Case Study

Coulsdon Commons

Client:

The Coulsdon Commons charity holds four, separate open spaces known as Coulsdon Common (Caterham), Farthing Downs (Croydon), Kenley Common (Croydon) and Riddlesdown (Croydon), that were acquired by the City of London Corporation at various times between 1883 and 2006. The charity is dedicated to the preservation of these areas for the recreation and enjoyment of the public and the areas were designated as part of the South London Downs National Nature Reserve in 2019, the second largest NNR in London after Richmond Park.

CITY OF LONDON

Coulsdon Commons

Registered Charity

Industry:

Local Authority

Product:

Aerial Photography

> *"The aerial images give us a clear, bird's-eye view of the landscape, helping us spot major changes and get a sense of the vegetation cover before heading out for on-the-ground checks and biological monitoring. By comparing our findings and these aerial images with previous surveys, we can see how things have shifted - whether that's due to our habitat management, the impact of visitors, or broader challenges like climate change."*
>
> Tom Oliver
>
> Conservation Ranger/Ecologist, Coulsdon Commons

Summary:

The conservation team at the Coulsdon Commons charity has been using Bluesky's aerial photography to support National Vegetation Classification (NVC) surveys at Riddlesdown and Farthing Downs, two areas of the South London Downs National Nature Reserve.

Challenge:

Covering 417 hectares along the border of Croydon and Surrey, the South London Downs National Nature Reserve, is the second largest NNR in London after Richmond Park. With such an extensive area to manage, the reserve presents both a rich opportunity and a logistical challenge for conservation efforts and classification.

At ground level, it's difficult to get a full picture of what's happening across the entire reserve. Dense vegetation, uneven terrain, and the sheer scale of the area make it hard to detect subtle changes in habitat condition or spot emerging issues like invasive species, erosion, or habitat fragmentation. Field teams can only cover so much ground in a day, and without a broader perspective, important patterns or shifts might go unnoticed.

Solution:

Using Bluesky's 12.5cm aerial photography via the APGB download portal enables the Coulsdon Commons conservation team to gain a highly detailed view of the landscape and this ensures time-saving desktop analysis can be undertaken in advance of site visits to pull out where significant change is happening and to get a feel for the vegetation cover. This enables the team to focus efforts and direct resources to areas where they're needed most. From there, they are able assess the types of plants growing in different areas and analyse how abundant they are, helping them to map out the various vegetation communities across the sites.

Results:

By comparing their findings and the highly detailed aerial photographs with previous surveys, the Coulsdon Commons team can clearly see how things have shifted across the sites—whether that's due to habitat management, the impact of visitors, or broader challenges like climate change. The photography alongside the surveys has proved key to shaping their 10-year conservation management plans by showing the team what's working, what species needs more support, and where attention is needed to boost biodiversity on these valuable sites.

	Imagery Specification	
Resolution	**12.5cm**	**25cm**
Coverage	Great Britain	Great Britain
Accuracy XY	± 30cm rmse	± 60cm rmse
Formats	Include: JPG, TIFF, ECW	Include: JPG, TIFF, ECW
Standard Projection	British National Grid	British National Grid
Tile Size	1km x 1km (8,000 x 8,000 pixels)	1km x 1km (4,000 x 4,000 pixels)
Metadata	Gemini 2.3	Gemini 2.3

Get in touch today at **support@apgb.co.uk**