

NEATH PORT TALBOT

5 YEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN

Shelone Woods, Briton Ferry



Author	Wendy Larcombe	Consultant Ecologist – Oxalis Ecology
Surveyor	Wendy Larcombe Bonnie Illingworth	Consultant Ecologist – Oxalis Ecology Assistant Ecologist
Version	1	2024

SUMMARY

Site Name/Reference: SHELONE WOODS

Site Designation/Reference: NPTSINC022

Site Location: Briton Ferry. Grid Ref at centre SS7363494550

[///tiles.anyway.co.uk](http://tiles.anyway.co.uk)

Reason for Selection: H1:3 Native Woodland; H14:1 Inland rock outcrop; H16:2 Other bracken communities

Site Description: 9.82h A mosaic of Woodland and open areas of Neutral and mildly acidic grasslands, Bracken with Birch Scrub, featuring sandstone outcrops supporting remnant Heathland communities. Canopy dominated by Oak and Beech, with Sycamore and occasional Holly. A number of mature oak exhibit potential bat roost features. Moderate regeneration, mostly Beech.

Habitats: W10 Restored Ancient woodland (dominated by Oak), Scrub (Bramble/Bracken); H9 Heathland (Heather and associates); Grasslands mostly neutral to mildly acidic MG6-7, U4 Acid Grassland to hill-top areas

Current/Past Management: Trees have recently been trimmed along pylon lines, with brash piles evident in situ. Small Central Grassland areas looks to be regularly mown as amenity grassland. Evidence of seating and signage which has now rotten and become unusable.

Future Management:

INNS treatment

Bracken Management

Grassland Management (Cut & Collect, Plug Planting)

Interpretation (New and Clean existing) & Renew seating

Create bat roost using derelict building (if in LPA ownership)

HABITAT MANAGEMENT PLAN





FIVE YEAR MANAGEMENT TABLE

[illegible]

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

INNS Monitoring and Control

There are a number of specimens of INNS (Cotoneaster and Wilson's Honeysuckle) at Shelone Road entrance, close to footpath/garages, and at the rear of the housing. There is Buddleia in verge by garages (Shelone Road Entrance SS 73777 94463). These will need to be controlled so that they do not spread into the woodland. See species specific INNS control sections at Appendix.

INNS Control – Rhododendron

There is an isolated area of Rhododendron (///snack.props.bring) but this does not appear to be widespread on the site. However, it is recommended that this is controlled as soon as possible and not given chance to spread further into the site. A full search of the site would highlight any more plants and seed sources external to the site. See Appendix: Rhododendron management.

Heathland Restoration

The rocky outcrops contain the last remnants of the Heathland which existed on this site, as recently as 2016 patches of Heathland were still visible. A judgement should be made as to whether it is feasible to restore the Heath to 2006 levels, maximum about 0.5ha (plus 0.2ha with Bracken control). It is likely to be very labour-intensive work, especially with scrub clearance and leaf litter removal. The future of the remnant Heathland patch in the adjoining grazing paddocks, together with Heathland on adjacent sites such as Giant's Grave, would be important factors in this decision. This decision needs to be made soon as the heathland is rapidly reducing in quality and extent, and will soon be completely gone, making restoration increasingly difficult.

Bracken Control

The area in the NW of the site, which was Heathland, is now mostly Dense Continuous Bracken, which could be managed by Bracken Rolling with the potential for Heathland restoration. See Bracken control section in Management Prescriptions at Appendix.

Grassland Management

A small area of neutral grassland (c.13ha) lies just south of the centre of the woodland. It is managed by regular mowing (as Amenity grassland), with an even height sward and supports a low species diversity. This grassland can be managed for biodiversity with a Conservation Hay Cut (Cut in September with arisings removed).

Native Plug Planting

To diversify this area of grassland (as above), native plug plants suitable for neutral, semi-shaded conditions can be planted directly. Alternatively, the grassland could be overseeded with a selection of native meadow species.

For more information on best practice for planting, see Butterfly Conservation link:

https://butterfly-conservation.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/Seeding%20and%20Plug%20Planting%20Factsheet_FINAL.pdf

Selective Thinning

Selective tree thinning would open up the canopy and provide opportunities for a varied age structure within parts of the woodland e.g. at <http://player.scarf.games>. This action can also be used to create more deadwood. See Appendix.

SITE PHOTOS



1. Derelict building: bat house creation



2. Interpretation Panel (NE of site): clean



3. Neutral Grassland within woodland block



4. Remnant Heath under Dense Continuous Bracken



5. Rhododendron



6. INNS at site entrance off Shelone Road

APPENDIX

MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

Rhododendron Management: (and other hardwood INNS)

Within woodlands, use **stem treatment** as a means of opening up the canopy, encouraging natural regeneration by increasing light through the canopy and increasing percentage of dead wood. If in a location where deadwood would be hazardous then remove, but keep as fallen deadwood as close to original growing location as possible. Stem treatment is best done from October through the winter. Avoid when the sap is rising in spring and early summer.

The best initial control of mature Rhododendron is stem treatment, where herbicide is applied to the in-situ plant either through a notch or drill hole. The wound has to be deep enough to allow the herbicide to enter the phloem or inner bark. This is the most effective method of killing woody species because keeping the plant alive means the herbicide is transported deep into the roots using the plants vascular system, which is literally cut off with stump treatment reducing this penetration and increasing likelihood of regrowth.

At the lowest point on the stem possible, using a hatchet, bill hook or other similar blade, create a horizontal notch into the inner bark, then apply the herbicide at label rate with a plant sprayer, paint brush or spot gun. The drill and fill method uses a cordless power drill with an 8mm drill bit, drilled about 4cm deep using a downward trajectory and applying the herbicide to into this well or an Ecoplug. This needs to be repeated every 10cm around the stem and for on each stem individually if they don't join into one stem. It is helpful to add a dye to the mixture to show where you have stem treated.

Both methods are effective, but the hatchet method can be used on smaller trees. These methods are advised for stems at least 3cm in diameter. On stems less than 3 cm stem treatment is still possible by scraping back the to the inner bark and applying the herbicide to the fresh surface. This keeps the same effectiveness as stem treatment on larger plants but with increasing numbers of stems, the operation takes longer. Where this is not practical, foliar treatment can be used.

Follow-up with another stem treatment when the unaffected/missed/partially killed bushes can be distinguished, potentially in the same season or the following season.

Regrowth is usually the right size for foliar treatment two growing seasons after being cut treated but can be done on bushes up to 1.5m high and 2m across with access full access to the bush as complete coverage is required to kill the whole plant. Using a knapsack sprayer using a hollow cone nozzle or CDA applicator. Using a glyphosate-based herbicide at recommended label rate, between June and early September but can be continued as long as

the weather is warm, and the plant is still actively growing. To allow better penetration of the chemical into the leaf by dissolving the plants waxy cuticle use mixture B nf (which cannot be used near water) at the label rate, normally 2% of spray volume. At least 6 but ideally 12 hours or over dry weather is needed for the product to become rains fast and improve efficacy.

For small plants around 60cm or less, hand pulling is a simple control method, ensuring that the rootstock is not left in the ground, using a fork if necessary. The arising can be taken away and disposed of, burnt etc. but as long as the roots do not touch the ground and can be left to desiccate, they can be left, such as hanging in trees. Can be done at any time of year but winter or early spring are ideal as vegetation growth could obscure or camouflage them during the summer.

Once all re-growth is killed and only seedlings could remain monitor on a 5-year basis when these could have grown to a sufficient size to be visible, and hand pull them.

Rhododendron can start rooting if branches are left on the ground therefore any brash resulting from earlier management (i.e. where plants have been cut to ground level) should be lifted off the soil. Utilise other brash or pieces of deadwood to form a base layer, then stack the Rhododendron brash on top, making sure that no pieces can touch the ground. (See also Log Piles).

Follow-up re-treatments in successive years until eradicated.

Managing Deadwood (including fallen and cut material)

The following principles should be adopted in relation to deadwood management:

- material left is large as possible
- don't move it, if unavoidable leave it in dappled shade or sun (so the wood is warm but not dry)
- if it has to be moved, move it ASAP after cutting/falling
- place new wood near decaying wood
- where possible, place on the ground not on other wood
- make brash piles as Hibernacula, ideally sunny and sheltered, do not burn
- leave standing deadwood for as long as possible, when it cannot be left any longer:

Remove branches and leave the trunk standing, if this cannot be left any longer,

Cut Stumps as high as possible (cut artificial crevices of different types or cut coronet ends in some), if this cannot be left any longer,

Leave root plates and stumps

For further information consult the Veteran Trees: A guide to good management (Read, H., 2001).

Bracken Management

Using a tractor or ATV drawn Bracken bruiser singly or in gangs of three, making sure the bruiser has enough weight to crush the Bracken's stipe (stem) when the Bracken has opened its third set of pinnules (mid-May to mid-June) and a second wave to control regrowth which is tall enough before the end of the growing season in the initial years of control. This will be for around three years, depending on the energy reserves in the rhizome, the more established, the longer it will take to reduce above ground quantities of the plant and therefore require longer. After this, a single treatment is sufficient.

Once the Bracken gets too short and sparse for bruising to be effective, either use bruisers with a narrower distance between the bars or it can be cut when it is at maximum height, usually in July.

The long-term management of Bracken would be through appropriate grazing levels of heavy-footed stock, trampling the Bracken fronds as they grow and creating soil conditions too low in nutrients to support their rapid growth.

Cutting would be the alternative to bruising. Cut in mid-June or mid-July and repeat 6 weeks later. Once the Bracken is weakened then a single cut in mid-July, repeated over multiple years until grazing can take over the habitat maintenance.

NB. A competent ecologist must check for Nesting birds before undertaking Rolling or Cutting operations as these operations are undertaken within peak bird breeding season.

Priority	Species of conservation concern	Locally important
Pipistrell	Woodcock	Creeping Feather-moss
Noctule	Green Woodpecker	Hard Grass
Hedgehog	Swift	
	Swallow	Speckled Bush Cricket
Peregrine Falcon	Redshank	Red-eyed Damselfly
Brambling	Grey Wagtail	
Barn Owl	Mallard	Rock Sea-lavender
Osprey	Gannet	Lesser Sea-spurrey
Reed Bunting	Woodcock	Greater Sea-spurrey
Duncock	Red-breasted Merganser	Yellow-wort
Ringed Plover	Wheatear	Knotted Pearlwort
Redwing	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Yellow Water-lilly
Herring Gull	Meadow Pippit	Rigid Hornwort
Lapwing	Long-tailed Tit	Sea Purslane
Starling	Cormorant	Royal Fern
Song Thrush	Mistle Thrush	Wall Screw-moss
House Sparrow	Grey Heron	Ivy Broomrape
Red Kite	Green Finch	
Herring Gull	Snipe	Narrow-leaved Water-plantain
	Whitethroat	Spiked Water-milfoil
	Goldcrest	Ivy-leaved Duckweed
		Long-spiked Glasswort
		Black Horehound
		Hawkweed Oxtongue
	Leptura aurulenta	
Common Toad	Buff-tailed Mining Bee	
Slow-worm	Small Tiphia	
	Anoscopus albifrons	

Long-horned beetle	Long-fringed Mining Bee	
Brown-banded Carder Bee	Ectemnius sexcinctus	
Grayling		
Cinnabar		
Bluebell	Golden Samphire	

Aderyn Data Search Dec. 2023 (Relevant Species recorded up to 500m from Site)