

Hawkesbury, Inglestone, Harley & Assley Commons

Scrub Management Plan

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I Introduction

South Gloucestershire Council, in conjunction with the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group, submitted a Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) application for Hawkesbury, Inglestone, Harley & Assley Commons in October 2010, which subsequently went live on 1st April 2011 (Agreement Ref AG00365947).

The application followed a lengthy period of consultation with commoners and local residents and was designed to bring the commons back into favourable management. To help achieve this, the agreement includes options for grassland management. The application recognised the threat that scrub poses to the many interests on the commons, including its wildlife and amenity value, and recommended that this was addressed through the production of a scrub management plan.

This plan is designed to aid scrub management work over the course of the Higher Level Stewardship agreement.

2 Site Overview

2.1 Location & Map Coverage

Hawkesbury, Inglestone, Harley & Assley Commons are situated between the villages of Wickwar, Hawkesbury Upton and Hillesley in South Gloucestershire; with Hawkesbury and Inglestone Commons lying in the administrative district of South Gloucestershire, and Harley and Assley Commons in Gloucestershire.

The main part of the commons lie directly adjacent to the north and east sides of Lower Woods and are traversed by minor roads from Hawkesbury Upton in the east, Wickwar in the west and Horton in the south. The central Ordnance Survey grid reference for the site is ST 755 880. The commons are mapped at 1:25,000 on OS Explorer Sheet 167 and at 1:50,000 on OS Landranger Sheet 172.

2.2 Designations

2.2.1 Statutory Designations

The commons are registered as one Common Land parcel (GLC38) under the Commons Act 1965.

Parts of Inglestone Common are designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). These areas fall within the Lower Woods SSSI which is divided into a number of management units. The management units covering Inglestone Common are units 15, 16, 17 & 18. The most recent condition assessment of these was undertaken in June 2009 when units 15 & 16 were found to be in an unfavourable but recovering condition and units 17 & 18 in a favourable condition.

All of the commons are designated as 'Access Land' under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000.

2.2.2 Non-statutory Designations

Inglestone and Hawkesbury Commons are both designated locally as Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI):

- Inglestone Common falls within site 78/5; Lower Woods SSSI and Wetmoor Complex, designated for its Neutral Grassland and Ancient Woodland.
- Hawkesbury Common is part of site 78/8; Hawkesbury Meadow SSSI and Hawkesbury Common, designated for its Neutral Grassland.

2.3 Land Tenure & Management

The Commons Act 1899, under which the Scheme was made, provided for land to be managed by a local authority for the benefit of users and the neighbourhood generally and it is understood the Scheme would have been made with the agreement of the owner of the land, insofar as at the time of making.

South Gloucestershire Council are the managers of this common and the owner holds the common land subject to the rights of the commoners and to the acts of parliament relating to common land and of course the law affecting any landowner.

Historically, the commons have been grazed predominantly by cattle. Livestock numbers have, however, been declining in the last 30 to 40 years for a variety of reasons, with TB restrictions recently playing a part in this. This reduction in cattle numbers has resulted in areas of the grassland becoming rank with a corresponding decline in botanical species diversity. The reduced grazing pressure has also led to an increase in the amount of scrub on the commons. Historically there was much less tree and scrub cover, with First Edition Ordnance Survey maps from 1882 showing only scattered patches in a few locations.

In addition to the main grazing area, the common also has areas of grassland - known locally as trenches - that transect Lower Woods, creating long linear corridors. These trenches were historically grazed, but the cattle have been excluded since the woodland was enclosed by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust in the late 1990s, who now manage some of them as part of the woodland.

Increasing livestock numbers to an appropriate level is key to the restoration and future management of the commons. There are currently 6 active graziers that turn out in accordance with their grazing rights. Through the recent HLS consultation exercise, the graziers have offered to work together to help the council deliver the required stocking densities under the HLS Scheme.

This will help to meet the botanical restoration targets of the scheme, termed 'indicators of success', and also assist in the control of scrub. Traditional breeds of cattle are widely used as conservation grazers on sites affected by scrub as they have the ability to browse scrub re-growth. The cattle on the commons are mainstream breeds and whilst they are less hardy, preferring more palatable vegetation, they will pick around in areas recently cleared of scrub, occasionally browsing immature, succulent shoots, which will help in the longer term restoration of the grassland.

2.4 Habitats & Features

The commons cover an area of approximately 113Ha and are predominantly grassland, with varying degrees of scrub. The botanical quality of the grassland is variable, ranging from semi-improved to average quality unimproved with a number of indicator species indicative of Lowland Meadows Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Habitat.

Scrub coverage is variable across the site: in some areas it is absent; in others it exists as small scattered patches; and in places it forms large dense blocks both within field and along boundaries. Generally there is little age diversity to the scrub, with most stands being relatively mature. In some locations this has developed into secondary woodland.

Although the area covered by the HLS agreement does not include any significant areas of mature woodland, it does incorporate a number of the trenches that transect Lower Woods.

Other habitats on the commons include hedgerows, ponds and streams. The hedgerows form the boundary of the commons where this is not formed by Lower Woods. Some of these hedgerows are actively managed by the surrounding landowners, but where this has not happened scrub encroachment onto the grassland has occurred, in some places extending out onto the common by up to 20m or more.

The importance of the ponds cannot be underestimated as one of them contains adder's tongue spearwort, a semi-aquatic plant found at only one other location in the United Kingdom. The status of this plant is monitored by one of the local residents and the pond – located next to the Old Shop on Inglestone Common – has been managed in the past to ensure that the correct conditions are maintained. It is essential that this continues. Most of the other ponds have become scrubbed over and are therefore unsuitable for this plant. The scrub clearance will present opportunities to restore ponds, and the translocation of adder's-tongue spearwort should be considered: the pond to the west of the track leading to the Wildlife Trust car park would be a good location for this.

The geology of the commons is predominantly Jurassic and Cretaceous clays. This gives rise to relatively heavy soils that are slowly permeable and seasonally waterlogged.

2.5 Injurious Weeds

Although the focus of this plan is scrub management, the presence of injurious weeds has been raised so it is referred to briefly here. A number of injurious weeds were noted on the site when undertaking the scrub survey. This included ragwort, nettle and dock but these species were only found in low numbers.

More evident was creeping thistle. In most areas its distribution is quite sparse but there are certain places where it is more established. This is to be expected on a damp site like this as creeping thistle readily seeds into poached ground. Due to the underlying physical conditions it will therefore never be possible to completely control creeping thistle. Nevertheless, it should be managed to an acceptable level, which to a certain extent is being addressed through the topping programme. Changes to this programme and the introduction of the grazing prescriptions in HLS will build on this to ensure that it does not become too much of an issue. The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) has also agreed to a site visit to give further guidance and advice.

2.6 Importance to Wildlife

The commons and adjacent woodland are a high value site to wildlife. This can mainly be attributed to non-intensive management practices which have ensured that a variety of semi-natural habitats have been retained. However, the quality of some of these habitats has deteriorated in recent years with knock-on effects to the species associated with them. One of the main aims of the HLS agreement is to address this so that over time the habitats meet the needs of the species that rely on them. The scrub management plan is essential in meeting this aim.

There are a large number of species records for the site. The scrub management plan considers the needs of those that are most heavily reliant on this habitat, in particular the rare and threatened ones. This includes:

- Nightingales – arguably the priority species for the site as they are both rare and have a strong association with scrub, nesting in dense thickets. In recent years their distribution on the commons has declined which may in part be due to much of the scrub now being mature and having a more open and unsuitable structure. Management will introduce age diversity and a more suitable varied vegetation structure.
- Bats – 12 species have been recorded across the site. Some of these are predominantly woodland species, whilst others utilise a broader range of habitats, spending time foraging for insects in more open conditions along scrub and woodland edge. The aim of scrub management is to enhance foraging conditions by providing a greater degree of sheltered edge habitat.
- Butterflies – the commons were historically an important site for many butterfly species including Adonis blue, chalk hill blue, fritillaries and hairstreaks. Most records, however, date back to the 70's and 80's with very few sightings in more recent years. Whilst the prescribed management does not focus on any of these species particularly, the combination of scrub and grassland management will improve the habitat for a broad range. The plan can be adapted to include more specific management as and when new records become available.
- Adder's-tongue spearwort – where practical scrub management will open up scrubbed over ponds to provide suitable conditions for this plant to be translocated to.
- Dormice – this species is commonly associated with ancient woodland but also inhabit hedgerows and scrub. There is a healthy population in Lower Woods and also the surrounding farmland. Management will introduce shrub species diversity and age structure to the scrub thereby enhancing both nesting habitat and the food resource.

2.7 Amenity Value

The Commons have open public access to those on foot under the CROW Act (2000), subject to the restrictions in Schedule 2 of the Act. Whilst there are no statutory rights of way crossing Inglestone and Hawkesbury Commons, there are many desire lines and also a large number of public rights of way to and from the commons and through Lower Woods. There is a public footpath running along the south and east edges of Assley Common and along the west edge of Harley Common.

The Commons have a high amenity value, providing an important open space for both local residents and the general public. They are situated in an area popular with walkers and are well used by them. They are also used for more informal types of recreation such as dog walking and picnicking.

The scrub management plan takes on board the needs of recreational users and aims to address problem areas. An example of this is the spur that leads from Inglestone to Harley and Assley Commons which suffers from a high level of poaching making access difficult

3 Aims of Management

3.1 Rationale

Scrub is an important component of the commons, providing habitat for a range of wildlife including nightingale and other bird species, numerous species of bat and butterflies. The presence of botanically rich grassland in some locations adds to this value, with the two providing the habitat mosaic that these and other species require.

The distribution of some of these 'priority species' has declined in recent years with surveys showing a reduction in the number of nightingales and fewer sightings of rare and endangered butterflies. Whilst detailed studies have not been undertaken to ascertain the reason/s for this, deterioration in habitat quality is almost certainly one of the underlying causes as this is a common factor generally. Species such as nightingale are quite specific in the type of scrub they require and it is evident that this is in decline on the commons. The transition from young to mature stands of scrub is also having an impact on butterfly numbers as they, along with many other species, have a strong correlation with edge habitat which is lost when scrub becomes mature.

In addition to these impacts on wildlife, the establishment of scrub is, in some areas, making access difficult for both recreational users and livestock. Where livestock are concerned, this has resulted in areas being undergrazed, leading to a reduction in botanical species diversity and further scrub encroachment.

In recent years a small amount of scrub clearance has been undertaken in an effort to restore and protect the value of the site and whilst this has been a positive step forward, it has had little overall impact, with considerable further clearance required. Up until now this has been unachievable due to the lack of resources and coordination available. The HLS agreement presents an opportunity to achieve this, not just through the financial resource it provides, but also through the engagement with rights holders and local residents which will help to drive the plan forward.

3.2 Aims & Objectives of the Plan

The overall aim of scrub management is not remove all scrub from the commons, but to: introduce management that restores and enhances its value to wildlife; allows for the restoration of botanically rich grassland; addresses any recreational and landscape issues; and enables livestock to move more freely about the site.

With regard to wildlife and grassland restoration this will be achieved by:

1. Reducing the extent and coverage of scrub to around 50% of current levels.
2. Managing remaining stands to introduce and maintain structural age and species diversity.

This will result in a more balanced and better quality grassland/scrub mosaic that delivers for a number of target species including nightingale, butterflies, bats and dormice.

Management to overcome recreational and livestock access issues is location specific and does not necessarily adhere to the two basic principles above.

It is important that once an appropriate level of scrub cover is achieved, management continues to maintain the structural, age and species diversity within the scrub.

3.3 Timescales

The Higher Level Stewardship agreement covers a period of 10 years - from 1st April 2010 to 30th March 2020 – and it is envisaged that scrub management will be ongoing throughout the course of the agreement.

Following consultation with Natural England it has been agreed that rather than setting out a 10 year work programme, the plan identifies priority works for the first 3 years only and is then revisited and updated with a further programme of works after this. There are two reasons for this: firstly, the commons are a very large site making it difficult to set out a 10 year work programme as priorities can change with time; and secondly, work programmes have a tendency to slip – for a number of reasons - rendering the plan out-dated after a period of time.

A 3 year plan will allow effort to be focused at high priority areas and determine what is achievable with the resources available over a given period.

4 Work Methods

There are many different scrub removal methods ranging from simple hand cutting to chopping and mulching with large self propelled machinery. Each of these has their own place, but also the ability to cause excessive disturbance and damage when not used appropriately. The amount of disturbance caused is also greatly affected by the timing of operations, with this generally being lower through the winter months. Scrub management must also consider legislation which has been adopted to protect both wildlife and habitats, along with other statutory considerations affecting commons and access land. Work methods therefore need to be adhered to avoid unnecessary disturbance to wildlife and to ensure there are no breaches in legislation.

4.1 Legislation

There is much statutory and non-statutory legislation that applies to the commons. Whilst the majority of this has little relevance to the scrub clearance, there are two pieces of legislation that do and everyone involved should familiarise themselves with them: The Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) (As amended); and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010).

These two pieces of legislation offer protection to a number of plants and animals including European Protected species, making it an offence to deliberately disturb or kill any of the listed species, or cause disturbance, damage or destruction to any structure or place used for shelter. Protected species that occur on the commons include bats and dormice. Dormice are particularly relevant as they could be nesting in the scrub. What this means in essence is that prior to scrub clearance commencing a visual inspection should be made to ensure that there are no nesting birds or animals present and if any are found, these areas should be left until such a time as the animals have moved on.

Parts of Inglestone Common are designated a SSSI, legislation for which was strengthened under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000. The SSSI designation includes Operations Likely to Cause Damage. Those that are relevant to scrub clearance include: the use of herbicides; dumping, spreading or discharge of any materials; the removal or cutting of any plant including trees and shrubs; storage of materials; and burning.

In normal circumstances the undertaking of these operations requires consent from Natural England. However, as this work forms part of the HLS agreement no consent is needed. These operations should, however, follow the best practice guidelines below.

4.2 Timing of Operations

To minimise disturbance to wildlife scrub clearance work should only be undertaken between mid-October and mid-March. Ideally, the main period of work should be from late-December onwards to give birds and other animals the opportunity to eat any fruits and berries before cutting takes place. It is, however, acknowledged that ground conditions are likely to dictate when work can be carried out as this is a wet site and dry periods will need to be taken advantage of. In years where the opportunity to undertake clearance is limited, work can continue through to the end of March but this must be

proceeded by a thorough check for nesting birds as some species can begin to nest by this time.

4.3 Clearance Methods

Scrub clearance methods should cause as little disturbance to wildlife as possible and leave ground conditions suitable for grassland to re-establish itself on. To aid the grassland restoration process, efforts should be made to cause minimal soil disturbance as bare ground provides ideal conditions for weed establishment. This also releases nutrients into the soil which further benefits weeds, allowing them to out-compete wildflowers which cannot tolerate high nutrient environments.

The scrub should be removed either manually using hand held machinery such as brush cutters and chainsaws or with machine mounted equipment such as self propelled mulching flails and tractor mounted hedge trimmers. Under no circumstances should scrub be bulldozed as this creates a large amount of soil disturbance.

Mature scrub and any trees identified for removal should be sawn off close to ground level and the stumps treated with an approved herbicide to prevent regrowth.

Smaller and multi-stemmed species such as bramble and regenerating blackthorn can be cut with either brush cutters or flails, but machine mounted flails should not be used in wet areas where they would leave deep wheel ruts and cause compaction of the soil.

Much of the smaller material will re-grow and follow-up treatment will be required in future years (see work plan for details). There should be no regeneration from treated stumps but this will need to be monitored.

A number of the areas to clear include semi-mature trees. The quantity to be felled will need to be assessed to determine whether a felling licence is required: a licence is needed when more than 5 cubic metres of timber is felled in a calendar year. See: www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-649ft3

4.4 Disposal of Arisings

All arisings generated from hand held machinery should be removed from site. Smaller material such as bramble, branches and large twigs can either be chipped or burnt (see burn sites below).

In limited circumstances there is scope to stack arisings in adjoining areas of scrub that are to be retained, but only where the amount of cut material is small and does not warrant burning, in the absence of a chipper being available.

Wood chips generated by flails and mulchers need only be removed where the chips completely cover the ground surface to a depth of an inch or more.

There is a desire to keep larger material for wood fuel, for use by local residents. The amount of large material is likely to be small as the vast majority of clearance will be shrub

species such as blackthorn and hawthorn which are unsuitable for burning. Any material of a suitable size and nature to burn should be corded-up and stacked.

The contractor may wish to retain this larger material themselves. They should inform South Gloucestershire Council where this is the case.

Burn sites must only be located on recently cleared areas where there is no grass layer and kept to as few sites as is practically possible. Fires should not be started with fuel and old tyres. Ash from burning operations will need to be removed from site.

4.5 Contractors and Work Groups

It is envisaged that the majority of clearance work will be undertaken by contractors. However, a number of local volunteers have offered their services along with the Avon Wildlife Trust Volunteer Group. This activity should be encouraged as not only will it result in more being achieved, but it also gives residents the opportunity to be involved with the management of their local environment as well as training people in rural skills.

All contractors should be given a copy of the scrub management plan for reference in the field. Whilst this is not absolutely necessary for the volunteer groups, they should at the very least be fully briefed about working methods, and ideally be supplied with the working methods, work plan and maps. On site guidance may also be required to direct them to the specified scrub clearance areas.

One of the local volunteer groups has identified areas that they would like to clear that are not identified in the plan as priority areas for the first 3 years. Separate guidance for these areas will need to be issued prior to this work commencing as it is not covered in any detail in this plan.

5 The Work Plan

The areas identified for management in the work plan and accompanying maps are based upon present and historic species records for the site, along with information taken from the field surveys on the current quality and condition of the scrub and grassland. Consideration was also given to recommendations and desires from the HLS consultation exercise. The work plan and schedule gives detail on the priority areas of work for the first 3 years only. A summary of proposed lower priority areas is given below this for consideration in the next phase of the plan.

The priority areas for the first 3 year programme are highlighted on the maps with yellow hatching, with the secondary and lower priority sites for future years hatched in red.

Due to the complexity of the site and nature of the works it is strongly recommended that on site guidance is given to the contractors both before and during clearance work.

5.1 Work Detail for Years 1 to 3 – priority areas, yellow hatching on maps

Point 1 - Spur to Harely & Assley Commons

Scrub encroachment has been severe in this area in recent years as is evident in aerial photographs. Some attempts to clear scrub have been made in the south but this was undertaken with a bulldozer, which is an inappropriate method as it creates a large amount of soil disturbance on which thistles and other weeds readily establish.

The remaining small patches of scrub that remain in the partially cleared area in south should be removed and the edge cut back by between 2m and 5m where possible to create a larger open area. The thistles will also need to be topped.

Two tracks run north from this, which eventually converge into a single track leading to Harely & Assley Commons. The two tracks should be widened to 25m each, leaving a fringe of scrub along each boundary and a strip running through the middle. This will enable and encourage cattle to move more freely northwards and also result in less poaching of the ground. Where possible, the majority of scrub removal should focus on less mature stands as the grassland will restore more readily beneath this. A proportion of mature scrub can also be removed. Edges should be curved/scalloped to create a sinuous rather than straight track.

Above where the tracks converge, the scrub should be cut back on each side to create a corridor with an average width of around 45m. Again, the edges should be scalloped.

Point 2 -Previously cleared patches between spur and Lance Coppice

A significant patch of scrub has recently been cleared from this area along with a few smaller ones. Blackthorn and bramble is beginning to re-establish in these areas which should be cut back in the first instance, with follow-up treatment as required in future years.

A number of individual young ash trees have been left in this area. These should all be removed as they will encourage the establishment of scrub around their trunks.

Point 3 - East of Oakhall Cottage

This area consists of a large block of mature scrub in the east (Point 8), with smaller blocks to the west of this along with some re-growth from previously cleared areas (Point 3). Follow-up treatment is required to prevent re-establishment on the cleared areas. The re-growth should be cut back, with follow-up treatment as required in future years. The two blocks to the south of this (nearest to the hedge boundary) should be reduced in size by 50%, removing all ash but leaving any oak and willow.

Point 4 - Ride to the west of Oakhall Cottage

Historically there was a wide ride on the south side of Oakhall/Horwood Coppice running down to the track that leads to Bucklesbury Farm, which has since closed over. Rides like this are incredibly important for butterflies and bats and it should therefore be opened-up, for at least part of its length, to provide habitat connectivity to Green Trench.

Initially an opening should be created so that all very young scrub and grass can be cut in any open areas that remain, with a view to clearing the more mature scrub later in the plan. The amount of work required is presently an unknown quantity as the ride cannot currently be accessed. Contractors may therefore feel that they are unable to quote for the first phase of this work until the opening has been created.

5.2 Schedule of Works

Year 1. Winter 2011 - 2012
Point 1 - Spur to Harely & Assley Commons
1a. Previously cleared area in south: cut back edge by between 2m and 5m; clear any remaining small patches of scrub situated within the cleared area; top thistles.
1b. Widen the track leading north to a width of 25m up to where the two tracks converge. The focus of clearance should be on less mature stands; a proportion of mature scrub can also be removed. Remove all ash and sycamore. Leave a scalloped edge where practical.
Point 2 – Previously cleared patches between spur and Lance Coppice
Cut all scrub re-growth in this area and remove all young ash.
Point 3 – Previously cleared area east of Oakhall Cottage
Clear all scrub re-growth in this area and remove all young ash.
Year 2. Winter 2012 - 2013
Point 1- Spur to Harely & Assley Commons
1a. Revisit this area in spring 2013 to control any scrub re-growth either by cutting or spraying with an approved herbicide. A 1.5m wide strip along the scrub edge should be allowed to regenerate (i.e. should not be controlled) to allow the development of nightingale habitat.
1b. Revisit this area in spring 2013 to control any scrub re-growth either by cutting or spraying with an approved herbicide. A 1.5m wide strip along the scrub edge should be allowed to regenerate (i.e. should not be controlled) to allow the development of nightingale habitat.
1d. Clear area in north above where the two tracks converge to leave a corridor of approximately 45m wide leading up to Harely & Assley Commons, <u>leaving a belt of scrub along each edge</u> . The focus of clearance should be on less mature stands; a proportion of mature scrub can also be removed. Remove all ash and sycamore. Leave a scalloped edge where practical. Moved from year 3 to year 2 to allow quicker completion of a wide track running from north to south
Point 10 (see supplementary map 5) – the bramble in this area should be cleared, leaving a 5m fringe along the fence line where present. All small ash should be removed, leaving only semi-mature specimens. New work
Point 10a – a 15m wide block of secondary woodland should be cleared to widen the track between the two areas of common. New work
Point 11 (see supplementary map 5) – remove the block of scrub along the south eastern edge of this pond. Also remove the small willows and two small ash from the northern edge. New work
Point 2 - Previously cleared patches between spur and Lance Coppice
Revisit this area again in autumn 2012 to control any scrub regrowth either by cutting or spraying with an approved herbicide.
Point 3 – Previously cleared area east of Oakhall Cottage
Revisit this area again to control any scrub regrowth either by cutting or spraying with an approved herbicide. A 1.5m wide strip along the scrub edge should be allowed to regenerate (i.e. should not be controlled) to allow the development of nightingale habitat.
Point 4 - Ride to the west of Oakhall Cottage
Create an opening into this relict ride and cut back all immature scrub saplings and grass. Completed in year 1
Continue clearance of this newly formed ride to the point where it meets the track. New work
Year 3. Winter 2013 - 2014
Point 1 - Spur to Harely & Assley Commons
1a. If necessary revisit this area again to control any scrub regrowth. A 1.5m wide strip along the scrub edge should be allowed to regenerate (i.e. should not be controlled) to allow the development of

nightingale habitat.
1b. If necessary revisit this area again to control any scrub regrowth. A 1.5m wide strip along the scrub edge should be allowed to regenerate (i.e. should not be controlled) to allow the development of nightingale habitat.
1d. Revisit this area to control any scrub re-growth either by cutting or spraying with an approved herbicide. A 1.5m wide strip along the scrub edge should be allowed to regenerate (i.e. should not be controlled) to allow the development of nightingale habitat.
1c. Widen the other track leading north to a width of 25m up to where the two tracks converge. The focus of clearance should be on less mature stands; a proportion of mature scrub can also be removed. Remove all ash and sycamore. Leave a scalloped edge where practical. Moved to year 3 from 2 to allow completion of north south track in year 2.
Point 2 - Previously cleared patches between spur and Lance Coppice
If necessary revisit this area again to control any scrub regrowth.
Point 3 – East of Oakhall Cottage
The two small blocks of scrub to the south of the cleared area should be reduced in size by 50%, removing all ash but leaving any oak and willow.
If necessary revisit the previously cleared areas again to control any scrub regrowth.
Point 4 - Ride to the west of Oakhall Cottage
Cut the edge of this now partially cleared area back by a further 5m where practical. Completed in year 1

5.3 Lower Priority Areas for Consideration in Years 4 to 6, red hatching on maps.

Point 4 - Ride to the west of Oakhall Cottage

Continue with the opening-up of this ride.

Point 5 - Wood Cottage area

The patches of scrub in this area should be reduced by 50% removing all ash.

Point 6 - Road between Inglestone Farm and Clematis Cottage

The scrub on the north side of the road especially should be cut back by at least 50% where practical with narrower strips cleared in other areas. The block of scrub at the junction of the track to the Wildlife Trust car park should also be reduced in size.

Point 7 - Spoil Coppice woodland edge, behind The Old Shop

The blackthorn edge should be cut back by up to 5m in sections over a period of time, removing all ash.

Points 8 & 9 - Oakhall Cottage area

The edge of the large block to the east (point 8) should be cut back to introduce age structure and to prevent the ride between the block and the hedge from closing over.

The block on the west side of the track (point 9) will soon become joined to the woodland. The aim here is to create and retain an open ride between the two by managing the edge of both the scrub and woodland. This work should push through to the area that has been cleared recently, thereby creating links and connectivity between all of the rides/trenches in this area.

Trenches

In addition to the above proposals consideration should be given to the management of the trenches. For example, the edge of Green Trench requires coppicing and the grass cutting in the centre. This may be undertaken by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.

Hawkesbury, Harely & Assley Commons

The scrub at Hawkesbury, Harely & Assley Commons is seen as a lower priority than the above. This is not to say that the scrub should not be managed here; rather it can wait until later in the plan when higher priority locations have been addressed.

See VAM for pond management