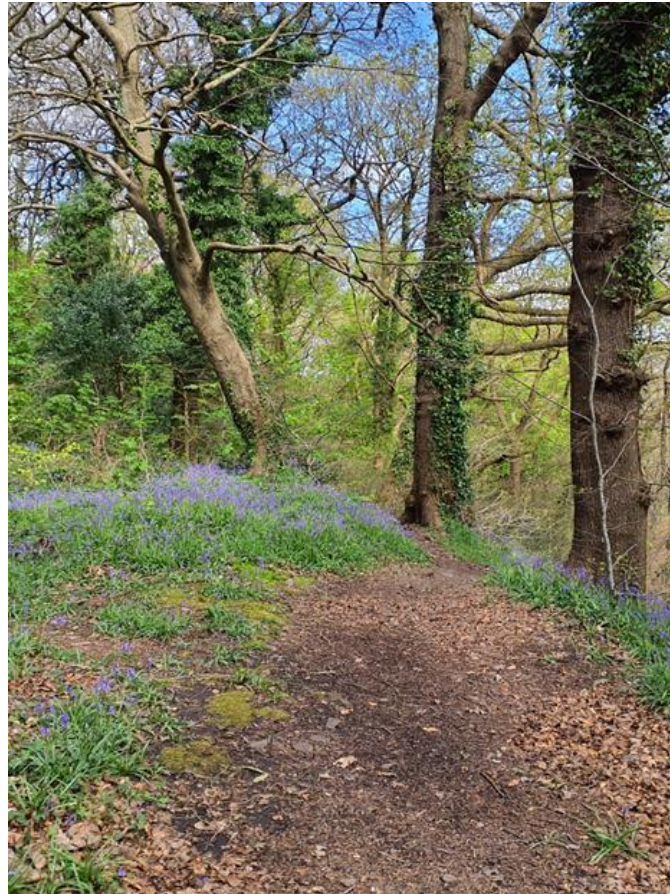


NPT Wildlife



Bywyd Gwyllt CNPT



SHELONE WOODS INNS REMOVAL PLAN

2025- 2027

SUMMARY

Site Designation/Reference: NPTSINC022 / TPO Woodland

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

INNS: Buddleia, Cotoneaster, Laurel, Wilson's Honeysuckle, Conifers, Rhododendron etc.

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

Site Location: Briton Ferry. Grid Ref at centre SS7363494550

RATIONALE

Woodland and hedgerows provide habitats for almost 40% of the priority species in NPT. Their value for biodiversity is enormous. Fortunately, there have been few major changes in the diversity, extent and connectivity of this habitat in the county in the last 20 years and the large area of woodland represented is particularly significant. However, there are important concerns about the occurrence of INNS such as Rhododendron in some woodland habitats, which precludes an assessment of excellent for the ecosystem resilience of woodland habitats in NPT [1]. As a result, the resilience and state of nature in woodland in NPT has been assessed as **good** under the [State of Nature of Neath Port Talbot 2023](#).

There are a number of Invasive Non-Native Species in Shelone Woods which represent a threat to the TPO Woodland and SINC habitats. These include two conifers (suspected old Christmas trees) which have been planted in the central clearing of the woods and other woody non-native invasive species including Box/Wilsons Honeysuckle, Laurel, Cotoneaster and Rhododendron which are spaced throughout the woodland. The conifers have been planted (without permission) in the only glade in the woodland, which is important for the population of native bluebells. Conifers have a tendency to alter the soil conditions underneath them and this poses a threat to the native flora already there. The TPO woodland is designated for 'mixed deciduous woodland', and conifers are not part of this kind of woodland, so we believe that retaining them is also at cross-purposes to the TPO designation. The other invasive non-native plant species present are likely to be a result of spreading from nearby gardens or dumping of garden waste.

Invasive non-native plant species in woodlands represent a threat to the native ground flora through competition, spread of tree diseases (such as Phytophthora which can be carried by Rhododendron) and even changing soil conditions. Leaving them in situ is a threat to the health of the woodland.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Where INNS are located in the woodland, they will be removed using the following methodology:

	ACCEPTABLE/OPTIMAL MONTH												
ACTIVITY	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	FREQUENCY
Hardwood Stem Treatment* e.g. Box/Wilsons Honeysuckle, Cotoneaster Rhododendron													Yr. 1. -5 1x annually, follow up treatment next season until clear

Rhododendron Management: (and other hardwood INNS)

Within woodlands, use stump 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. Stump 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 stem 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 or hand winch 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, Cotoneaster, Box/ Wilson Honeysuckle and Laurel 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 brash on top, making sure that no pieces can touch the ground.

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

REFERENCES

1. [The State of Nature and Nature Recovery Action Plan for Neath Port Talbot 2023](#)