

Acknowledgements

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Notes of Importance

Prior Reading

Much of the development, direction and work involved in the Danebury Dog Project was based on information provided by the 'Understanding the Psychology of Walkers with Dogs: new approaches to better management' study. As such it is recommended that it is read in full to gain a proper understanding of this report.

Abbreviations

In the interests of clarity and ease of reading the following phrases have been abbreviated:

- 1) The 'Understanding the Psychology of Walkers with Dogs: new approaches to better management' study is referred to as the 'dog walkers' study.
- 2) The Danebury Dog Project is referred to as the DDP.
- 3) Hampshire County Council is referred to as HCC.
- 4) Dog walker/s are referred to as DW/DW's

DANEBURY DOG PROJECT

1.0

This chapter examines the problems experienced with DW's, the level and variation of DW management on HCC central countryside sites and the initial idea put forward to help establish desired DW behaviour. It also briefly discusses the development of this idea into a structured project.

Project Background

At regular meetings the HCC Countryside Service central team frequently discussed problems experienced with DW's. These included:

- Uncontrolled dogs and the subsequent disturbance to wildlife and other site users.
- Lack of dog faeces collection.
- Worrying and occasional killing of sheep.
- Misunderstandings and heated confrontations with DW's over access and signage.

Quarterly HCC ranger meetings showed that these problems were experienced across the county.

The central sites were examined and it became apparent that the strategies employed to manage DW's and the information available to them, such as livestock and dog bin location, expected behaviour and faeces collection policy were inconsistent. It was also apparent that no matter what the level or type of management being used, all the central sites were experiencing problems with DW's.

It was decided that the central team must work proactively towards solving these problems and that a careful review of our current strategies was needed in an effort to establish desired DW behaviour.

It was agreed that an awareness campaign should be implemented, incorporating the production and distribution of information leaflets, the provision of dog bags on site and additional posters on information boards.

Initially this would be in a pilot format at Danebury Hillfort. Danebury was chosen because it had a reasonable level of management already in place. Specifically:

- Protection under the 'Dog Fouling of Land Act 1996' (making it an offence not to pick up after your dog).
- Provision of one dog bin in the top car park.
- Visits from the local dog warden.
- Several signs highlighting the presence of grazing livestock and required DW's behaviour.

As such, the central team had some awareness of how DW's at Danebury behaved and therefore were in a better position to observe the successes and failures of a campaign. An understanding of which areas worked would allow its fine tuning before being launched at more problematic sites.

Danebury was also chosen because it was felt that a project which aided in the management of dog walker movements in conjunction with other enterprises, such as the addition of alternative access from the main car park*, would help to reduce the high levels of trampling pressure experienced and as such slow erosion rates to main desire lines.

It is important to emphasize that despite Danebury's existing level of management it was still experiencing all of the problems associated with DW's as discussed above. After an examination of the 'Dog Walker' study it became apparent that this was primarily due to badly worded and conflicting signage making DW's feel confused and unwelcome, a poorly located dog bin and lack of available and relevant information to DW's.

* For more information on this alternative access see the Danebury steps report available from the Crab Wood depot.

1.1 The Development from campaign into project

It is important to note at this stage of the report that as work into this campaign progressed it became evident that it would not be sufficiently structured to provide a proper insight into improved ways of managing DW's.

Therefore, through a series of meetings and appropriate research it developed into a comprehensive project with clear aims and objectives (sec. 3). This project was dedicated to the establishment of a dog walkers management system that would allow significant lessons to be learnt.

2.0 Background to Danebury Hillfort

This chapter describes the site of the dog project. It details the site's designations, facts about visitor numbers etc and its livestock population.

2.1 Danebury Hillfort

Danebury is a raised area of chalk downland surmounted by an Iron Age Hillfort that is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM). This Hillfort is flanked by woodland, scrubland and chalk grassland, of which the chalk grassland is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)¹.

The site is located in the parishes of Nether Wallop and Longstock, 4km North-West of Stockbridge town, at a grid reference of SU324377. It is a total of 39.57ha and a Hampshire County Council (HCC) freehold¹.

2.2 Visitor Data, Access, Recreational Activities and Facilities

Danebury offers panoramic views and provides both a landscape feature and open space for the local community. It is also one of the few green spaces within easy reach of Andover. Under the CRoW act 2001 it is designated as an Open Access Site, meaning that there are no predetermined routes and visitors are free to roam¹.

As such Danebury is popular with the public and receives between 30-40,000 visitors per annum. The visitors use the site for various forms of countryside recreation including hiking, dog walking (a high percentage of total visitors), picnicking, kite flying, ball games and general sight seeing.

At the time of this report the facilities provided for these visitors consists of two free car parks (one surfaced, one unsurfaced), ladies, gents and disabled toilets and a notice board used to display various items of information and interest.

2.3 Livestock population

As well as the County's own herd of 65 Manx Loughtan sheep, Danebury is grazed by a local farmer's livestock under an annual grazing licence. Numbers of livestock fluctuate between 10 – 20, with the licence stipulating that no more than 20 cattle can graze the site at any one time. The grazing for these cattle is spread between the Causeway, Roadside and Lower Copse fields, while the County's sheep flock graze the inner ring for most of the year and the SSSI grassland during the late autumn/early winter (Map 1).

3.0 Project Aims

This projects initial design and subsequent development occurred in an effort to accomplish the following aim:

- 1) To initiate a pilot 'dog walker management system' at a site with some management initiatives already in place.

The objectives of this system are:

- a) To learn from the positive and negatives to enable its successful implementation at more problematic sites.
- b) To improve communications between the central team and walkers with dogs, with respect to appropriate behaviour, livestock movements and access restrictions/limitations.
- c) To increase the amount of dog faeces collected and appropriately disposed of by dog walkers at the chosen site. As such improving the overall experience for all visitors and helping in its conservation management.
- d) To significantly reduce the amount of negative and conflicting signage displayed at the chosen site.
- e) To aid in reducing the erosion pressure experienced at Danebury.

4.0 Project Method and Development

This section examines the processes and phases involved in the development of the project and how these subsequently helped to establish the design of a new dog walkers system which tackled the aims and objectives highlighted in section 3.0.

4.1 Phase 1: Literature Review

It was deemed that the most appropriate initial phase of development was to examine the current thinking and research into dog walker management. In this respect the timing of the project was fortunate as it coincided with the publication of an in depth study entitled “Understanding the Psychology of Walkers with dogs: new approaches to better management” (The ‘Dog walker’ study).

This study was the product of a seminar examining the understanding of how people behave in the countryside. It was argued that by understanding the reasons behind certain behaviours, land managers may be better able to challenge these beliefs and eventually change behaviour².

The seminar was attended by Hampshire County Council, The Kennel Club and The Countryside Agency. These organisations subsequently formed a partnership and appointed a research contract to the University of Portsmouth that looked at applying the seminar’s approach to understanding the beliefs and behaviours of DW’s².

The aims of the dog walker study were to:

- I. examine the attitudes and beliefs of DW’s that might influence their behaviour.
- II. identify psychological principles that can influence how people think and behave.
- III. apply these findings to develop recommendations for land management practise that might optimise the benefits and minimise the costs of people walking dogs in the countryside.

The study gathered data using a series of focus group which incorporated not only DW’s but also site managers.

In brief, the initial analysis revealed that dog DW’s behaviour was influenced by attitudes and beliefs relating to their relationships with their dogs, those with whom they share dog walking locations and land management officials².

The relationship between DW and dog was discovered to be one of great importance and a major influence on DW behaviour. The intensity of this relationship was found to impact on how DW's interact with others and the environment².

In terms of those with whom they share locations with participants reported choosing to walk where they anticipated meeting other DW's as they saw this as a social opportunity and believed their dog enjoyed the companionship of other dogs. Conversely, participants highlighted occasional conflicts with other users such as cyclist and joggers and as a consequence avoided areas and times where they are likely to meet such groups².

Reported interactions between DW's and land management officials were mixed. A positive attitude from DW's towards site staff was presented but less so towards more senior officials who were often perceived as anti-dog. Separately to this, site managers discussed the negative impact of dogs on their sites with particular regard to fouling and control issues that effect people, wildlife and livestock. However it was also acknowledged that DW's did on occasions act as unofficial wardens of the countryside, through actions such as litter collection and problem reporting².

From the studies findings a recommended package of measures were developed. Succinctly, these where that land management policy and practise should:

- I. open the lines of communication with the dog walking community.
- II. provide clear and consistent messages that communicate how people are expected to behave.
- III. encourage dog walkers to take responsibility for their dogs behaviour and promote desired behaviours within the dog walking community.
- IV. Enable dog walkers to feel valued and welcomed at sites via the provision of dog related facilities, products and events².

It was with this information in mind that the development of the 'Danebury Dog Project' was commenced.

4.2 Phase 2: Meetings and Action Plans: the development of ideas.

After undertaking the literature review it was logical to arrange a series of meetings with the HCC's representative involved with the 'dog walkers' study.

It was felt that these meetings would provide critical analysis on the initial ideas behind the DDP, help evolve new ideas and provide continuous support and direction throughout its development.

The initial meeting highlighted that for the DDP to be a success it was important to have clear goals. Consequently, before going any further the desired outcomes were discussed and the aims and objectives seen in section 3 decided upon.

Subsequent meetings were structured around ways in which these aims could be met. One of the main themes to arise from the meeting process was that 'give and take' ideas were being discussed for pilot schemes at other HCC sites. This idea was taken from the recommendations of the 'dog walkers' study.

For example to combat problems with faeces collection 'no pick up' areas and 'kick it or flick it' areas were being planned. It was hoped that by being more lenient in certain areas it would encourage the desired behaviour of faeces collection in areas where it was a definite necessity.

The provision of a fenced off exercise area at Danebury, located next to the car park, was also discussed. Here it was felt that dogs and their owners could socialise and dogs could carry out their toiletry needs (it is proven that dogs defecate within the first few minutes of exiting the car). Collection would still be necessary but disposal could be immediate via the dog bin in the adjacent car park. It was thought that an exercise area such as this could be a first port of call for dog owners therefore reducing the amount of faeces on the rest of the site.

Such a strategy would also meet many of the recommendations from the 'dog walkers' report. For example, it would be seen as an area especially for dog walkers, that they were welcome at Danebury and that a facility had been provided where the social aspects of dog walking could be maximised.

However, upon examining the details specific to Danebury it became apparent that such formats weren't transferable or would only go a certain way towards meeting the projects aims and objectives. The Open Access nature of Danebury means that there are no specific paths where faeces could simply be flicked off and it's status as a SSSI means that it needs to be in favourable condition, meaning that there are no 'rough areas' that could be set aside as 'no pick up' areas. On top of this Danebury is also designated as a SAM and as such Natural England would not permit any further fencing.

As can be seen, it became apparent during this series of meetings that site specific constraints and requirements were going to be an important deciding factor on any dog management system that was developed.

With regards to Danebury it was evident that because of its particular characteristics the aims of the project would have to be met in a different way. This was done by re-examining the recommendations of the 'dog walkers' study and at how, specifically, these could be applied to Danebury.

4.2.1 Developing a Comprehensive Project.

It was decided that due to the above, a management system at Danebury had to be more comprehensive than a few specially designated areas. To meet the required aims the management system needed to encompass the whole site.

With this in mind, focus shifted to those study recommendations (sec 4.1) that could be implemented at Danebury and on how their implementation would help in reaching the projects aims (sec 3).

As such, in consequent meetings this subject was at the forefront. It was felt that the main areas that could be resoundingly addressed were:

- Signage – information should be relayed more positively, (negative signing has been a problem at Danebury, see appendix 1), it should be non-conflicting (i.e. all signs with same information and up-to-date) and the information should be worded in such a way as to promote desired behaviour i.e. 'help us to help you' or angled towards highlighting possible danger to dogs e.g. 'Grazing cattle may hurt your dog: please keep it on a lead'.
- Zoning – highlighting zones where dogs can run free and exhibit natural behaviour, as well as informing where they should be on a lead or where they cannot go.
- Facilities – it was hoped that it would be possible at Danebury (depending on finances) to install a new bin at much more appropriate place.
- Events – it was thought that it would be entirely possible at Danebury to organise a annual event that was targeted specifically towards dog walkers.

After this examination into what was achievable at Danebury, further research was carried out into what (if any) dog management systems were being operated elsewhere in the country. It was hoped that by proceeding in this way it would help cement conceived ideas, establish new ones and highlight any possible pit falls.

Several management strategies were examined, including dog identification cards, different types of site zoning and importantly a Traffic Light system in place at Rookbury Mill, a countryside site managed by Test Valley Borough Council. This particular system appeared to be very interesting and one that in theory could be implemented at Danebury.

As such a site visit was arranged to Rookbury accompanied by the local dog warden. This showed that the site had been divided into exercise, dog on lead and no dog areas. These different zones were highlighted by the placement at intervals of appropriately coloured paw signs i.e.

- Green paw = Exercise area
- Amber paw = Dogs on lead area
- Red paw = No dog area

Information about this system was relayed to the public via A4 sized information boards situated near access points.

After this site visit and after discussions with the warden responsible for its management, it was felt that, if the design and running aspects of the Traffic Light system were tailored specifically to Danebury's requirements, it would be the right direction to take.

With this decision taken the next step was to establish how it could best be organised for Danebury. To do this the project's aims, dog study recommendations and information gathered from the investigation into other dog systems were examined together. An assessment was made into how best to communicate the new system to DW's, how the ongoing relaying of information would be carried out, how we could make DW's feel more welcome and how it could be made easier for dog walkers to behave in the desired way i.e. responsibly.

It was seen that several changes to the Rookbury system would have to be made, with particular reference to the provision of information about zoning. This was because unlike Rookbury Mill, the zones at Danebury would not be permanently designated. They would have to be dynamic and movable due to the necessity of moving livestock to different areas of the site. As such, the way in which information was made available would have to be dynamic and changeable.

The final design for the establishment of a 'Traffic Light' system specific to Danebury was as follows:

1. **Map** – the production of a large map naming the different areas of Danebury (Map 1). The exercise, dogs on lead and no dog zones were also highlighted on the map, in the form of a small computer generated paw print on the appropriate area.

The map was designed to be updated quickly as and when the area designations changed. E.g. The map could have a green paw on the Causeway Field indicating an exercise area but if sheep were moved into this area the map could be reproduced with an amber paw on the Causeway field indicating a dog on lead zone.

The map was attached to the information board and would provide a reference point for DW's, providing clear, up to date information on livestock location and dog bins. It was deemed that naming the areas would also reduce confusion when discussing the site with visitors.

2. **Paws** – the zoning of the different areas was achieved by attaching the appropriate coloured paw signs to access points. For example, if livestock were grazing in the Causeway Field, amber paws (dogs on lead) would be attached to all gates and stiles leading into that area.

The paws were 3" by 3", with the different coloured paws on a white background (appendix 2). This size allowed for their attachment to gate posts whilst still retaining a good visual presence. They were affixed using two 1" round head screws, giving strong adhesion but also allowing for quick removal and changing as the area designations changed.

The provision of the paw signs also meant that many of the negative and poorly worded signs could be removed from Danebury and therefore help in creating a more welcoming site.

3. Leaflet – A leaflet was produced to a high standard (appendix 3). The leaflet included:

- A smaller reproduction of the map discussed above (minus the paw prints). Allowing DW's to familiarise themselves with the different areas of the site.
- An explanation of the dog system. Careful consideration of the wording was taken to ensure that it relayed a positive and friendly message.
- A section for useful information for DW's, such as contact details for the dog warden, petlog, vet help direct and the police.
- An endorsement by the Kennel Club. Providing increased kudos within the dog walking community.

4. Dog bin – It became apparent through the research stages of the project that a major barrier to DW's behaving desirably was the lack of facilities or the provision of inappropriate ones. When examining Danebury it could be seen that the position of the existing dog bin was one such barrier.

Dogs have been noted to defecate five minutes after exiting the car. The habits of many danebury dog walkers is to arrive and then walk directly out of the car park towards the earth works. As such, the existing bins location in the top car park means that DW's are already quite a distance past it before needing to dispose of any faeces. It was believed that this was a contributing factor to the undesired behaviour of non-collection or worse, of collecting in bags and then discarding in bushes.

It was decided that the installation of a new bin in a more appropriate place would help achieve desirable behaviour. However, this transpired to be a difficult task. Not only were there funding issues with regards to the new bins installation and emptying (resolved by obtaining external funding from HCC Access Development team) but also meeting with the contractors responsible for bin emptying highlighted a reluctance to empty a bin that involved walking to it.

Ideally, a new bin would be positioned near the entrance to the inner ring. This location however, was met with much resistance from the contractors who were adamant that this would be an inaccessible position. After much communication with the contractors and by obtaining the support of the local dog warden a compromise was reached. A new bin was installed half way between the top car park exit and the trig point (map 1). This was near enough to be accessible by contractors but far enough away from the car park to be useful to DW's.

- 5. Dog event** – The best way to launch the system, provide face to face interaction with Danebury's dog walkers, promote HCC Countryside Service and establish a welcoming message to Danebury DW's was to organise a Dog event, later to become known as the 'Danebury Dog Day' (Appendix 4).

The Central team together with members of the Access Development team organised an event that included a dog behaviourist, a dog agility course, coconut shy, treasure hunts and guided walks. The day also provided an opportunity to discuss issues with the local dog warden and of course details about the new system. Every visitor was provided with a dog goody bag (courtesy of Pets at Home. Winchester) and a 'I'm a Danebury dog' rosette. The day was a fun way to get across an important message.

5.0 Evaluation

This chapter evaluates the Danebury dog management system in three sections. Firstly it examines the design areas that needed adjustment or improvement after the systems launch. Secondly, it discusses the feedback obtained from the Danebury dog walking community and lastly examines the success of the new dog bin.

Design Adjustments

As time elapsed after the launch of the dog system it became apparent that changes to some of its design aspects would need to be made. These changes, the reasons for them and how they were fine tuned are discussed below.

1) **Addition of wording to paw signs** (appendix 2)

Personal observations and discussions with dog walkers highlighted that many were not consulting the information available to them on the notice board prior to commencing their walk. As such, it was possible for those that hadn't attended the Danebury dog day or collected a leaflet from the dispensers to have no idea of what the paw signs represented or even that a new system was in place.

To ensure and make it easier for DW's to exhibit desired behaviour it was felt that the paw signs should be understandable even with no prior knowledge of the system. Consequently, new paw signs were produced with the zone designation also in writing. The new signs were still small enough to fit onto gate posts and, arguably, had an enhanced visual impact.

2) **Dog walker specific information board**

It also became apparent that the existing notice board which held much of the information about the system, was not perfectly situated. To help ensure that the relevant information regarding zone designation etc, was easily available to dog walkers it would be desirable to have a dog walker only information board. Ideally this would be in an unmissable location, such as next to a main desire line.

However, due to Danebury's SSSI designation and an unwillingness to clutter the site with more notice or interpretation boards, this wasn't possible. Therefore, to overcome this problem a sign was produced and attached to the top car parks main exit gate. This sign politely reminded DW's to look at the existing notice board prior to their walk so as to inform themselves of the latest DW information.

3) Sensitive no dog areas

It became clear to the Central team in an unfortunate and dramatic way that when dealing with sensitive no dog areas, which have previously had large amounts of negative signage, a gradual reduction and change in signs is needed.

The inner ring at Danebury (Map 1) was unofficially designated as a permanent no dog area, this was due to its grazing by sheep, its importance for ground nesting birds and its use in educational visits.

Prior to the new system a large, obvious and unfriendly sign was in place at the rings access point informing Danebury visitors that no dogs were to enter the ring. Upon the new systems launch this was replaced with two 3" by 3" red paws. This proved to be too much of an instantaneous change and as such the paw signs were ignored and DW's entered the ring. This resulted in a serious dog attack on a sheep, leading to the sheep's destruction.

Obviously a rethink was needed to ensure this didn't happen again. This resulted in large red paws with wording being attached to the access point, alongside a large, well worded sign highlighting the presence of sheep and a laminated copy of the leaflet explaining the new system. This information was left in place for approximately 2 months and then gradually removed until only two red paw signs with wording remained. Since this time no further attacks have occurred.

4) Alterations to the notice board map

As discussed in section 4.2.1 the notice board map provided changeable information regarding the areas of Danebury and their current designation i.e. exercise area, no dogs etc. However, the Central team became aware that creating changes to the map relied on access to the computer with the original map JPEG. If access wasn't possible it caused a delay in altering the map and meant that it was not always in keeping with the rest of the system. This created a situation where incorrect and out of date information was being relayed.

This problem was addressed by producing a A3 map that would stay permanently on the notice board. In place of the computer generated paw designations, separate and laminated attachments were produced (appendix 5). Each attachment clearly highlighted a particular area and its designation. Enough attachments were produced to cover all possible area and designation combinations. These could be kept inside the Danebury kiosk and as such would always be readily available to keep the notice board map up to date.

5.1 Dog Walker Feedback

To gain a fuller understanding of the system's successes and failures it was felt that feedback should be obtained from Danebury's dog walking community.

This was achieved by organising a meeting point in the car park (appendix 8) where DW's were asked to spend a few moments answering a questionnaire. Their time was rewarded with a dog goody bag.

These feedback sessions took place over the winter months and this coupled with a limited amount of available time to actually obtain feedback (due to other work commitments) resulted in a relatively low response. However, it is felt that alongside the information received from informal discussions, there were a sufficient number completed to provide a good insight into how the system is being received. It is also important to note that the task of obtaining feedback is on going.

The feedback showed that of those DW's that took part in the questionnaire 75% were aware of the new dog system. Initially, this appeared to be lower than expected but is less concerning when it is realised that, of the 25% that were unaware, the majority had not been to Danebury since the systems launch and as such had not had an opportunity to familiarise themselves.

In regards to the relaying of information the following results were obtained. 83% of DW's felt it had improved the clarity of where they could walk with their dog. 92% expressed that it had improved their understanding of where their dog should be on a lead and of where the no dog areas are and lastly, 75% felt it had made the location of grazing animals more obvious. This last statistic, in relation to the previous results, is a relatively low number. However, half of those that did not feel that the new system had made the location of grazing animals clearer, highlighted that it wasn't that the system didn't work, but that they had understood where the livestock were under the previous management.

The above results show that the new system has greatly improved communications between the central team and DW's in respect to appropriate behaviour, livestock movements and access. When asked in what way this had been achieved three quarters of respondents said that the system was clear, understandable and easy to understand.

5.2 Dog Bin and Faeces Collection Assessment

The latter section of the questionnaire focused on dog faeces collection and sought DW's reaction to the new bin. 41% of DW's reported that the system had made it clearer as to where they should pick up after there dog. This would seem to be a disappointing result but is less so when it is understood that 85% of the DW's that said it was no clearer, also stated that they already knew that they should be collecting everywhere.

This is a particularly interesting result as it highlights that, possibly, in regards to the aim of increasing faeces collection, it is not the provision of increased information that is important but instead the provision of appropriately placed bins i.e. regardless of whether new information is available a new, appropriately placed bin, will automatically increase faeces collection.

This is supported by the results obtained from a dog faeces flagging study. Prior to the installation of the new bin, faeces was flagged (appendix 9). This was in a 2 meter by 50 meter strip below its selected position and likewise above. In this area, all faeces had a flag positioned next to it and then flags were counted. This was repeated three months after the bins installation. An 82% reduction in faeces was recorded. Other variables that could have effected faeces amount have to be considered, but it is felt that this goes someway to showing the importance of well placed infrastructure. This also shows that faeces collection increased disproportionately to improvements in the understanding of where people should pick up.

In respect to the new bin, 83% of DW's were aware that it had been installed. However, the majority felt that it would be better placed nearer the inner ring i.e. further from the car park but acknowledged that it was in a much better place than the old bin and were sympathetic to the restriction described in section 4.2.1.

This result shows that site specific research i.e. talking to the DW's of a site, must be carried out prior to installing dog bins. If there are restrictions to locating a bin in its ideal position then these should be highlighted to DW's. This it would appear is a good way to improve understanding and relations between site managers and the dog walking community.

6.0 Conclusion

Overall it is felt that this new system has performed well in its role as a pilot scheme, meeting all of the projects aims and objectives.

Its establishment highlighted several areas where its initial design fell short, however, its subsequent alterations and improvements have paved the way for its easier and more successful launch at other sites. It is also believed that this project can act as a case study by the HCC Countryside Service as a whole.

The central team have learnt much about developing such a system and importantly can carry this newly acquired knowledge with them into the future. A greater understanding and empathy towards the needs and desires of DW's has also been established, alongside an increased capacity to achieve desired DW behaviour.

Perhaps most importantly this project has provided an opportunity for the central team to closely examine how the issue of DW's and site management was approached on their sites at a time when access and conservation converge ever closer.