

BLASHFORD LAKES STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PLAN – SUMMARY

Introduction

1. This Strategic Management Plan has been prepared to review and update the proposals of the Blashford Lakes Management Strategy and Plan (BLMSP) (1992). The Strategic Management Plan has been prepared by Land Use Consultants, overseen by a Blashford Lakes Steering Group comprising Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council, English Nature, the Environment Agency, Wessex Water, Bournemouth & West Hampshire Water Company, and the Hampshire Wildlife Trust.
2. The purpose of the review was to build upon the success of the original BMLSP taking into account changes that have occurred in terms of land use and activities at the lakes, and also changes in legislation, policy and guidance since 1992. The area covered by this Strategic Management Plan has also been extended from the original BLMSP, so that it now includes all of the lakes and adjoining land within the Blashford Lakes study area.

Factors Influencing the Strategic Management Plan

3. A number of changes have taken place since the BLMSP was published, most notably:
 - ending of much of the mineral extraction activity in the study area, (with the exception of the north of the study area), although processing of minerals continues in a number of locations, and several sites in the study area are still being restored.
 - designation of a large proportion of the study area as a Special Protection Area and Ramsar site, which means that it is of national and international importance for its nature conservation interest, and in particular for over-wintering waterfowl. This has brought with it various statutory duties and responsibilities to protect and conserve the ecological interest in order to achieve nature conservation objectives.
 - inclusion of the Blashford Lakes study area in the proposed New Forest National Park.
4. The Strategic Management Plan has drawn on both detailed research relating to the study area, such as monitoring of waterfowl populations, and consultation with those with an interest in the study area.

The Value of Blashford Lakes

5. The Blashford Lakes study area is a valuable resource, catering for a wide range of uses and interests:
 - It has been an important source of minerals over many years, providing essential supplies for the construction industry.
 - It represents an important ecological asset, as part of the wider Avon Valley, but also through the creation of large areas of open standing water.
 - It is a strategic resource for water storage and supply.
 - It is a regionally important location for water-sports, including sailing, water-skiing, and canoeing.
 - It provides an important local resource for recreational fishing.
 - It also caters for a range of other recreational pursuits, including shooting, walking and bird watching.
 - It is an agricultural resource, providing back-up grazing for the New Forest.

- It is an educational resource, linked to all the above uses.
6. The proposals in the Strategic Management Plan take into account the history and evolution of the study area, the various interests involved, and the statutory duties that need to be discharged by public authorities.
 7. The Strategic Management Plan looks at the lakes as a whole, and defines an overall Strategic Aim and Key Principles to help to manage the multiple uses and potentially conflicting interests at the lakes.

The **Strategic Aim** of the Plan is:

To ensure that existing and future uses at Blashford Lakes, including water storage and supply, sport and recreation, nature conservation, mineral working and restoration, and residential amenity, are mutually accommodated as far as is practicable, within the framework set by legislation.

The **Key Principles** are:

- i Opportunities to achieve multiple objectives (e.g. water storage and supply; nature conservation; sport and recreation; access) should be pursued rather than single objectives (i.e. win-win solutions).***
- ii Ensure safe and reliable water supply from specific lakes, within previously agreed drawdown limits, until further research has been undertaken to establish an appropriate management regime for water supply that is consistent with nature conservation and recreation objectives.***
- iii Protect and enhance the nature conservation interest of the Blashford Lakes study area as a whole, and in particular those areas designated for their nature conservation value and protected by legislation.***
- iv Where there is a clear and obvious conflict between legal and policy obligations for nature conservation and other uses, nature conservation should take precedence, except where there is a proven over-riding public need for water supply.***
- v Preserve and enhance the landscape, recognising that the lakes have their own unique character within the wider context of the Avon Valley, and carry out management to improve the landscape and nature conservation value of the lakes and land areas in between the lakes.***
- vi Ensure that the restoration of mineral workings is co-ordinated and managed, and carried out to a high standard in keeping with nature conservation, amenity and landscape objectives.***
- vii Maintain and manage current well-established sport and recreational uses at the lakes, and seek enhancement in such uses, within constraints set by nature conservation objectives.***
- viii Improve footpath access for local residents and visitors.***
- ix Improve educational interpretation at the lakes, including the nature conservation and historic interest of the area.***
- x Implement the Strategic Management Plan through engagement with landowners, users of the lakes, local residents, and other interest groups, under the continued auspices of the Blashford Lakes Consultative Committee, with the aim of extending its remit to cover those lakes currently outside the ownership of the water companies.***

These provide the framework for the Strategic Management Plan, allowing sufficient flexibility to accommodate changes over time.

Key Proposals (see Figure 1)

8. The key proposals included in the Strategic Management Plan are as follows:

9. Mineral workings

- Continued restoration and aftercare of mineral workings in line with planning consents, conditions and obligations.

10. Water storage and supply (see Figure 2)

- Continued use of certain lakes within the study area for water storage and supply, with management of the resource to be determined by detailed hydrological studies.

The lakes where water supply is the primary purpose are:

- ◇ Blashford Lake
- ◇ Ellingham Lake
- ◇ Ellingham Pound
- ◇ Ibsley Water
- ◇ Ivy Lake

Other lakes with potential for water storage and supply are:

- ◇ Rockford Lake
- ◇ North Somerley Lake

11. Nature conservation (see Figure 3)

- Manage the sites designated for the nature conservation value in line with statutory requirements and nature conservation objectives, restoring to favourable condition those lakes designated for their nature conservation interest that are not achieving their conservation objectives.

Lakes currently in favourable nature conservation condition are:

- ◇ Ibsley Water (eastern part)
- ◇ Ivy Lake

Lakes not in favourable condition are:

- ◇ Ellingham Lake
- ◇ Linbrook Lake (East)
- ◇ Mockbeggar Lake
- ◇ Rockford Lake (eastern part)
- ◇ Snails Lake
- ◇ Dockens Water

Restore sites currently not designated for their nature conservation interest to achieve nature conservation objectives:

- ◇ Ibsley Quarry
- ◇ Ibsley Water (western part)
- ◇ Linbrook Lake (west)
- ◇ North Somerley Lake
- ◇ Rockford Lake (western part)

- Conserve and enhance the nature conservation interest of parts of the study area that have developed nature conservation interest but are not designated, in order to improve the ecological value of Blashford Lakes as a whole. These are:
 - ◊ Goblins Lake
 - ◊ Kingfisher Lake
 - ◊ Land surrounding the Wessex Water Treatment Plant
 - ◊ Lin Brook.
- Pursue opportunities to enhance the nature conservation value of other areas not currently contributing to nature conservation interest
 - ◊ Ellingham Pound
 - ◊ Hucklesbrook Lake
 - ◊ Hurst Ponds
 - ◊ Morey's Lakes (excluding Goblin's lake)
 - ◊ Poulner (Northfield Lake)
 - ◊ Wash Pit
 - ◊ Hardstanding at Ellingham Drove
 - ◊ Public open space north of Wash Pit
- Undertake further survey and monitoring work to inform conservation management of the lakes.

12. Sport and recreation (see Figure 4)

- Continuation of sailing at Blashford Lake, and water-skiing at Ellingham Lake, subject to appropriate arrangements being in place to ensure that nature conservation objectives are not compromised.
- Consideration of controlled water-based, non-powered recreational use (e.g. sailing/ canoeing) at Rockford Lake provided there is no adverse impact on the nature conservation interest of the lake or Dockens Water.
- Maintain active water sports at Hucklesbrook Lakes.
- Continuation of fishing at:
 - ◊ Blashford Lake
 - ◊ Hucklesbrook Lake
 - ◊ Hurst Ponds
 - ◊ Kingfisher Lake
 - ◊ Linbrook Lake
 - ◊ Meadow, King's and Vincent Lakes
 - ◊ Poulner Lake
 - ◊ Wash Pit.

For lakes that are part of the Special Protection Area or contribute to it, studies are to be undertaken to investigate and monitor the effects of fishing, e.g. at:

- ◊ Blashford Lake
- ◊ Kingfisher Lake
- ◊ Linbrook Lake (east)

Fishing will only be allowed to continue at Rockford Lake and Snail's Lake if it can take place without affecting nature conservation interests.

- Continue low-key recreation (e.g. non-powered water sports) at Hurst Ponds
- End shooting at Mockbeggar Lakes and Ibsley Water as this is in conflict with the nature conservation designations. Also seek controls on shooting on the lakes outside the Special Protection Area e.g. North Somerley.

13. Access and parking (see Figure 5)

The Strategy seeks to develop a network of linked footpaths to connect specific sites of interest and provide for walking facilities off roads.

Footpaths and bridleways already proposed in mineral restoration plans are:

- a bridleway west of the A338 (which this Strategy recommends should become a definitive right of way with provision for cyclists if feasible)
- a footpath connecting Mockbeggar Lane with the Avon Valley Path.

In addition, the strategy proposes the following routes:

- a north-south footpath potentially connecting Mockbeggar Lane and Ellingham Drove. Two indicative routes are shown. There is also the potential to create a link with the former Ibsley Control Tower.
- a north-south footpath to the east and south of Ellingham Lake to link with the Study Centre and the bird hide between Ellingham Lake and Ivy Water.
- a north-south footpath to the west of Rockford Lake connecting Mockbeggar Lake with Ivy Lane and the Avon valley Path.
- east of Rockford Lake, to take the Avon Valley Path off Highwood Lane.

In addition, a footpath to the south and east of Blashford Lake, which would create a circular route around the lake, has been proposed for some time. This should only be introduced if it can be shown that it will result in no additional disturbance to wildlife or adjoining properties.

All these proposed paths would be permissive initially, with a view to becoming definitive rights of way in the long term.

While it is not the intention to encourage access by car, it is recognised that some provision should be made, particularly to assist those with mobility problems. Four locations offer scope for additional parking:

- the hardstanding north of Rockford Lake, off Ellingham Drove
- near to Ellingham Pound
- to the south-west of Linbrook Lake West, to be accessed off Woolmer Lane
- east of the former control tower, opposite Forelock Farm (if the control tower is brought into use).

There is also limited potential to expand or formalise the parking arrangements at the Study Centre.

14. Agriculture and grazing

Opportunities should be pursued to provide for agricultural use of land in the study area, particularly for back-up grazing for the New Forest. Locations that offer potential for this use are:

South of Ellingham Drove north of Rockford Lake

- east of Blashford Lake
- east of Linbrook Lake
- west of Ibsley Water
- west of Ellingham Lake
- at Ibsley Quarry
- north and east of Mockbeggar Lakes.

15. Education

The Strategic Management Plan aims to increase the educational use of the lakes area. Proposals comprise:

- additional use of the Blashford Lakes Study Centre, which should be promoted to a wider range of interests beyond schools, and could include extending the existing building to create a Visitor Centre;
- the potential use of the former airfield control tower adjacent to Mockbeggar Lake for educational purposes/ bird watching/ historic interpretation etc. A further study is needed of the feasibility of this proposal.

Linked to these proposals, a strategy for interpretation and education in the study area should be drawn up, including links with any similar initiatives for the New Forest and the River Avon, and focusing on the history, nature conservation interest and recreational potential of the area.

Implementation of the Strategic Management Plan

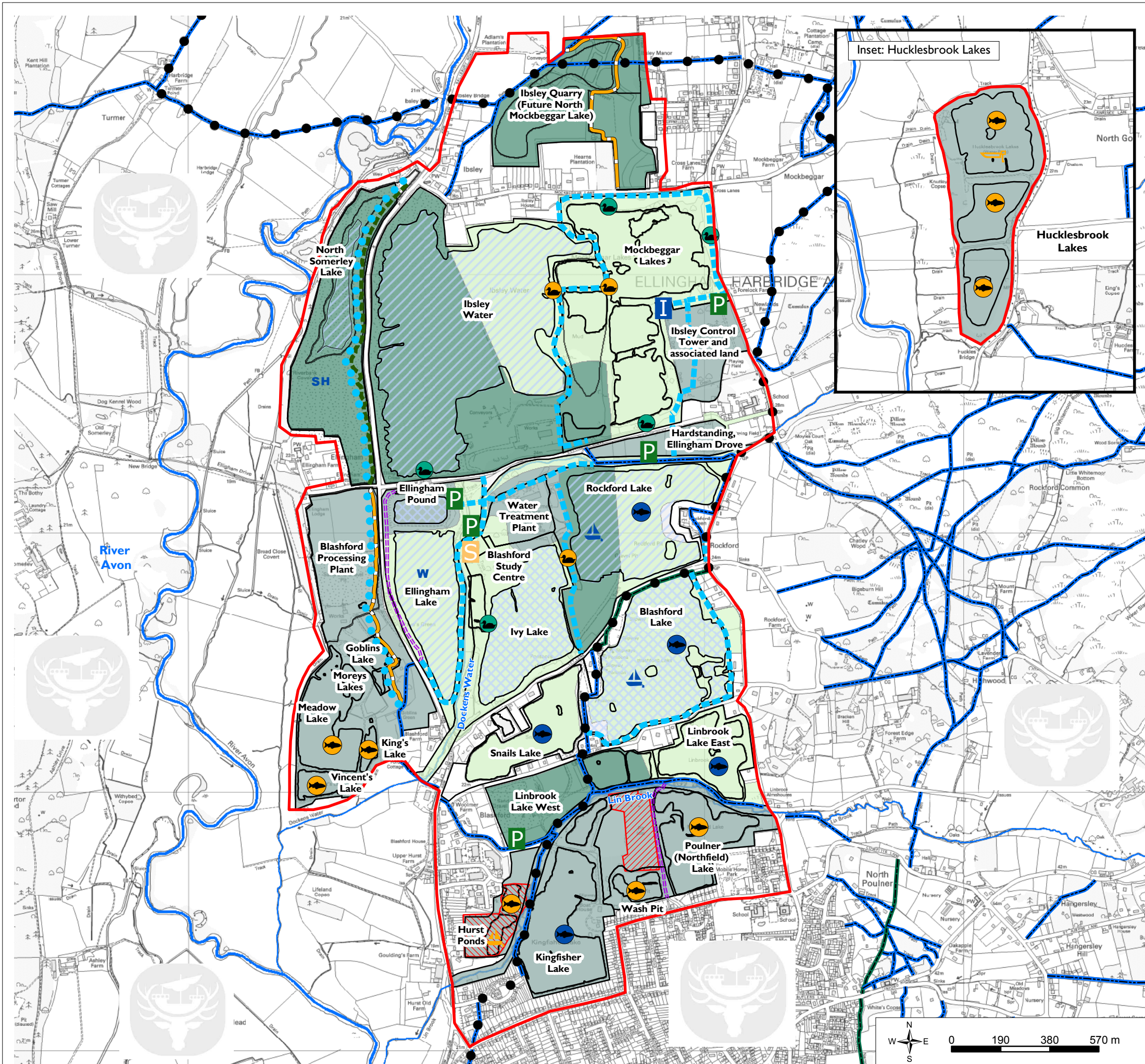
16. It is recommended that the Blashford Lakes Consultative Committee continues to provide a forum for different interests to consider the future of the study area as a whole, and that stakeholders who currently are not represented on the Committee are invited to join.

17. At the detailed level, it is recommended that the Blashford Lakes Strategic Management Plan Steering Group, comprising the partners who guided this project, continues to oversee implementation of the Plan.

18. It is recommended that the chair of the Consultative Committee and Steering Group are reviewed, to reflect the extended boundaries to the study area, and that New Forest District Council are invited to take on this role. This arrangement may need to be reviewed once the New Forest National Park Authority is established.

BLASHFORD LAKES STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PLAN

Figure 1:
Overview of Management Proposals



- Key**
- Study area
 - Water storage and supply**
 - Rivers/streams
 - Confirmed use for water storage
 - Potential use for water storage subject to appropriate permissions
 - Nature conservation**
 - Designated sites to be managed in line with statutory requirements and nature conservation objectives
 - Sites not designated where nature conservation interest should be conserved and/or enhanced
 - Sites not designated to be restored to achieve nature conservation objectives
 - Public open space (New Forest District Local Plan, Adopted 1999)**
 - Existing
 - Proposed
 - Sporting uses**
 - Fishing, subject to assessment and controls to accord with nature conservation objectives
 - Other locations for fishing
 - ▲ Non-motorised watersports (e.g. sailing, canoeing) subject to assessment and controls to accord with nature conservation objectives
 - ▲ Other locations for non-motorised water sports
 - W Waterskiing subject to assessment and controls to accord with nature conservation objectives
 - W Other motorised water sports associated with New Forest Water Park
 - SH Shooting subject to assessment and controls to accord with nature conservation objectives
 - Existing access**
 - Footpath (Public Right of Way)
 - Bridleway (Public Right of Way)
 - Permissive footpath
 - Route of Avon Valley path
 - Proposed footpath in current mineral restoration plans
 - Proposed bridleway
 - Existing birdwatching facilities**
 - Bird hide/shelter
 - Existing educational facilities**
 - S Blashford Study Centre
 - Possible additional access**
 - Permissive footpath (indicative potential routes subject to further assessment)
 - Potential route for cycleway
 - P Possible location for additional/improved car parking (subject to further assessment)
 - I Ibsley control tower - potential for use as interpretation and viewing location (subject to feasibility study)
 - Possible location for additional bird hide/shelter

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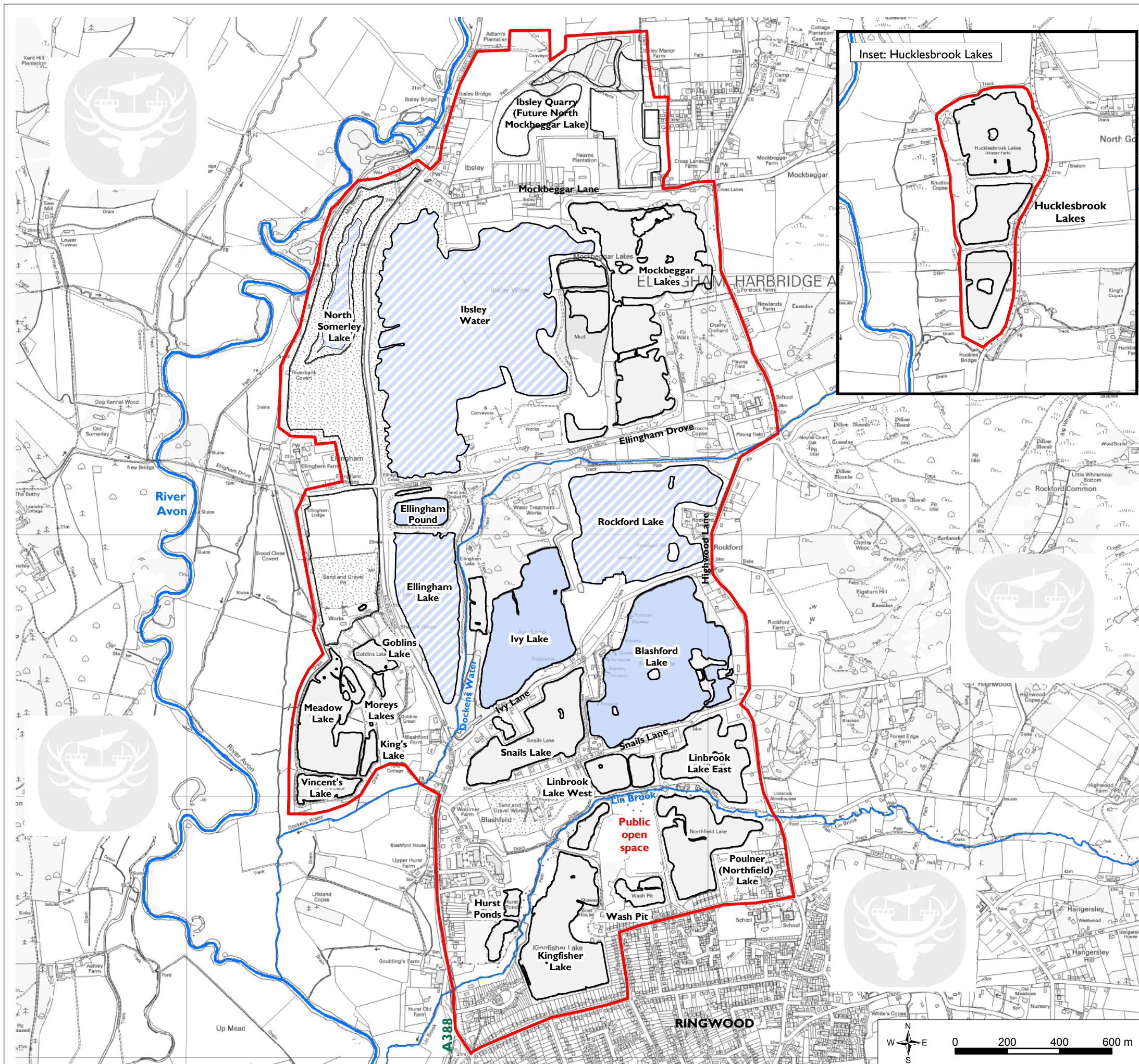
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**Figure 2:
Management Proposals - Water Storage and Supply**

Key

-  Study area
-  Rivers/streams
-  Confirmed use for water storage
-  Potential use for water storage subject to appropriate permissions







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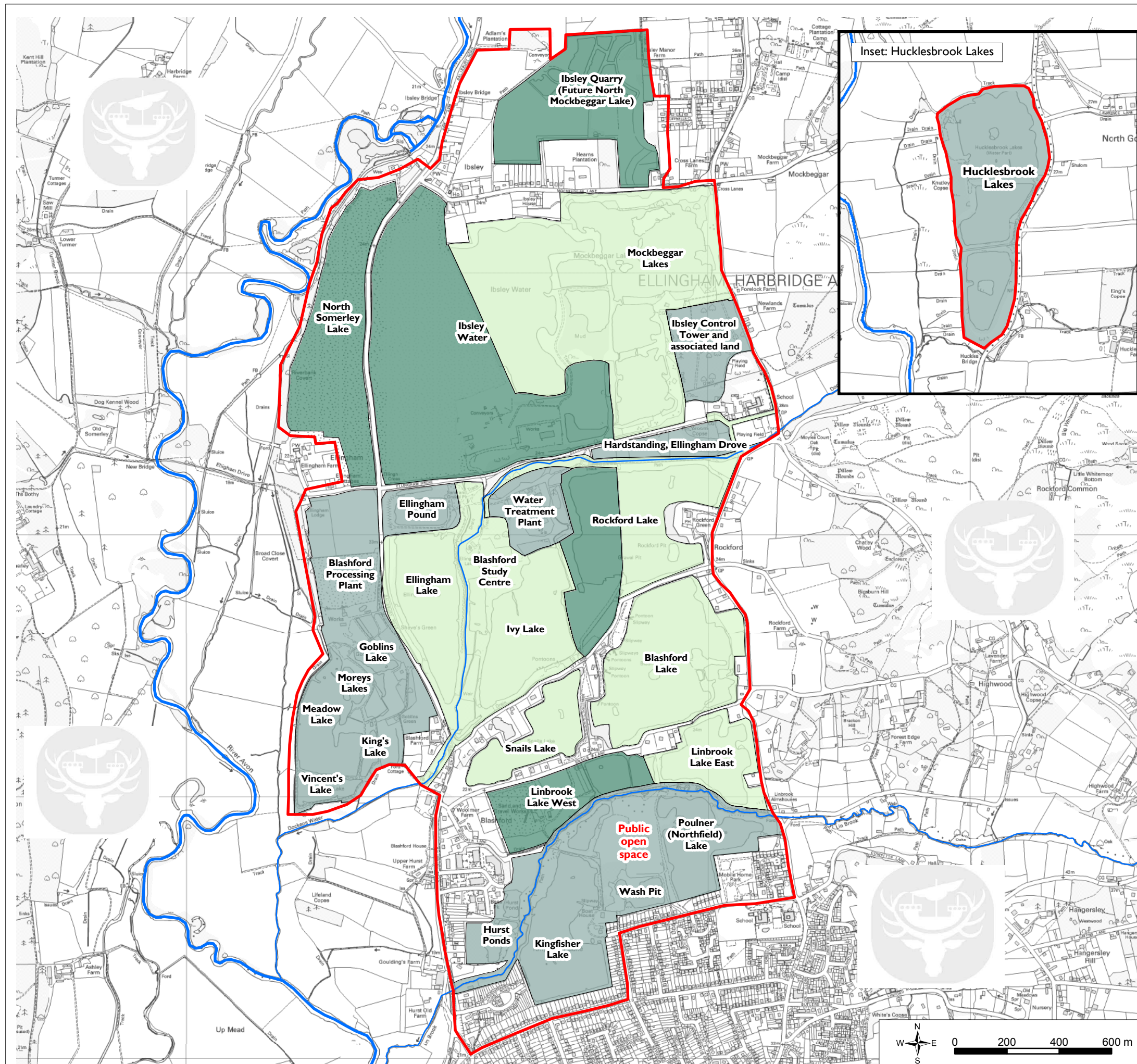


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**Figure 3:
Management Proposals -
Nature Conservation**

Key

-  Study area
-  Designated sites to be managed in line with statutory requirements and nature conservation objectives
-  Sites not designated where nature conservation interest should be conserved and/or enhanced
-  Sites not designated to be restored to achieve nature conservation objectives



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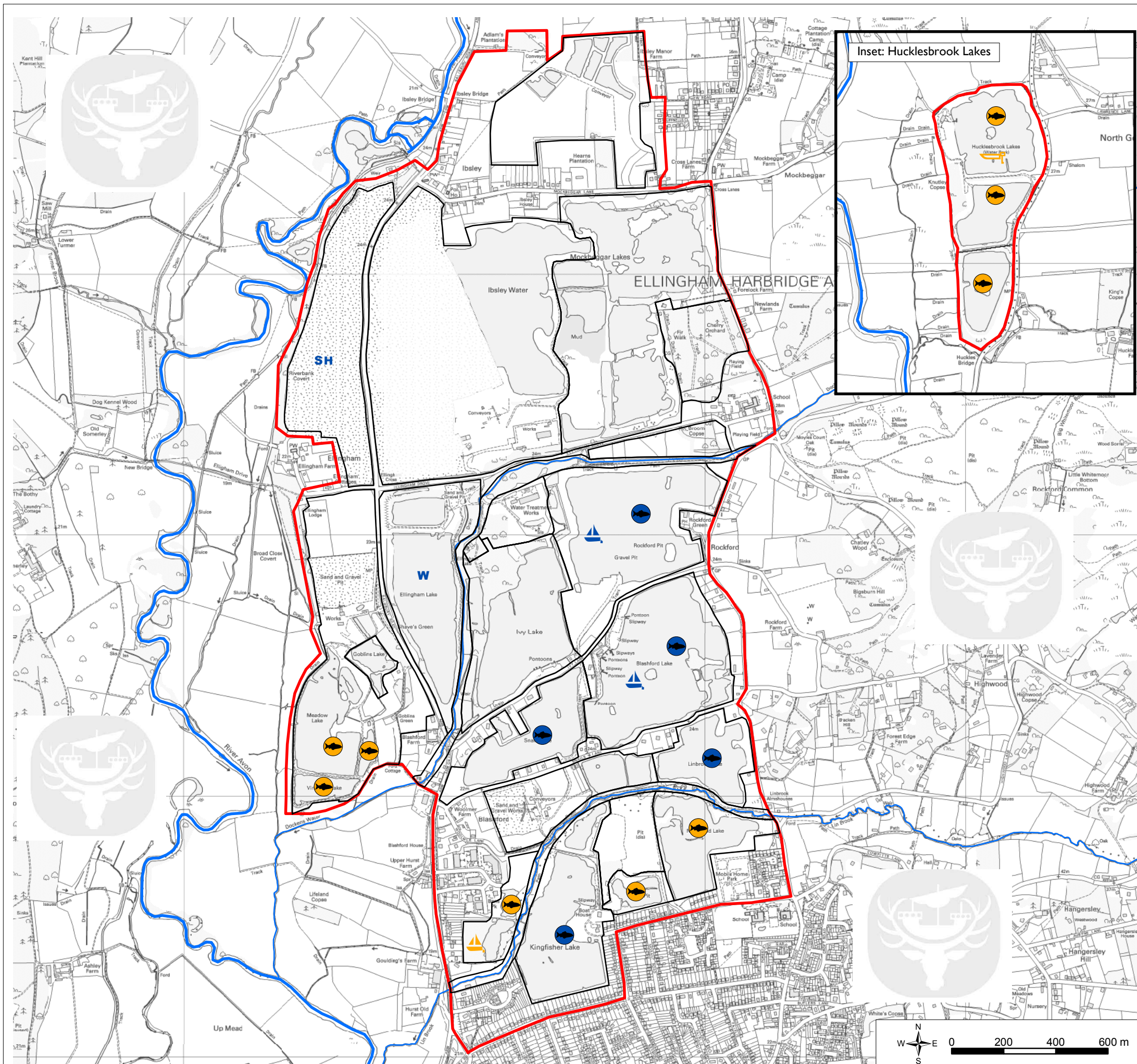
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**Figure 4:
Management Proposals -
Sporting Uses**

Key

-  Study area
-  Fishing, subject to assessment and controls to accord with nature conservation objectives
-  Other locations for fishing
-  Non-motorised watersports (e.g. sailing, canoeing) subject to assessment and controls to accord with nature conservation objectives
-  Other locations for non-motorised water sports
-  Waterskiing subject to assessment and controls to accord with nature conservation objectives
-  Other motorised water sports associated with New Forest Water Park
-  Shooting subject to assessment and controls to accord with nature conservation objectives




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**Figure 5:
Management Proposals - Access**


Key


 Study area


Existing access

 Footpath (Public Right of Way)

 Bridleway (Public Right of Way)

 Permissive footpath

 Route of Avon Valley path

 Proposed footpath in current mineral restoration plans

 Proposed bridleway


Existing birdwatching facilities


 Bird hide/shelter


Existing educational facilities


 Blashford Study Centre


Possible additional access

 Permissive footpath (indicative potential routes subject to further assessment)

 Potential route for cycleway

 Possible location for additional/improved car parking (subject to further assessment)

 Ibsley control tower - potential for use as interpretation and viewing location (subject to feasibility study)

 Possible location for additional bird hide/shelter

