

Alderney Community Woodland 2020 Action Plan

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1. Introduction

The history and natural history that can be found within the Alderney Community Woodland (ACW) is the result of many thousand years of human activity. The landscape around which the ACW has been formed holds remnants of pre-historic, Victorian and German (WWII) culture (Fig. 1).

The natural habitat present over much of the site prior to the ACW project's commencement in 2009 was largely mixed scrub, a common habitat on Alderney. Areas of naturally developing regenerative woodland can be found immediately to the west and east of the area, making the site a natural location of a woodland restoration project such as the ACW. Through the ACW project, the Alderney Wildlife Trust (AWT) aims to develop large native woodland in the centre of the island, acting as a nexus between wildlife, cultural heritage and the local community.

This document has been created to outline the management actions needed for the present year, 2020, in line with the previous aims and objectives described in the Alderney Community Woodland Management Plan 2019-2023 (Goddard 2019).



Figure 1 The Alderney Community Woodland, displayed in green

2. Background

The Alderney Community Woodland Management Plan 2019-2023 (Goddard 2019) will be the primary management tool for the ACW, building on work from the previous Management Plan (Gonzalez 2014). The ACW is the largest single Community Woodland project in the Channel Islands and an important island resource. The overall management of the Woodland is defined by three core aims:

1. **Wildlife.** To create a native broadleaved woodland of high ecological and landscape value, rich in wildlife and accessible to the Community.
2. **Amenity.** To develop the educational and recreational value of the ACW through the provision of facilities and opportunities that promote a greater understanding and enjoyment of the natural and cultural wealth of Alderney.
3. **Resource.** To involve the island's Community in the ACW, promoting woodland culture and recovering traditional skills, whilst simultaneously increasing the socio-economic value of the woodland as a source of sustainable material for the future.

The ACW project itself began in 2009, and was then developed under the Alderney Community Woodland Development Plan 2011-2014 (Henney et al. 2011). Initial work mainly consisted of the planting of approx. 10,000 native broad-leaved trees (Fig. 2). Subsequent work included the establishment of the Greenwood and Children's Area, the creation of a Woodland Trail and the restoration and maintenance of the historical features and footpath network (Fig. 3).

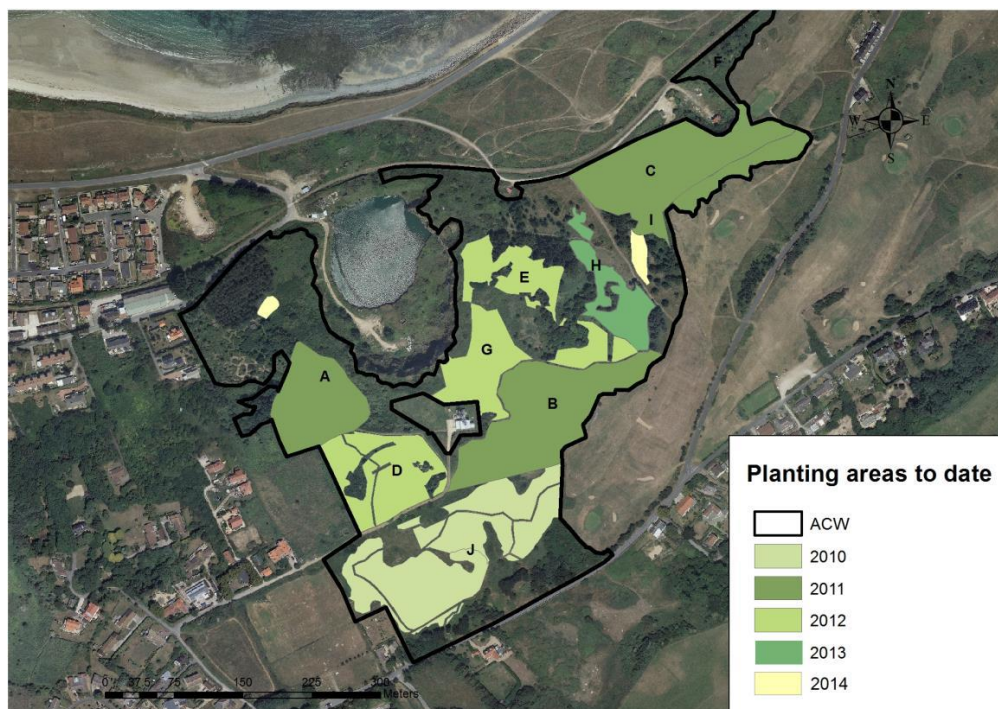


Figure 2 Areas of the ACW planted to date

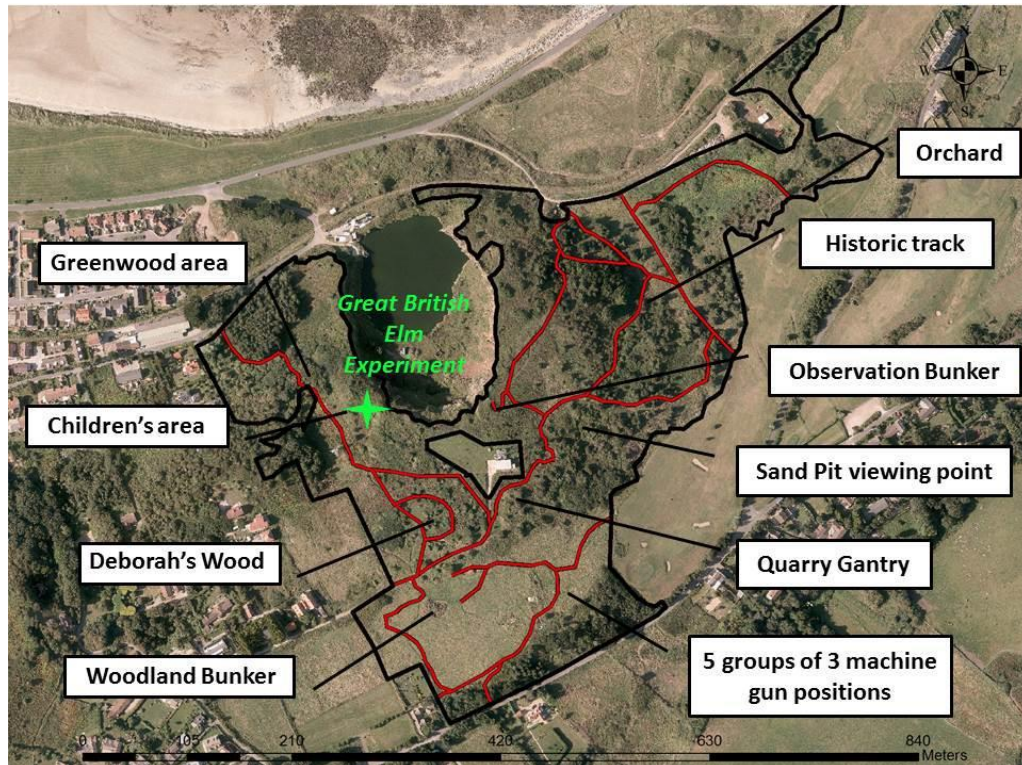


Figure 3 Notable features and footpaths within the ACW

3. Objectives

The overall management of the ACW is guided by the following key objectives (Goddard 2019). This action plan will lay out a series of actions for 2020 to achieve the fulfilment of these objectives.

Objective 1.1 Maintain the structural diversity of the site

Objective 1.2 Maintain and manage the spread of dense scrub

Objective 1.3 Develop and implement a grazing plan with the Alderney Grazing Animals Project herd

Objective 1.4 Continue aftercare and monitoring of planted trees

Objective 1.5 Collect ecological data about the site for measuring past successes and to inform future management

Objective 1.6 Enhance areas of native woodland

Objective 2.1 Undertake surveys of both residents and tourists to develop an understanding of the use of the site

Objective 2.2 Maintain and improve existing memorial features

Objective 2.3 Create provisioning for future memorial features

Objective 2.4 Maintain and improve historic features

Objective 2.5 Maintain footpaths and access to the site

Objective 2.6 Provide amenity and recreational facilities in the ACW

Objective 3.1 Develop and implement an Economic Harvesting Plan for the ACW

Objective 3.2 Using survey data, increase the success of outreach and community engagement

Objective 3.3 Maintain a safe environment in the ACW

The achievement of these objectives will be reviewed at the end of 2020.

4. Work Programme

Below are listed a series of management actions to be achieved in 2020. A Gantt chart detailing timings for each of these actions is listed Appendix 1; avoiding key sensitive times for wildlife.

4.1 Managing the glades

The glades are an important florally diverse habitat within the woodland and require constant management to prevent scrub encroachment. Historically the AWT has performed this via mechanical cutting late spring and summer.

Actions for 2020:

- Continually monitor the floral diversity of the glades and adjust the cutting/grazing regime in order to best improve the diversity
- Perform a cut of the glades in spring and later summer using either, or a combination of, topper and flail collector. Efforts should be made to remove cuttings from the site to prevent soil enrichment
- If practical, graze the glades at low intensity over winter using the Alderney Grazing Animals Project (AGAP)

4.2 Tree Aftercare

The insides of tree guards can become swamped with grass and brambles; hindering the development of the sapling. Additionally, many trees are now at a stage where the guards can be removed.

Actions for 2020:

- Regularly use Conservation Volunteers to clear grass from in and around tree guards
- In line with recent land management practice guidelines, gradually remove tree guards where they are no longer necessary, eventually moving towards a plastic-free woodland
- Remove turf from around the trees in the orchard in spring. The turfed areas should then be mulched with seaweed and closely monitored to assess the effect on trees
- Liaise with horticulturalists over management of fruit trees in the Orchard and set up a pruning regime

4.3 Managing areas of scrub

Dense scrub is an important habitat in its own right, as well as forming a natural barrier to hazards such as Battery Quarry. However, the spread of scrub needs to be controlled to prevent it swamping other growth and becoming dominant.

Actions for 2020:

- Maintain current areas of dense scrub
- Prevent the spread of scrub into grasslands and notable features using mechanical or manual methods where appropriate

4.4 Controlling noxious/invasive species

The woodland contains a number of invasive or injurious species that can present a risk to the development of planted areas as well as humans and animals.

4.4.1 Bracken

Bracken can spread rapidly through the rhizome and requires constant cutting to keep growth low. Bruising and crushing appears to be the most effective method of controlling the spread of bracken. Consequently, using the topper and hand lashers may be the most recommended control. Bracken nevertheless holds value as it may encourage tree growth from the shading effect and build-up of leaf litter, so care should be taken to minimize unnecessary control measures.

Actions for 2020:

- Bracken is not in need of maintenance currently. Consequently, do not undertake any further cutting of bracken in 2020

4.4.2 Brown-tail moth

The larvae of the brown-tail moth can cause extremely adverse allergic reactions in people and animals. The hibernating structures of the larvae are very obvious and easy to remove. No brown-tail moths were found last year.

Actions for 2020:

- Monitor and if necessary remove and incinerate brown-tail moth tents in early spring before the larvae emerge or autumn/winter at the beginning of hibernation. The tents should be removed wherever possible, particularly around footpaths

4.4.3 Ragwort

Ragwort (*Senecio jacobea*) is classed as a 'Mauvaise Herbe' and under Alderney law its control must be undertaken by the land manager. The plant can be extremely noxious to animals if ingested. As part of its management of the site the AWT undertakes control of ragwort to maintain the amenity use of the site for dog walkers and horse riders particularly. However, as a native species with value to wildlife, including pollinators, it is worth assessing whether indiscriminate removal is the best course of action going forward.

Actions for 2020:

- Hand-pull ragwort during the flowering season (May-July), particularly before seed set, and remove from site. Pulled shoots can be composted under tarpaulins to prevent spread or preferably incinerated.

- Concentrate ragwort removal effort on locations where it would pose a threat to livestock or where it looks to become a dominant species

4.5 Collecting ecological data

Collecting ecological data can be extremely beneficial in informing more targeted conservation actions in the future. Working with the terrestrial ecologist surveys on several key species will be undertaken in 2020. Details of established transects and survey points can be found in Appendix 2.

4.5.1 Bats

There is already an established bat monitoring route through the community woodland (Appendix 2), set up following the National Bat Monitoring Programme (NBMP) guidelines and methodologies.

Actions for 2020:

- Complete NBMP surveys twice in July, following established route and methodology (Appendices 2 and 3)

4.5.2 Bees

The BeeWalk survey was introduced in 2017 following the established UK Butterfly Monitoring Survey Transects (Appendix 2).

Actions for 2020:

- Complete the BeeWalk in the ACW as part of the island wide effort using volunteers and in conjunction with the Terrestrial Ecologist
- Follow standardised procedures as set out by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust; performing transects once a month on sunny a sunny day through the summer, counting and identifying bumblebees noted on the transect
- Liaise with local beekeepers on the possibility of setting up beehives around the Community Woodland, as both an amenity and conservation feature

4.5.3 Butterflies

Staff and volunteers have previously undertaken regular butterfly surveys along the transects set out in the ACW

Actions for 2020:

- Perform UKBMS transects as often as possible; following the guidance in Appendix 4

4.5.4 Owls

Though long-eared owl used to breed in Alderney, there have been no signs of occupancy since 2011. In 2019, an island wide survey aiming to assess the presence of the long-eared owl on Alderney was undertaken, and none were found. Given the results of this survey, it is worth moving towards an opportunistic recording system for owls, until such point as there is evidence of the long-eared owl returning. Nevertheless, a monitoring effort should be maintained every few years to assess the owl diversity in Alderney.

Actions for 2020:

- Given results from previous years' surveys, move towards an opportunistic recording system for owls.
- Should a long-eared owl be reported, resume surveys as previously.

4.5.5 Ash dieback

Ash dieback was noted on the island in 2018, most likely arriving through airborne spores blown in from the Continent. An ash dieback survey was conducted using CVs in late May of 2019 showing fairly high levels of infection in the area around the Woodland Bunker with decreasing levels towards the north-eastern area of the site towards the glades and orchard.

Actions for 2020:

- Survey ash trees during the summer; noting for signs of ash dieback such as withering leaves and lesions
- Continue to monitor the spread of ash dieback and factor the results of this into future action plans.
- Remove dead immature ash trees and take for incineration at the depot, taking care to ensure no additional spread of the spores
- Consider additional planting for late 2020-2021 to replace areas of lost ash throughout the woodland

4.5.6 Floral

The glades previously showed particularly high floral diversity. Collecting baseline data about these areas can inform future management actions as suggested in the Management Plans (Goddard 2019). This data can also be used to chart the effectiveness of these changes over time

Actions for 2020:

- Perform a floral survey of species diversity and abundance before re-introducing the AGAP herd into the glades
- Survey the glades post grazing, if possible. Noting the sward height, level of soil disturbance and any remaining dominant species

4.6 Enhancing native woodland

Most of the large scale planting for the ACW was completed by 2013 (Fig. 2) and today work is aimed at enhancing these areas and extending further small-scale planting in areas cleared of non-native species.

Actions for 2020:

- Replant in the areas opened up by felled pine trees. Some of these trees will be planted without plastic tree guards to assess their necessity to establishing saplings
- Continue the coppice rotation of 1/8th of the sycamores in the 'Greenwood Area'.
- The AWT has planning permission to remove up to 10 trees from within the ACW area. These trees should be carefully selected to maintain the aesthetic and sheltering value of this area. The trees will be removed and sold as firewood (Action 4.7).
- Start the process of ash replacement where ash dieback disease has created large die-off areas within the original planting

4.7 Developing an Economic Harvesting Plan

One of the founding principles of the ACW was to create woodland of high socio-economic value. The economic potential has thus far been underdeveloped.

Actions for 2020:

- Continue the development of the Economic Harvesting Plan over the course of the 2019-2023 planning cycle
- Develop a range of products from current features of the wood such as jams from the orchard and benches from non-native conifers
- Maintain the Orchard through pruning and weeding to maximize fruit production and consider planting additional fruiting trees such as apple, plum, quince or walnut in 2021
- Develop new products from other under developed features in the woodland. For example liaising with local bee keepers to keep bees along the edges of the glades

4.8 Maintaining important features

Maintaining the access and notable features of the ACW is an important part of managing the woodland as a community resource.

4.8.1 Footpaths

Footpaths can become overgrown with grass and scrub if not constantly managed throughout the year. Steps are also prone to erosion and slumping without remedial works

Actions for 2020:

- Perform a full footpath cut in early spring, late summer, and autumn, avoiding sensitive breeding times
- Reactive maintenance should be undertaken in the spring/summer using the power scythe and effort should be made to avoid disturbing breeding animals
- Repair steps as necessary

4.8.2 Amenity Features

Figure 3 depicts some of the amenity features present in the ACW. Maintaining features such as the Woodland Bunker and Children's Area is an important responsibility undertaken by the AWT to keep these areas safe and available for the public.

Actions for 2020:

- Maintain and update signage where necessary
- Maintain the infrastructure of sites such as the Woodland Bunker and Children's area, e.g. roofs and fences
- Action 4.8.1 applies here

4.8.3 Historic Features

The historic features of the woodland, such as the Woodland Bunker and Quarry Gantry, are important parts of the ACW and a reason why many people visit.

Actions for 2020:

- Continue to maintain the bunkers and other heritage structures clear of vegetation and litter on a reactive basis
- Action 4.3 applies here

4.8.4 Memorial Features

Memorial features are not only important for their intrinsic value but also as a means of building and maintaining good community relationships.

Actions for 2020:

- Clear around memorial features like benches where necessary
- Actions 4.2 also apply to the memorial hazel copses

4.9 Community engagement

An important aspect of the ACW is engaging the local community in the project. The AWT hosts regular events throughout the year; namely Arbor Day and Woodland Week, to involve local people in the management of the woodland.

Actions for 2020:

- Continue with the established engagement events
- Undertake a survey of locals and tourists in the summer to assess their use of the site and areas where community outreach and publicity for events can be improved
- Depending on survey results, develop additional community events based on what the public show interest in. Possibilities include fruit picking, outdoor educational events in collaboration with the school or exhibiting bee hives with apiculturists for pollinator engagement

5. References

Goddard, C. S. (2019). *Alderney Community Woodland Management Plan 2019-2023*. Alderney Wildlife Trust. (Unpublished)

Gonzalez, C.S (2014). *Alderney Community Woodland Management Plan 2014-2018*. Alderney Wildlife Trust

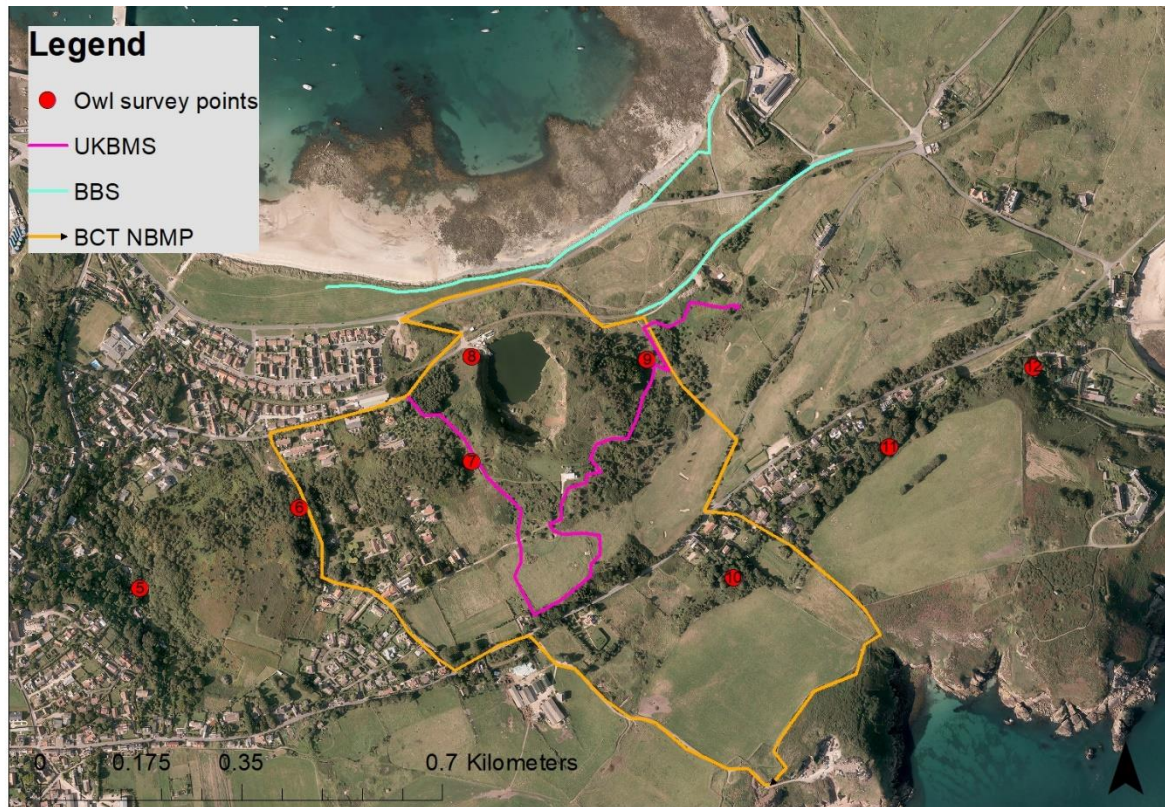
Henney, J.M., Gauvain, R. and Pyne, L. (2011). *Alderney Community Woodland Development Plan 2011-2014*. Alderney Wildlife Trust.

6. Appendix

Appendix 1 Timing of conservation actions in the ACW

| Action | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----|------------------------------------|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|----------------------------|-----|-----|
| Management | | | | | | | | | | Cut/AGAP Grazing | | |
| Tree Aftercare | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Scrub Management | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Noxious Species Control | Brown-tail moth | | | | Ragwort | | | | | Brown-tail moth | | |
| Ecological Surveys | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Enhancing Native Woodland | | Arbor Day | | | | | | | | Conifer thinning/coppicing | | |
| Footpath Maintenance | | | | Breeding season: avoid tractor use | | | | | | | | |
| Maintaining Important Features | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Community Enagement | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Appendix 2 Established survey transects in and around the ACW for the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme and National Bat Monitoring Program surveys



Appendix 3 Bat Conservation Trust guidelines in how to participate in the National Bat Monitoring Program

Field Survey card (noctule, serotine, pipistrelle)

Planning your survey

- Survey dates: 1st to 15th July; 16th to 30th July
- Materials: route map, spot descriptions, survey form/notebook
- Ensure that you have read the health & safety checklist, walked your route during daylight & secured permission from relevant landowners
 - Be in position to start the survey approximately 20 minutes after sunset at pm (see sunset timetable & pencil in the start time here)

Starting your survey

- Just prior to starting, record the following details:
Temperature Weather conditions (cloud, wind, rain)
Date Start time
 - Don't forget to record the make of bat detector that you have used & your experience/skill level on the survey form

For convenience you can refer to this card instead of your instruction booklet.

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Methodology

- Begin the first walk with your detector tuned to 25kHz.
- Listen for noctules/serotines only. Pause to check identification if necessary & then resume.
- If it is unclear whether a bat is a noctule or serotine, record as 'unsure'. Record results as Walk 1.

Ignore ALL other species.

- At first spot, re-tune detector to 50kHz and record pipistrelle activity - common (45kHz) & soprano (55kHz) - for two minutes.

- If you cannot identify the species of pipistrelle, record as 'unsure' under Spot 1.

Ignore ALL other species.

- At the end of two minutes, re-tune your detector to 25kHz and commence Walk 2. Repeat the method until you have completed your route.
- After completing Spot 12, stop the survey and record your finishing time.
- Note any changes that you have made to the route.
- If abandoning the survey at any time, record the point at which you stopped & the reason for stopping.

Appendix 4 Guidance on how and when to carry out UK Butterfly Monitoring Survey transects

WHEN TO MAKE TRANSECT COUNTS

Time of year: A full season's transect counts take place once a week for 26 weeks from the beginning of April to the end of September. Week 'one' runs from 1st-7th April, week 'two' 8th-14th April and so on, until week 'twenty-six' which runs from 23rd-29th September. You can record earlier than 1st April (25th-31st March is week 0, 18th-24th March is Week -1 etc.) or after September (30th Sept- 6th Oct is Week 27, and so on). If the weather conditions are suitable, you should record even if there are not likely to be any butterflies present (e.g. early/late in the season) – a negative result is still a result.

How many weeks: As many weeks should be walked as possible, as gaps reduce the quality of the data and too many can render it virtually useless. The more gaps the less species-indices can be calculated. Where it has been decided that a transect is aimed a single, usually rare, species (or sometimes for two or three species) then weeks should be walked that cover the flight period(s), with zero counts at either end.

Time of week: You can record on any day of the week, but should aim to walk the transect on the first opportunity that the weather is suitable (some weeks you may not get a second chance!). You only need to record more than once a week if the weather on your first walk did not meet the criteria.

Time of day: Transect counts should ideally be made between 10:45 and 15:45 hours, though between 10:00 and 17:00 hours is usually allowable, though butterfly activity may drop off rapidly during the late afternoon so later times should be avoided.

Weather conditions: Transect walks should only be carried out in warm and at least bright weather, with no more than moderate winds and not when it is raining. The minimum criteria are either 13-17°C with at least 60% sunshine, or if there

is no sunshine the temperature must be 17°C or above. Windspeed (Beaufort scale) should be no more than 5 unless the transect route is sheltered from the wind. Do not record if the temperature is below 13°C except in northern upland areas where, if butterflies are active, they may be recorded in temperatures down to 11°C. Check that conditions are suitable before you start the transect, and that if the temperature is less than 17°C there is likely to be sufficient sun.

Recording butterflies: walk at a slow, steady pace counting all butterflies seen within a fixed distance – the recommended distance is 2.5m either side of the transect line and 5m ahead. In some habitats e.g. along sea cliffs or woodland rides, it is acceptable to record at a width of 5m along one side only of the transect line. A wider area is recorded on part or all of some transects (e.g. 10m instead of 5). Always stick to the limits established when the transect was set up. Try to avoid double counting where possible e.g. when an individual butterfly repeatedly flies in and out of your recording zone. However, if you lose sight of an individual, and later regain sight of the same species do not assume this is the same individual. Do not count butterflies behind you. Try to identify and separate all species you encounter, including where possible 'difficult' species such as Small and Essex Skipper, whites and the fritillaries. If similar species such as Small White and Green-veined White are flying together at a site you may want to net a sample (a small clear plastic pot can be very useful to temporarily confine the butterfly so it can be examined more easily – hold pot in the shade), to determine the proportion of each species present -