



Stonehouse Park

Proposed Local Nature Reserve Management Statement

Contents

Introduction

General information

Habitats, flora and fauna

Landscape

Cultural information

Site infrastructure

Recreation and access

Local community

Conclusion

Contacts

Appendix 1: Objectives and actions

Appendix 2: Maps

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 sixteen 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: Stonehouse Park proposed Local Nature Reserve (pLNR) can be found on the northern edge of the town of Stonehouse, in South Lanarkshire. Please refer to the location maps in this statement for further details.

Site name: Stonehouse Park

Grid reference: NS 7490 4712

Site boundary area: 6.4 ha

Current ownership and management: the boundary of the reserve is based upon the extent of land owned by South Lanarkshire Council (SLC).

Site description: The woodlands of Stonehouse Park pLNR are located along the steep sloping banks of the Avon Water, in the Avon Valley. The woodland types vary throughout the reserve from mature broadleaved and mixed conifer to young woodland regeneration and re-stocking from felling work completed in 2005. The lower ground supports a mosaic of habitats including marshy grassland with small areas of fen and swamp associated with wetter ground. The Dunavon Burn runs south to north through the centre of the site, giving rise to wetter and marginal vegetation.



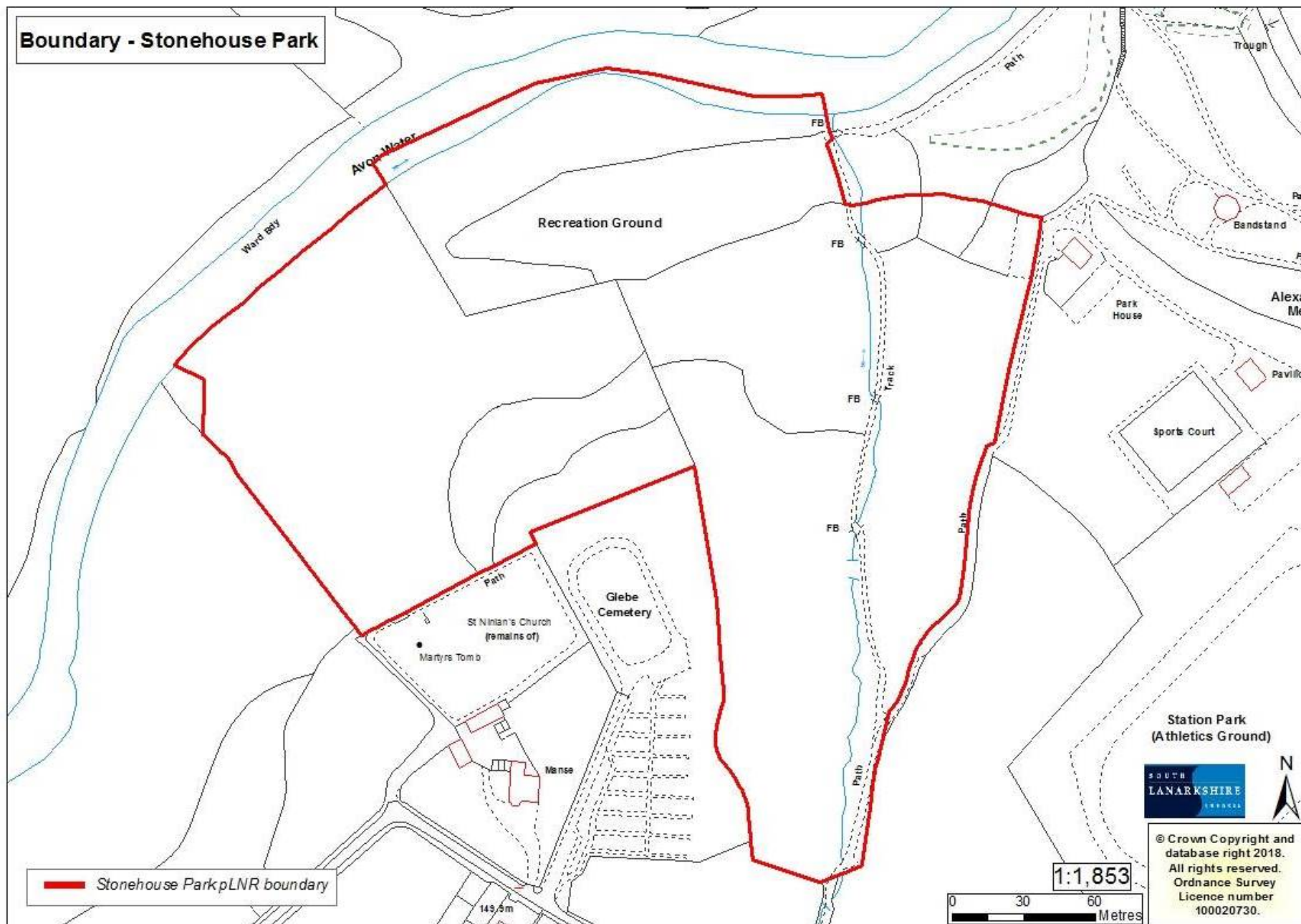
The following National Vegetation Classification woodland communities have been identified at the reserve:

- W7 *Alnus glutinosa* – *Fraxinus excelsior*
- W9 *Fraxinus excelsior* – *Sorbus aucuparia*
- W10 *Quercus robur* – *Pteridium aquilinum*.

Of significance is the location of the proposed reserve along the River Avon, in relation to the surrounding landscape. The river and associated riparian habitats provides key elements of the natural wildlife corridor in this area. Significant additional areas of woodland are located to the north and south of the pLNR.

There is a strong sense of community ownership associated with Stonehouse Park. In May 2015 the Friends of Stonehouse Park became a constituted group. This active community group aim to maintain, develop and promote Stonehouse Park as a valuable local greenspace.

Boundary - Stonehouse Park



Stonehouse Park LNR boundary

Station Park
(Athletics Ground)



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1:1,853

0 30 60
Metres

Habitats, flora and fauna

The majority of Stonehouse Park pLNR supports broadleaved woodland with smaller pockets of semi-improved neutral grassland, fen and swamp vegetation. Semi-mature and early mature woodland located on the upper sloping ground along the River Avon Valley is dominated by sycamore and ash, with some birch, hawthorn, willow and alder. To the western edge of the valley is an area of

Habitat	Area (Ha)	%
Semi-natural broadleaved woodland	4.9	76
Semi-improved neutral grassland	1.4	22.4
Fen	0.05	0.8
Swamp vegetation	0.05	0.8
Total	6.4	100%

open ground in which natural regeneration is gradually encroaching and extending the woodland cover and is composed mainly of hawthorn, elder and willow. The narrow strip of woodland occupying the edge of the Avon Water consists mainly of mature alder with distinctive groups of willow and ash. Other components of the riverside woodland include young birch and sycamore.

The Dunavon Burn runs south to north through the centre of the site. Along the valley slopes of the burn are recently planted and regenerated woodland areas which were established following felling works carried out in 2005. These are dominated by birch, ash and willow and are very densely stocked. Other species represented in these areas include hawthorn, beech, rowan and wild cherry. More mature areas of broadleaved woodland are dominated by ash, sycamore, willow, and beech, with some alder, birch, and hawthorn.

Regeneration is occurring throughout the woodland areas, mainly comprising ash, sycamore and beech. There are a few mature individual conifer trees and small groups of conifers, consisting of Douglas fir and Sitka spruce.

Deadwood habitat is well represented with standing and fallen stems, limbs and branches occurring frequently on the woodland floor. Timber arising from the felling of areas of mature conifer in the Dunavon Valley was for the most part removed from site; some timber was used on site to form temporary access routes, in particular across wetter sections of slope. These timber roads generally remain in place and are gradually rotting down. Other deadwood in the woodland is the result of natural processes, with large diameter stems and limbs forming fallen deadwood throughout areas of more established woodland, and an abundance of smaller timber from fallen branches and twigs.

The ground flora within the woodland consists of a variety of species including red campion, wood avens, dog's mercury, great woodrush, bluebell, common comfrey, male fern and ramson. Wetter areas along the Dunavon burn give rise to yellow flag iris, soft rush, meadowsweet, reed canary grass, angelica and water horsetail.

Japanese knotweed can be found on site. Such invasive species have the capacity to continue to spread and threaten the integrity and character of the woodlands through competition with native ground flora and understorey species. It is necessary to monitor the location and spread of these species with the aim to minimise their risk.

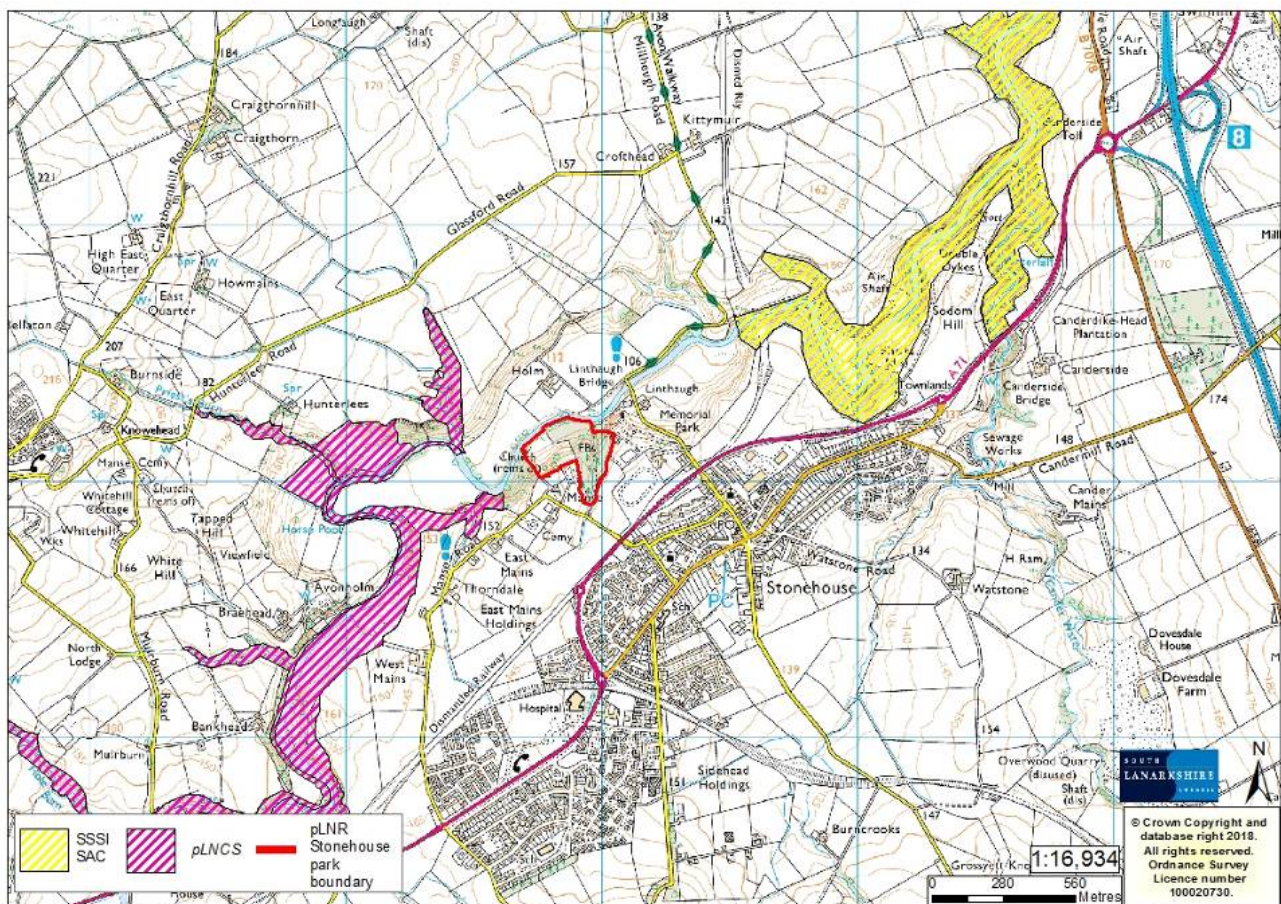
Badgers are known to be present at the park, with one large active sett recorded within the woodland area. Evidence of badger activity in the form of trails and snuffle holes can be found throughout the woodland. Otters have been recorded along the Avon Water. The mature woodland tree and the location of the river would make the site suitable for a variety of bat species.

A notable feature of the reserve is the large area of flat open ground located in the south west of the site, between the woodland valley slopes and the Avon Water. This area is known locally as "the Bogs" and is a natural feature associated with the flood plain of the river. The eastern portion of the area was traditionally used for recreation and was historically mown on a regular basis to

maintain it as an accessible area of grassland for public use. The grassland has not been cut recently and supports a variety of grassland species.

Landscape

The woods located in the Avon Valley form part of a wider wildlife corridor and forest habitat network along the valley. To the east lies the recreational greenspace and amenity grassland associated with the Alexander Hamilton Memorial Park. In the south west corner of Stonehouse Park is St Ninian's church and cemetery grounds. To the west the woodland extends along the Avon Water. The river forms a key site and land-use change boundary along the northern edge of the woodlands. Land to the north of the river, to the east of Stonehouse Park and south of Manse Road is mainly used as agricultural grazing land.



There are a few designated sites in the surrounding landscape including “Avondale” (NS765488) approximately 0.4 miles to the northeast. This is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

Potential Local Nature Conservation Sites (pLNCS) nearby include:

- Upper Avondale (Stonehouse to Cot Castle) NS738460 (0.1 miles to the west)
- Avon Water Woodland NS740465 (0.2 miles west)
- Hunterlees, Avon Water NS740471 (0.3 mile west)
- Holeburn NS726460 (1.3 miles west).

Cultural information

Past land use

Maps from the Ordnance Survey were used to look at the history of Stonehouse Park and the surrounding area from 1888 to 1913 (available online from the [National Library of Scotland](#)).

The formal grounds of Stonehouse Park, located to the east of the pLNR were sponsored by Alexander Hamilton, a local who made his fortune as head of the Victoria Carpet Company in England. It was his wish that he could leave something for the town. SLC purchased the land from Holm Farm for the purpose of creating a public park and on the 30th May 1925 Alexander Hamilton presented the park, bandstand and fountain to the town of Stonehouse.



There are a number of archaeological features of interest recorded adjacent to the pLNR:

- NS7552146774: Stonehouse is noted as conservation area.
- NS7481247011: St Ninian's church and graveyard, listed building.
- NS7526746699: St Ninian's Parish Church including boundary wall, gate and railings, listed building.
- NS7481247011: Martyr's tomb and churchyard, burial ground and Covenanters grave.

Present land use

The park is typically used for recreational activities such as play, walking with family, exercise and dog walking. The woodland acts as a natural extension of the adjacent Alexander Hamilton Memorial park, which houses more formal amenity and play facilities.

Site infrastructure

Stonehouse Park supports 715m of wider network paths. There are no core paths within the site boundary, although core paths HM/2516/1 and HM/2518/1 lie close to the western boundary of the site. There is a small footbridge over the Dunavon Burn. Linthaugh Bridge is marked as a water access point, one of few in the local area. National Cycle Route 74 runs past the east of the site; this route runs from Gretna to Hamilton.

In general the woodland paths are in poor repair, suffering largely from a lack of drainage which in turn leads to erosion issues. The resultant scouring action of water over the paths has resulted in the washing out of the surface layers and exposing the loose aggregate forming the path base. Many paths are timber edged, which traps water once it reaches the path and exacerbates the erosion issue. Erosion is extensive on some sections, to the extent that sub-base geotextile material and culverts have been exposed. In wet weather puddles form on the paths which has developed into severely poached sections of path in places, where water is unable to drain away.

An 11kv overhead electrical powerline passes through the woodland, with an associated wayleave of around 20m cut through the woodland and maintained by clearance of the trees and shrub growth as regular maintenance.

Recreation and access

The park is well used by the local community for walking dogs, walking and exercising. Part of the woodland path is used by mountain bikers.

The main entrance to the site is via Millheugh Road to the eastern edge. This is the only entrance with clear signage notifying you that you are in the Alexander Hamilton Memorial Park. The secondary main access point to the site is via Manse Road. Parking is available to the east of the proposed reserve, within the Park recreation area. Pedestrian access can be gained from the car park and to the south of the site along Manse Road.

Nearby public transport links are available along New Street in Stonehouse, where the number 250 bus runs to Hamilton from Stonehouse. This service drops off at Trongate, in Stonehouse, which is a five minute walk (0.3 miles) to the pLNR.



Local community

The Friends of Stonehouse Park are actively involved in running events and fun days aimed at promoting the park and encouraging visitors.



The aims of the Friends include:

- To conserve, enhance and improve the landscape, biodiversity and sustainable use of the area for the benefit of people and wildlife.
- To improve access to the site.
- To promote the site's facilities, thereby encouraging increased use, leading to the improvement and development of community spirit in the site.
- To engage and involve the local community in environmental issues and action, through information exchange and practical activities.
- To promote, encourage and secure the educational value of the site, its ecological qualities as well as its scenic, historical, landscape qualities.

More information can be found on the Friends websites:

www.friendsofstonehousepark.co.uk/

www.facebook.com/groups/friendsofstonehousepark

There are two schools in close proximity to the proposed reserve: Stonehouse Primary (0.5 miles) and Newfield Primary (1.4 miles).

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.

CAG@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

www.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 J. Birkin

Note that maps may not be to scale

Appendix 1: Objectives and actions

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

Actions:

- Maintain and increase woodland diversity and structure where appropriate to give a range of age classes of tree and representation of dead wood.
- Investigate the opportunity to diversify the open grassland communities by amending mowing regimes.
- Investigate the opportunity to diversify and improve the open wetland communities.
- Contribute to national and local biological recording and other monitoring schemes.
- Ensure appropriate management programmes and use of best practice.

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

Actions:

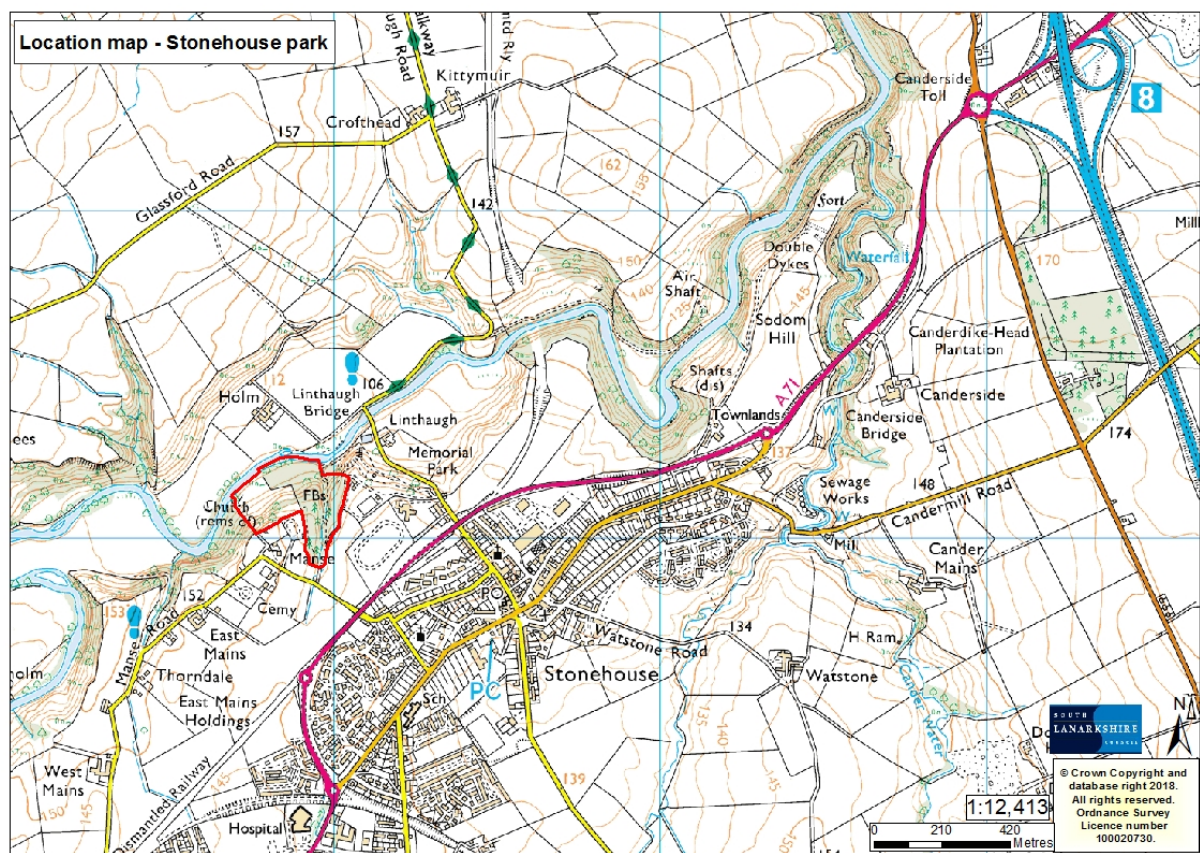
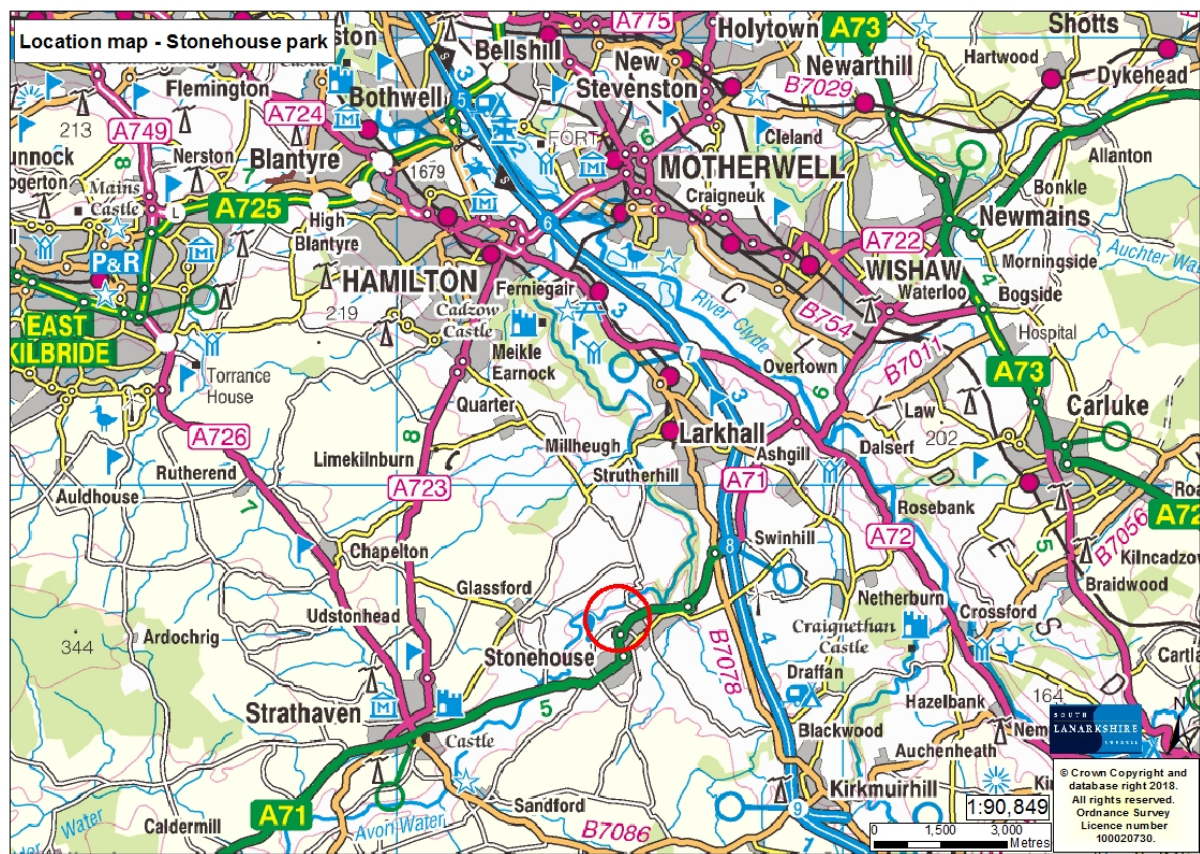
- Identify funding opportunities.
- Upgrade and maintain the existing access routes throughout the reserve.
- Investigate improvements to the access network through the creation of a route to connect the two parts of the reserve and incorporation of some desire lines into more formal paths.
- Investigate the opportunity to use signage to highlight access points and routes to the reserve, as well as interpretation.

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

Actions:

- Develop community involvement within the site with the Friends of Stonehouse Park and other interested parties.
- Investigate and develop opportunities for conservation volunteering.
- Work with local people and other stakeholders towards meeting the objectives of the management plan.
- Identify and promote opportunities for people to enjoy the wildlife of the area.
- Investigate possibilities of promoting the reserve in new and different ways.
- Encourage and promote the use of the reserve for the local community, schools, colleges and other interest groups.

Appendix 2: Maps



Aerial photograph - Stonehouse Park



— Stonehouse Park pLNR boundary

1:1,719

0 25 50 Metres

SOUTH
LANARKSHIRE
COUNCIL



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● entrance point

- wider network paths

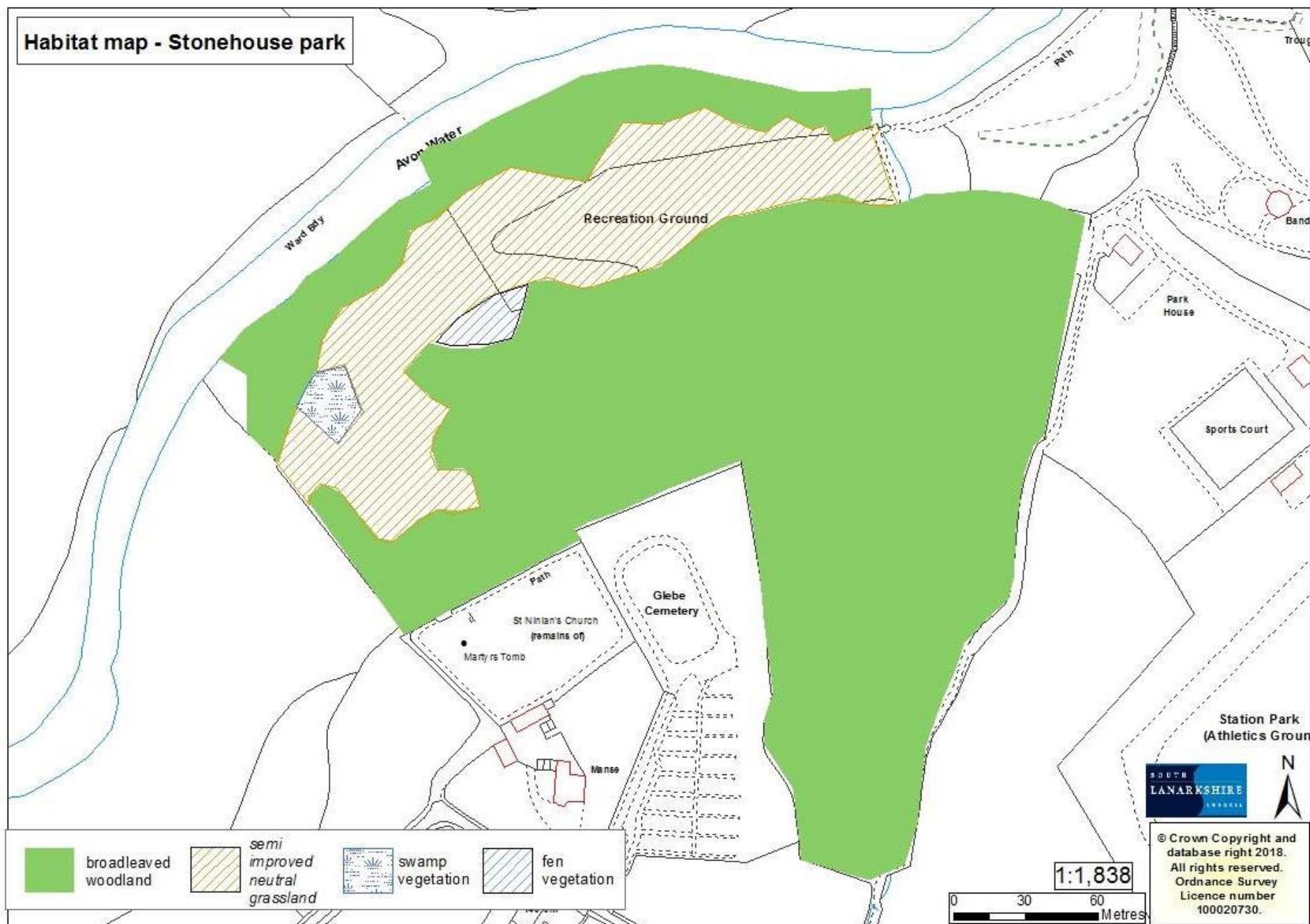
Stonehouse ParkpLNR boundary

**SOUTH
LANARKSHIRE**

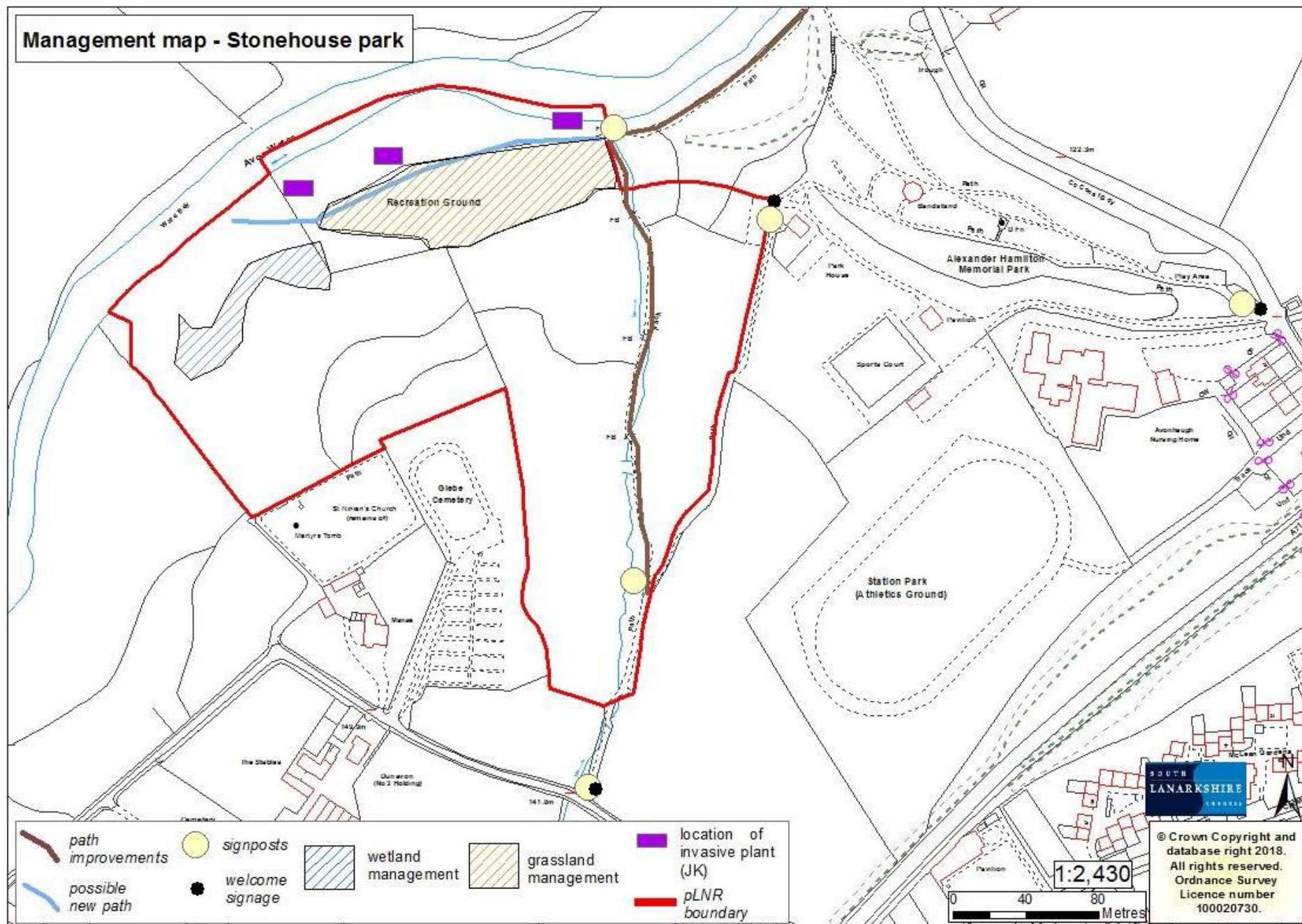
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1:2,376

Habitat map - Stonehouse park



Management map - Stonehouse park





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