

Local Wildlife Site 10 Year Monitoring Survey Form for: Former Halsey School Playing Field

The monitoring survey is to establish whether there's any noticeable changes to the LWS since the previous full LWS Survey

Site Ref:	65/098/01	Site size (ha):	4.46
District:	Dacorum	Central Grid Ref:	TL042088
Surveyors:	AJ,MD,CL,JW,JW,BH,JL,RG,CJ		
Form by:	A.Judges	Map by:	A.Judges
Date of survey:	22/10/215	Duration on site:	1.5 hours

Geology:	Bedrock:	Lewes Nodular chalk formation and Seaford Chalk formation.
	Superficial Deposits:	Clay, Silt Sand and Gravel.

Original criteria:	H.2.2.b	Habitat:	Grassland, neutral
Recommended changes to boundary (with justification)			
Original Site Description:	Disturbed neutral grassland and scrub mosaic on the Eastern edge of an amenity field, bordered mainly by woodland and arable fields but also urban residences. There is a slope running from its far Western border downwards in a North-easterly direction where the land then remains lower throughout the site. Much of the site has a small amount of bare ground, numerous anthills and a rich diversity of herbs and grasses. There is a large amount of well established hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>), Dogwood (<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>) scrub and Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>) saplings growing throughout the site. Species of interest recorded include native Red clover (<i>Trifolium pratense</i>), Meadow Vetchling (<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>), Grass vetchling (<i>Lathyrus nissolia</i>), Pyramidal orchids (<i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>), Cowslip (<i>Primulara veris</i>), and Agrimony (<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>)		

Landowner questionnaire (filled in by the WSO) – how the site has been managed since the previous survey

- **Is the site in Environmental Stewardship?**
No.
- **How has the landowner been using/managing the site in the past 10 years (or since the previous survey)?**
The site was previously grazed by several horses (years previously), however these horses were removed from the site due to welfare issues. The site is currently not being managed, however a local enthusiast (Chris Ridley) has arranged for the Chilterns Conservation Board workparty volunteers to begin workparties there starting December 2015.
- **Is the landowner aware that the site is a LWS and what that means?**
yes
- **How does the landowner expect the site to be managed in the next 10 years or so (besides any management advice being offered as a result of this visit)?**
The volunteer group are very keen to manage the site, Boxmoor Trust have expressed an interest in the site, and this is currently being followed up.
When we met with Chris Ridley we discussed the possibility of having the site grazed.

The most likely animals being able to graze the site are horses (dogs would threaten sheep, and the site is not fenced adequately for livestock at present in any case). Having grazing animals on site will have consequences for example a fence will have to be erected between this site and the field that was removed from the Wildlife Site. If horses are kept on the site, it would be important that the livestock-owner remove the droppings to ensure that nutrients are not added to the soil, there is also a possibility that some plants may have to be removed as they are poisonous to the horses such as Ragwort, Oak and St John's-wort. The ideal grazing animal to use would be cattle however this is unlikely to be possible.

It was accepted that the likelihood of getting the site grazed was very slim due to the practical implications, therefore the most likely form of management will come from the volunteer group's workparties. They will manage the site using hand tools and a brush cutter if they can purchase and maintain one.

- **Has the landowner received any management advice (from other sources)?**

It has been suggested to Chris by another local naturalist that Yellow Rattle be introduced to the site to help manage the grasses on the site, currently however this has not happened yet. CL advised that it could help in areas where Wood False-brome is dense but that over much of the nutrient poor lower areas grass is not at all dominating.

- **Does the landowner have the previous Survey Report?**

Yes, the last survey date for this site was 8/7/2014. (It was said that some of the management advice given was hard to follow and hard to apply, particularly the part regarding cutting of the shrub in 3/15ths of the compartment every 3 years).

- **Would the landowner welcome management advice, to improve the site for wildlife?**

The volunteer group are very keen to manage the site. They are planning to create a "Friends of group". They have also been given a small amount of funding to help in the management of the site. Chilterns Conservation Board volunteer workparty group.

Compartments: write an ecological description of each:

Note the description of each compartment in the original Survey Report (if provided) and note down any gross changes. Does it appear to have degraded? Or become better for wildlife?.

Woodland:

- Notice structural changes in particular – are the trees the same age? How old?
- Are there natural glades? Are they because of mature trees falling? Natural or felled?
- Is there a ground layer (herbs, Bramble)?
- Is there a shrub layer (Holly? Tree saplings? Honeysuckle or other climbers? Hawthorn etc
- Are the trees natives? Broadleaves or conifers or mixed? Are there lots of Sycamore?
- Is there evidence of management (coppicing, glade creation, any cutting/clearing)? Is there much deadwood being left? Is it stacked or naturally fallen/left?
- Note invasive species if identifiable in winter (e.g. Rhododendron/Laurel/Snowberry/Bamboo, cultivated Yellow Archangel)
- Is there any dumping and if so where (eg behind residential areas)
-

Grassland:

- The sward will give an impression to some degree of gross changes since the previous survey.
- Are there areas where scrub is invading?
- Are nettles/thistles etc beginning to dominate, and if so where (eg at the bottom of slopes? Edges?)

Compartment 1:
Middle open flat
area.

A flat lower area of nutrient-poor very herb-rich grassland with mixed-age shrub scattered throughout.
The sward comprises of a range of different forb species including Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra* agg), Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), Fleabane etc. (see the separate survey report for spp list). The dominant grass throughout the site is Wood False-brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*). The sward hasn't been cut this year at all.
There are ant hills throughout this compartment.

	<p>The scrub comprises of a range of different species but mainly Hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>), Blackthorn (<i>Prunus spinosa</i>), some Spindle (<i>Euonymus europaea</i>), Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>), Dogwood (<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>), with some patches of Bramble (<i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>). Throughout the site there is a range of ages of shrub species from young saplings to established adult individuals. These form important habitats for birds, reptiles and invertebrates but need keeping in check or they will take over.</p>
Compartment 2: Peripheral slopes and edges	<p>There is a slope along the West and South Boundary of the site. The south slope has a large number of young trees growing along the slope (not planted – they are a result of the scrub maturing in these areas which are more nutrient rich), there are two large patches of Willowherb. The Western slope has a large amount of shrub (with a range of ages) and is less herbaceous than the flat area in the middle of the site, however there are some patches of Knapweed (<i>Centaurea nigra agg.</i>) on the slopes in patches. There are also more large patches of Wood False-brome (<i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i>).</p> <p>Chris Ridley stated that after conducting butterfly transects on the site she found the bottom of the slopes supports a larger diversity of butterflies than other areas of the site. This may be due to the slope providing shelter from the wind.</p>

Is a summer survey required?	Yes/No	Justification:
Invasive species:	Please mark the position of any invasive spp on the map.	
Other species recorded during visit	Meadow Pipits, Roman Snails (shells), Green Woodpecker, Red Kite	
Current Management (as seen):	none	
Recommended Management:	(NB: refer to any invasive species recorded, as well as their abundance and distribution, under the relevant compartment)	
Compartment 1:	<p>Recommended to divide the site into quarters (see map) using the natural path lines already there which criss-cross the site.</p> <p>The nutrient-poor lower open area is the most important part of the site to conserve (although see comment above re butterflies along the edge-base of slopes).</p> <p>Taking each quarter at a time and varying the times of year that each quarter is tackled, the work party will:</p> <p>Using hand tools (loppers, bowsaws etc) clear approx. 80% of the scrub present in each quarter. Where large patches of Bramble occur, simply push them back a little and use these as sacrificial patches where cut scrub and herbs/grass can be dumped in piles. Try as much as possible to reuse these same areas for any future piles.</p> <p>Use a brush-cutter (or scythes) to cut the sward. If this is done at varying times of year, at least once year in each quarter, then the sward will benefit from this variety. Cutting at different heights is also a good idea so don't attempt to be too precise about height of the cut. Protect anthills</p>	

	<p>where possible but don't worry if soil is exposed by management – that has benefits too.</p> <p>Where large patches of Wood False-brome are present, attempt to cut these hard in July, before the grass can set seed.</p> <p>Always clear all the cuttings and place in piles as mentioned above.</p> <p>October 2017: Additional advice regarding the possibility of introducing winter grazing: An opportunity has arisen to put a limited number of cows (Belted Galloways, owned and managed by the Boxmoor Trust) onto the site over the winter months. This could provide some benefits to the site in terms of opening the sward and controlling vigorous grasses. Secure fencing and drinking water for the cattle are to be in place before the animals are introduced.</p> <p>Placing any supplementary feeding sites (which should be minimal to avoid adding more nutrients) on the scrub can encourage the cattle to open up and trample down the scrub, during winter. During very wet periods it may be necessary to remove cattle to prevent extensive areas of poaching, and the Boxmoor Trust have confirmed that they will respond quickly if such a situation arises. The number of cows should be kept low to begin – i.e. no more than 2 cows), and the effects monitored, as it may be necessary to increase or decrease the number at short notice, depending upon the soil conditions as well as the results of grazing on the vegetation.</p> <p>It would be of further benefit if the cows can also be put on to aftermath graze after a summer cut, in July/August/September/October. This helps to spread the seed around and open up the sward, as well as remove nutrients and control scrub.</p>
Compartment 2: slopes and scrubby edges	There may not be enough time to manage the scrub on the slopes as well as the central area. The slopes are less floristically diverse. However some slopes (particularly the slope on the west side which is east-facing) has some areas which provide good shelter and nectar (Knapweed) for butterflies and these should if possible be kept open by clearing scrub from scallops along the edge. Again use sacrificial areas such as Brambly patches for dumping piles of cut scrub.


Any additional comments	The Trust will stay in contact with the volunteer group and offer advice and support when needed. Dog walkers frequent the site.
Surrounding land use (briefly describe):	Ancient Woodland to the South. Open grass to the West, Fields to the North, and Parkland beyond to the East. There is also residential housing close by but not adjacent, to the south.
Overall assessment	Site condition appears to have improved


Table 1: Woodland habitat condition (this is broadly based on Natural England's Common Standards Monitoring 2005)		
Attributes	Targets for positive condition	detail
Structure and natural processes	UNDERSTOREY (2-5m) present over at least 20% of total stand area (NB: Beech (<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>) and Oak (<i>Quercus</i>) woods often have sparse shrub layer)	
	CANOPY COVER present over 30-90% of stand area (Coppiced stands have lower canopy cover)	
	AGE CLASSES (seedlings, saplings, young, semi-mature, early-mature, mature+) – list the age classes present, spread across the average life expectancy of the commonest trees	
	OLD GROWTH FEATURES: Some areas of relatively undisturbed mature/old growth stands or a scatter of large trees allowed to grow to over maturity/death on site (e.g. min of 10% of the woodland or 5-10 trees/hectare)	
	FALLEN DEAD WOOD: A minimum of 3 fallen lying trees >20cm diameter per ha and 4 trees per ha allowed to die standing	
Regeneration	Are there signs of seedlings and saplings growth by natural regeneration? – describe age classes (seedlings, saplings, young) and density	
	No more than 20% of areas regenerated by planting as opposed to natural regeneration?	
	Are the new plantings all with natives?	
Composition: trees and shrubs	At least 95% of cover in any one layer of site native or acceptably naturalised species	
	Death/destruction/damage of native woodland species through effects of deer/squirrels/Ash-die-back or other external unnatural factors (e.g fires/flytipping etc) not more than 10% of total area?	


Please label a map of the site with a summary the information on each compartment. Take photos of each compartment and label the map with the photo points and direction of view.





22/10/2015


District Boundary



HCC Wildlife Sites



Wildlife Site


 Nutrient Poor Area –
 Compartment 1

 Sloping Bank

 Compartment 2

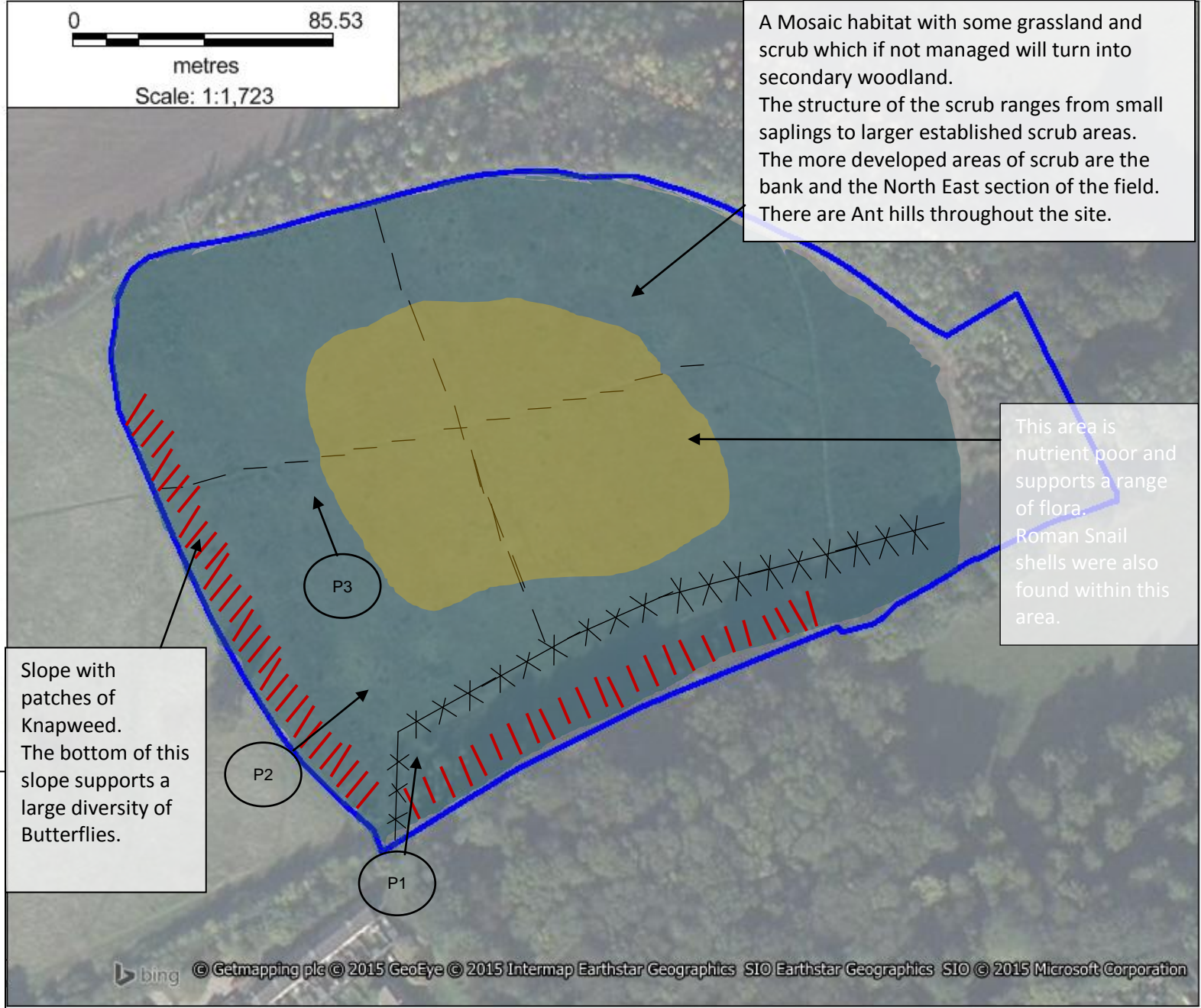
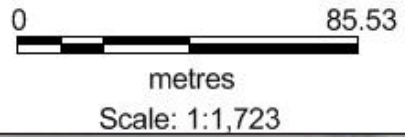
 Footpath

 Fence

Surveyor Name: A.Judges

Survey Date: 22/10/201

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A Mosaic habitat with some grassland and scrub which if not managed will turn into secondary woodland. The structure of the scrub ranges from small saplings to larger established scrub areas. The more developed areas of scrub are the bank and the North East section of the field. There are Ant hills throughout the site.

This area is nutrient poor and supports a range of flora. Roman Snail shells were also found within this area.

Slope with patches of Knapweed. The bottom of this slope supports a large diversity of Butterflies.



Photo 1: Looking North east across the site



Photo 2: Looking east across the site



Photo 3: looking north across the site.