

Alderney Community Woodland Review 2019

Introduction

This document will evaluate the delivery of the work programme as laid out in the ACW 5-Year Management Plan 2019-2023 and 2019 Action Plan (Goddard 2019a, Goddard 2019b). With the development of a new 5-year Management Plan, 2019 saw the developing use of the Alderney Community woodland. This review will examine the successes and failures of the management and action plans and provide recommendations for future management. NB Priority recommendation actions for next year are in bold

Work Programme Review

The following sections are numbered according to the actions detailed in the 2019 Action Plan.

4.1 Managing the glades

A cut of the glades was performed in April this year and the cut material was removed to avoid enriching the soil. The AGAP herd, consisting of 1 steer and two heifers was moved to the glades at the end of November and grazed for 10 days

Recommendations

- **Continually monitor the floral diversity of the glades and adjust the cutting/grazing regime to best improve the diversity. Low intensity winter grazing, possibly combined with spring mowing is suggested to be most beneficial for increasing wildflower diversity and suppressing grass**
- If the grazing proves to be beneficial for species diversity the site could be cut late summer and the cuttings dried in situ and removed for winter fodder. Hay from species rich grasslands can provide more nutrition than modern hay/silage. Aftermath grazing late autumn/winter would then be undertaken to remove the remaining grass growth.

4.2 Tree Aftercare

Several Conservation Volunteer sessions throughout the year were dedicated to clearing and removing treeguards. The Alderney Golf Club wishes to extend a fairway and green into some planted areas of the ACW (Figure 1) and the removal and replanting of these trees will have to be considered.



Figure 1 Map of the proposed extension to the 18th hole of the Alderney Golf Club

Recommendations

- Continue to use CV sessions to remove guards in the planted areas throughout the year
- **Work with the AGC over the next few years to establish a work timetable for the extension and plan for the removal of trees accordingly**

4.3 Managing Areas of Scrub

The encroachment of scrub was controlled around historic features as part of maintaining the overall access to the site. A group of volunteers from Guernsey cleared the scrub around the hazel plantations in Milly's Wood and by the Woodland Bunker and subsequent CV sessions turfed around the base of some of these trees.

Recommendations

- Continue with maintaining access to the historic and amenity sites
- The clearance of scrub will need to be reviewed in the light of the golf course extension into planted areas
- Maintain the clear areas around the hazel plantations allowing for access when the time comes to harvest the wood from these trees
- Consider seaweed mulching around the base of some of these hazels

4.4 Controlling noxious/invasive species

A CV session in June was dedicated to removing ragwort in the glades as a precaution for the wintering cattle. There were no other actions towards removing noxious species. Brown tail moth caterpillars were not abundant this year and did not pose any issues. Similarly, bracken

was not controlled in any of the planted areas as it may actually encourage tree growth from the shading effect and build-up of leaf litter.

Recommendations

- Perform control of noxious species on a reactive basis over the growing months

4.5 Collecting ecological data

There was a sustained effort over spring and summer to complete the surveys as listed in the 2019 Action Plan. However, no floral survey was conducted in the glades due to a lack of time and expertise.

- Bee and butterfly transects were performed monthly from May-September
- The National Bat Monitoring Program transect was performed in (July) as well as static detector surveys
- Static long-eared owl surveys were performed in the ACW using playback in February/March
- A preliminary ash dieback survey was conducted using CVs in late May 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. The more established trees in the north-eastern area may be more resistant due to their improved vigour
- The phase 1 habitat map was updated for the site (Figure 2)

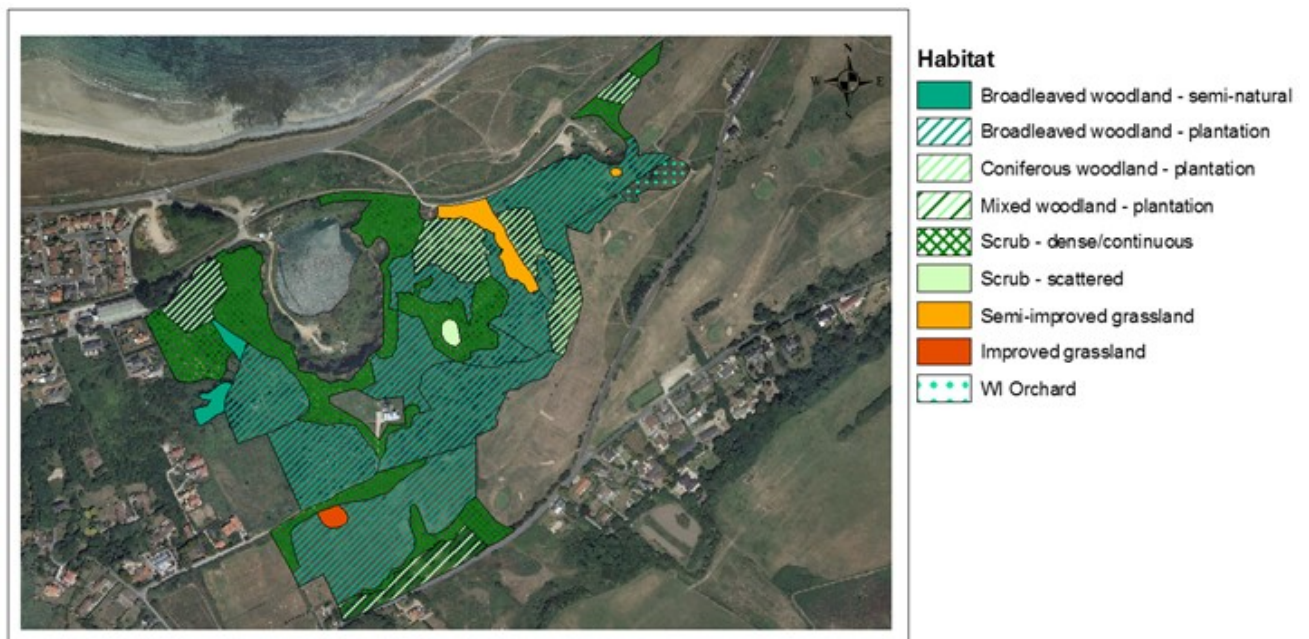


Figure 2 Updated phase 1 map for the Alderney Community Woodland, summer 2019

Recommendations

- Continue with the established bee and butterfly monitoring schemes
- Review the continuation and use of the owl and bat surveys as no long-eared owl presence was noted in the ACW

- Continue to monitor the spread of ash dieback and factor the results of this into future action plans. The trees removed as a result of the golf course extension can be used to replace infected trees or the areas allowed to regenerate naturally
- Perform a floral survey in the glades in spring summer 2020, this is important to assess the effect of the grazing in the woodland and note the presence of any wildflowers.
- Incorporate the updated phase 1 habitat into future planning.

4.6 Enhancing native woodland

During Arbor Day the space created by the felled pine trees was planted with native saplings. These trees were planted without tree guards as rabbit grazing was not believed to be an issue and they appear to have established well. Although the trees by the woodland bunker were some of the first planted they show extremely poor establishment due to the wind exposure. If the proposed fairway extension occurs, this area of trees will become an important corridor to other areas of the woodland and must be managed to maximise its benefit for wildlife.

Due to a lack of planning permission no pine trees were felled this year; however, some of the sycamores in the greenwood area were coppiced and stacked at Essex Farm for use as firewood next year.

Recommendations

- Review the use of treeguards for any future plantings. If treeguards are deemed necessary as a result of grazing pressure or windburn consideration should be given to plastic free cardboard guards.
- **With the potential loss of a significant proportion of the woodland to the proposed golf course extension the quality of the woodland boundary areas should be maximised. Working with the golf course an appropriate cutting regime can be devised for the rough areas of the course to increase the floral and invertebrate diversity in these areas.**
- **Continue with establishing a coppice rotation in the greenwood area, coppicing another 1/8th of the trees in 2020, subject to planning permission**
- **Subject to planning permission fell up to 10 pines in the woodland and process the wood for firewood.** The area of pines near Blanchards is managed by the States but no work has been undertaken to remove any of the trees. Working with SWD and Jamie Laband some of these trees should be removed and processed for firewood. The density of trees in this area means that at least 10 could be removed without compromising the overall look of the area. Additional planning permission will have to be sought for this
- Consider planting fast growing species, e.g. willow as a windbreak for establishing trees, especially on the exposed areas by the woodland bunker.

4.7 Developing an Economic Harvesting Plan

As part of developing the use and community value of the site research is ongoing on how to generate funds from the ACW. Darren Mason from Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust suggested planting more fruiting trees such as apple, plum, quince or walnut in the woodland for their benefits for people and wildlife. Most of these species aren't strictly native but would be hugely beneficial for the island. Wood from the felled pine trees was sold at 33.4p/kilo, 200kgs was sold to Catherine Veron and 15kg bags will continue to be sold in the office.

Recommendations

- Continue the development of the Economic Harvesting Plan over the course of the 2019-2023 planning cycle
- This year the orchard showed good signs of fruit production which could be a strong source of income for the woodland in years to come. The orchard should be carefully managed following the actions in the Action Plan to improve the yield. Consideration should also be given to planting more fruit trees around the site as not only a resource for the community but for wildlife.
- Maintain low grassy growth around the cleared areas of hazel and monitor the effect on growth and nut production
- As the wood from the sycamores has a higher calorific value and is thus more valuable it could be sold for more at around 50p/kilo

4.8 Maintaining important features

The main features of the woodland, notably the historic sites and woodland bunker were managed to maintain their access and safety.

Recommendations

- Continue with the current management of these sites

4.9 Community engagement

The survey for locals and tourists investigating potentially useful woodland skills was not conducted this year. However, there was still a strong effort to engage the local community in the ACW and Arbor Day was well attended.

Recommendations

- Continue to host community engagement events and publicise these events across different media platforms

General Recommendations

- Work with the States of Alderney to get effective designations for the site to include a definition for coppicing in planning regulations; allowing the management of the greenwood area, and more protections for the site to stop further developments.
- Increase the use of the site. The Children's Area was not used this year and is overall a completely underused resource for the ACW. As the Greenwood area gets opened up with coppicing, more events and activities should be held in this area such as summer barbecues and woodland learning activities.

- The current 5-year plan was approved by the General Services Committee in May 2019 and sent to the golf course for any additional comments. It has not yet been opened up to the general public for consultation. With the possible creation of an environmental secretariat/steering group it was decided to postpone the consultation until a clearer idea of the new group is available. The consultation and the status of the plan with the States should be reviewed in 2020

Summary

The main aims of this year's management plan were well met and overall the conservation actions in the woodland were successful. Some large changes during the course of the current 5-year Management Plan (Goddard 2019a) may have to occur in the woodland with the proposed extension to the golf course. However, working with the golf course on a number of conservation actions can be undertaken to help mitigate this loss. Following the changes in UK agri-environment schemes future management and action plans can be written to be less prescriptive and more results driven. Rather than detailing specific actions the plan should ask the questions 'how can this area be improved for X species' then actions detailed accordingly. This will form part of driving more evidence-based conservation actions and more close working with the Reserves and Avian Ecologists.

References

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

Goddard, C S. (2019b). *Alderney Community Woodland 2019 Action Plan*. Alderney Wildlife Trust.