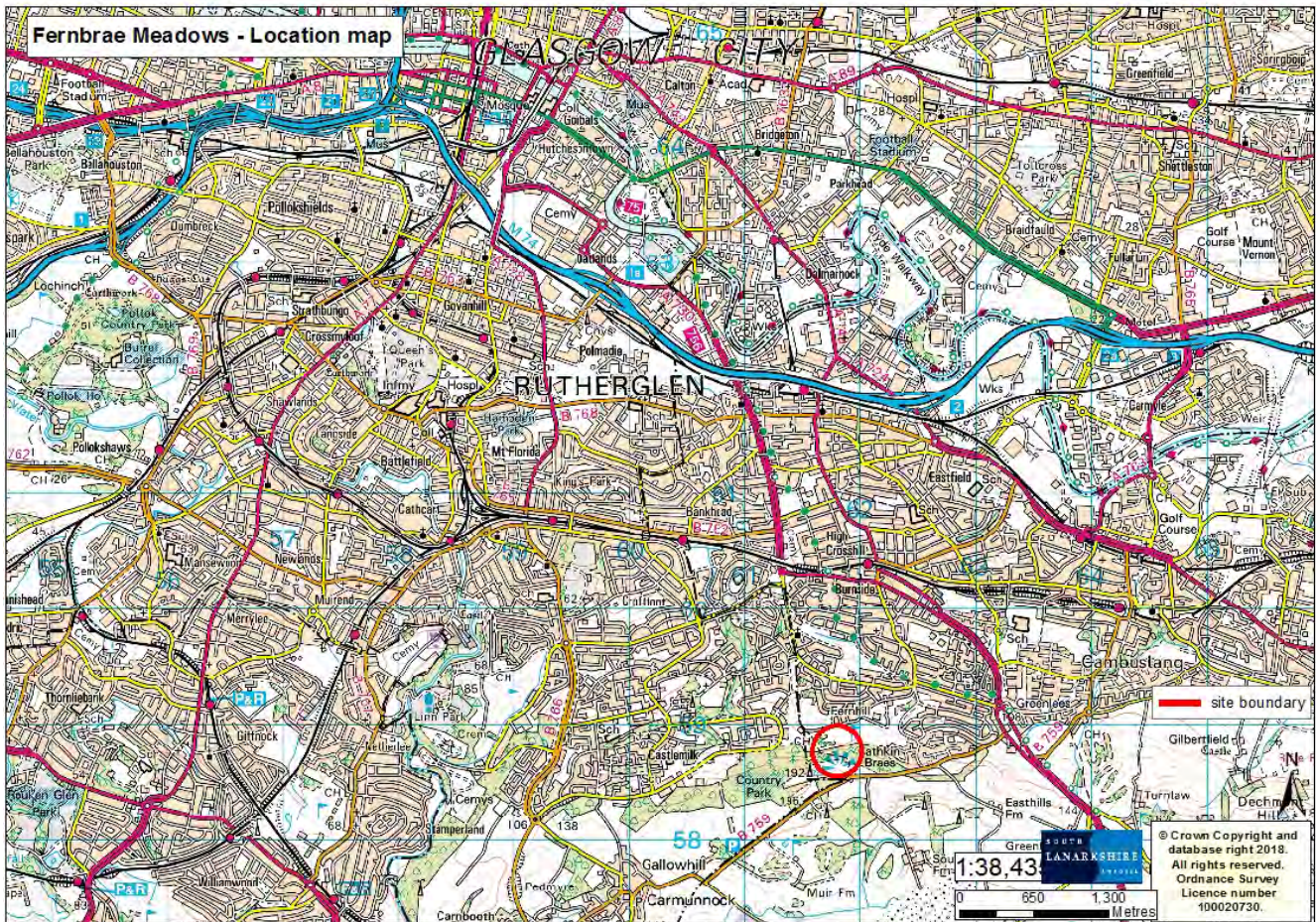
- Identify funding opportunities.
- Maintain and improve access around the proposed reserve.
- Install interpretation panels highlighting the natural history and history of the pLNR.

Objective 3: Encourage and facilitate community involvement in the reserve.

Actions:

- Raise awareness of the pLNR to the local community.
- Investigate possibilities of promoting the reserve in new and different ways, such as to specialist interest groups.
- Review the information at the site ensuring that it is current and up to date.
- Monitor and assess visitor numbers.
- Investigate the need for a trails guide of the routes, path networks and points of interest within the area.
- Encourage and promote the use of the pLNR for the local community, schools, colleges, universities, youth groups and other interest groups.
- Identify and promote opportunities for people to enjoy the wildlife of the pLNR.

Appendix 2: Maps



Fernbrae Meadows - Aerial Photo



— site boundary

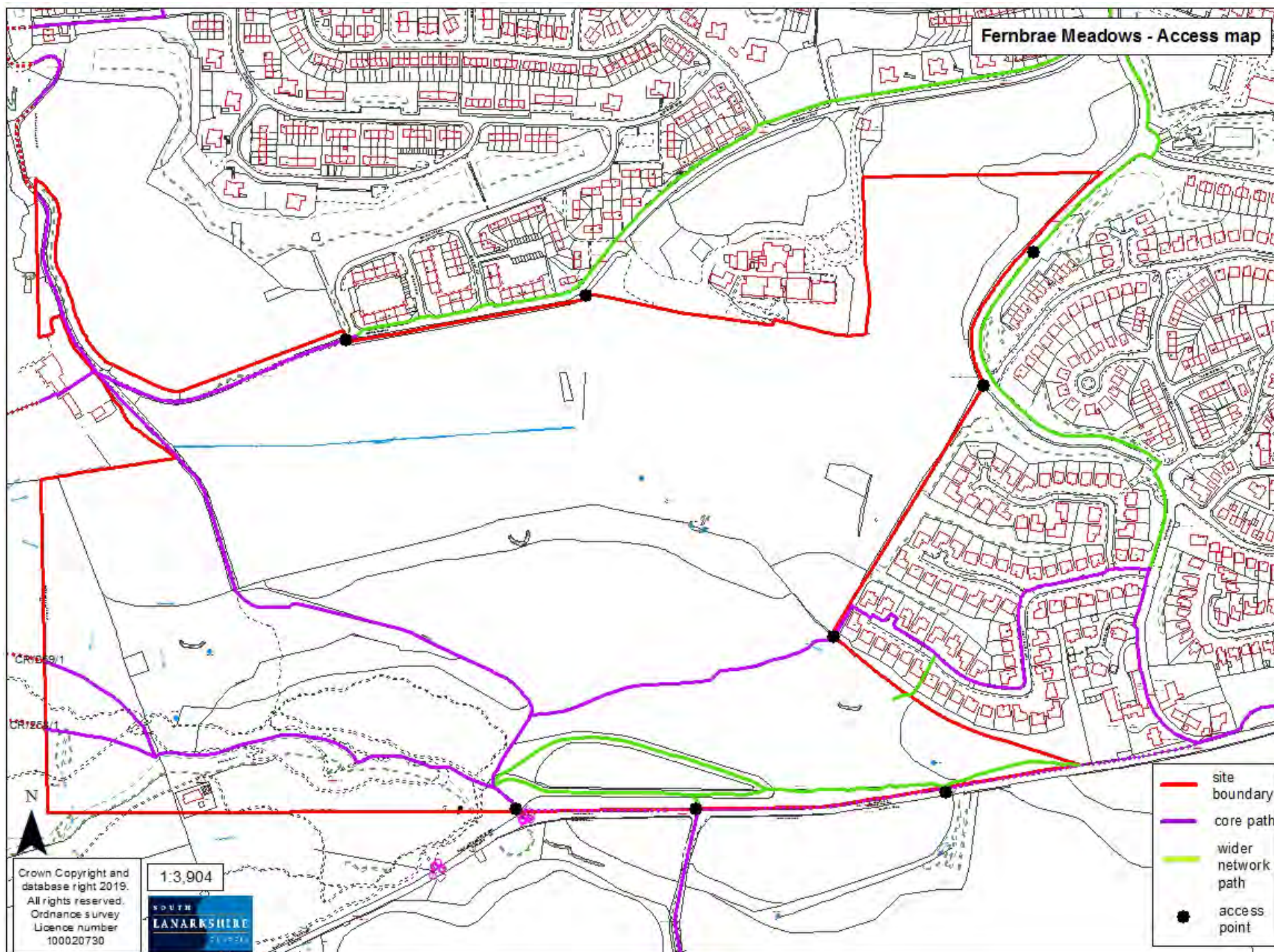
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SOUTH
LANARKSHIRE
COUNCIL

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Fernbrae Meadows - Access map









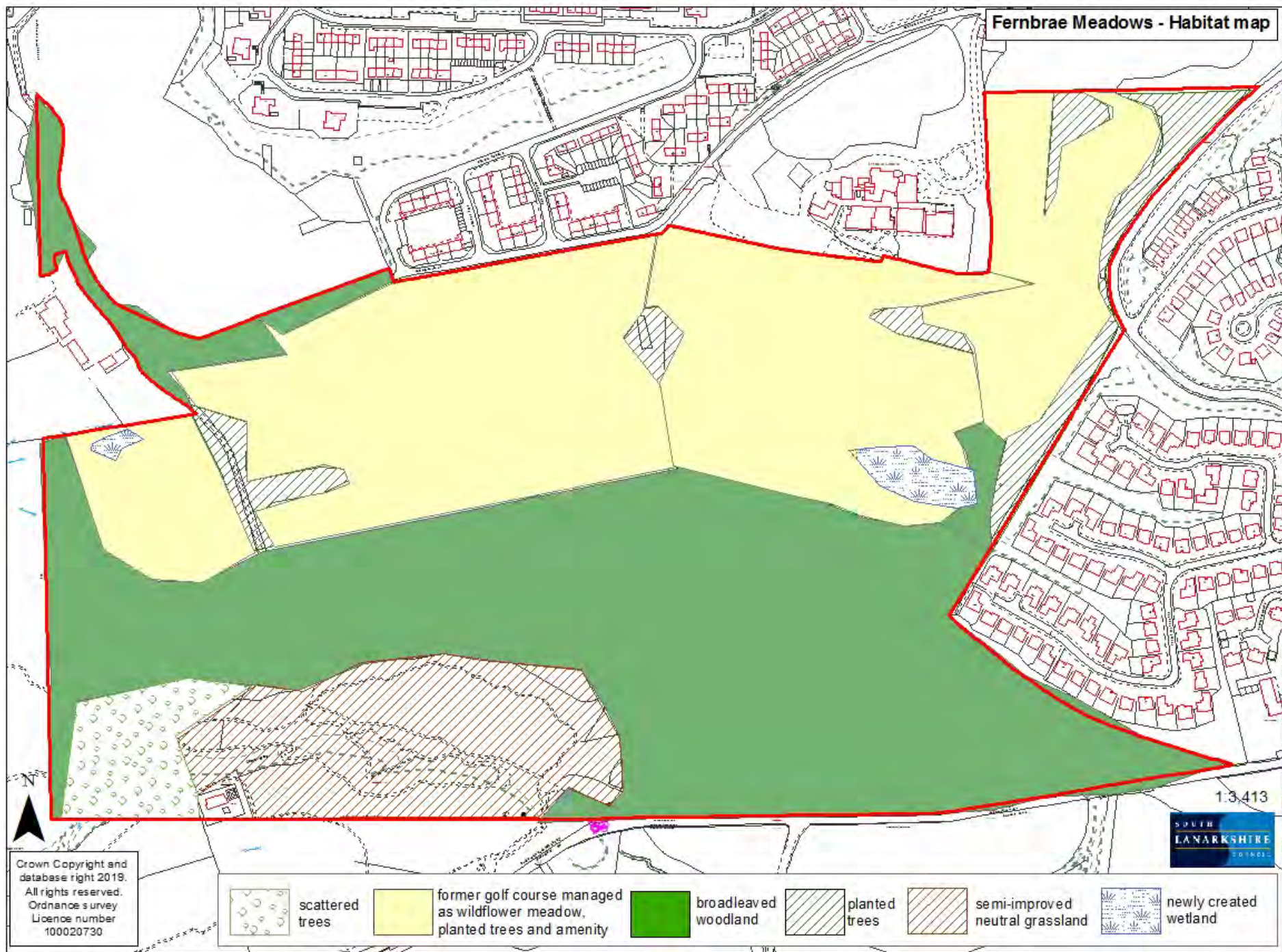
Fernbrae Meadows - Habitat map

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|---|--|--|---|---|---|
|  scattered trees |  former golf course managed as wildflower meadow, planted trees and amenity |  broadleaved woodland |  planted trees |  semi-improved neutral grassland |  newly created wetland |
|---|--|--|---|---|---|





If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs.
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www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk