

# **Longis Reserve Annual Review 2017**

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## **Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to review delivery on the 2017 work programme for the Reserve as laid out in the Longis Reserve Annual Action Plan 2017 (Whyte, 2017) under the Longis Reserve Management Plan 2017-2021 (Manzano-Rubio & Whyte, 2017). This report will evaluate the successes and failings of delivery and management in 2017 and provide recommendations for key areas to target for 2018 in order to meet the long term aims for the Longis Reserve.

The Longis Reserve Management Plan 2017-2021 was ratified by the General Services Committee (GSC) of the States of Alderney (SoA) in February 2017 and represents the first formal Management Plan for the Reserve since the initial 3 year Management Plan expired in 2006. The commitment to produce an Annual Action Plan to be ratified by the GSC and subsequently an annual review to be presented to the GSC for each year of the Management Plan is laid out in the Management Plan document.

## **Work Programme Review**

The points listed below refer to the management actions detailed in the Longis Reserve Annual Action Plan 2017 and are numbered accordingly.

### **4.1. Grassland management**

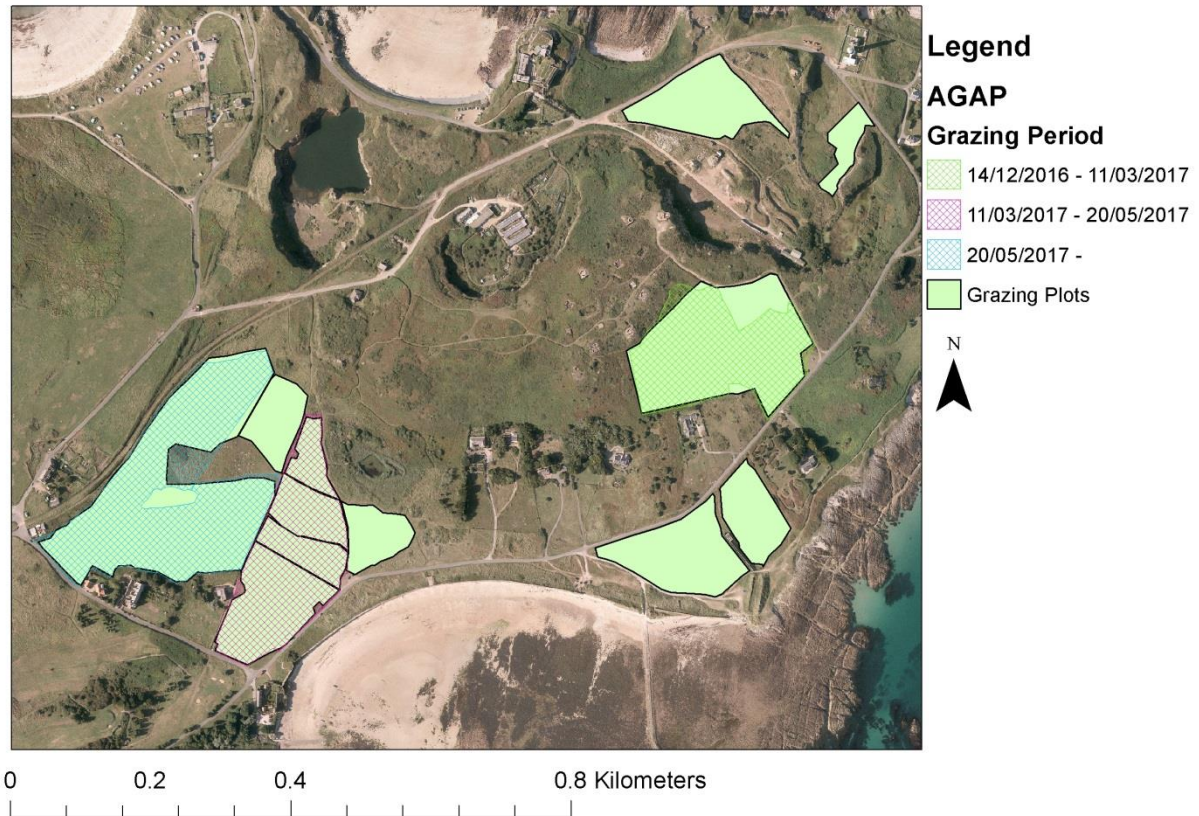
#### **4.1.1. Grazing**

In 2017 Grazing was carried out on 3 plots across the Longis Reserve (Fig. 1). Excepting Coastguards, these were all larger plots than described under the Longis Reserve Management Plan (LRMP).

All plots were grazed for a relatively long period and not according to the schedule laid out in the LRMP. Ideally, plots should be grazed to maximise heterogeneity. This means not grazing the same plots at the same time every year and rotating fairly frequently to ensure that no particular plant growing or flowering seasons are impacted more than other to maintain species rich grassland areas (Julia Henney, pers. comm., Sept 2017). At the current low stocking levels, it is doubtful that the grazing is having much of an impact in controlling scrub and bracken encroachment in grazed areas and it means that some areas have not been grazed for more than 12 months.

Recommendations:

- AGAP should be fully reviewed in 2018.
- Consideration should be given to the possibility of adding to the herd in order to best use the grazing project as a tool for habitat management.
- Plots should be grazed at a higher intensity for shorter periods of time. i.e. smaller plots. Although more work in terms of moving the cattle, this will allow greater control of grazing effort.
- As part of the review, full NVC surveys carried out in the grazing areas should be considered to provide a snapshot of the floral diversity being maintained by the current approach.



**Figure 1:** 2017 AGAP grazing rotation within the Longis Reserve

#### 4.1.2. Cutting

Mechanical cutting was carried out along a stretch of the Houmet-Herbe coast path (Fig. 2) in March 2017. The area cut was approximately half that identified as suitable for mechanical cutting under the LRMP. Flail collection and piling of cuttings on a bramble patch caused a disagreement with a local resident who considered it to be an eyesore.

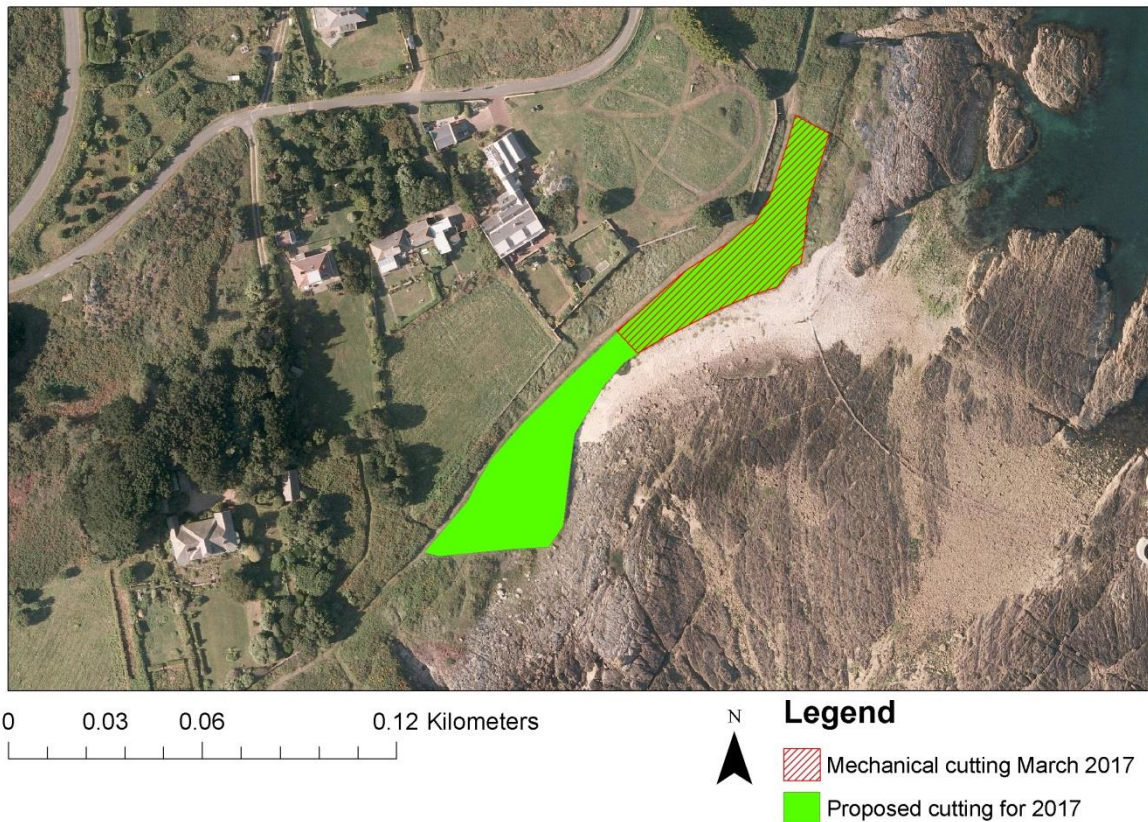
A thick thatch meant that flail collecting was difficult and there was significant material left on the ground which was further raked by hand in April. More regular cutting should make this less of a problem in future.

Due to the late clearance of the ground, there was slow regeneration but by midsummer, there was a good variety of less competitive plants and flowers.

#### Recommendations

- A full cut of the whole area identified under the LRMP should be undertaken in early 2018 (January/February).
- Care should be taken when disposing of collected material to not create an eyesore and to consider the ecological implications.
- A full NVC survey carried out in 2018 would provide good baseline data for the floral diversity of this area and provide evidence of the successes of the management regime.

- Dialogue should be maintained with the landowners in this area to ensure they understand the reasons for management and are aware of success demonstrated by monitoring work.



**Figure 2:** Area of Houmet-Herbe Grassland cut mechanically in 2017.

#### **4.2. Longis pond and reedbed management**

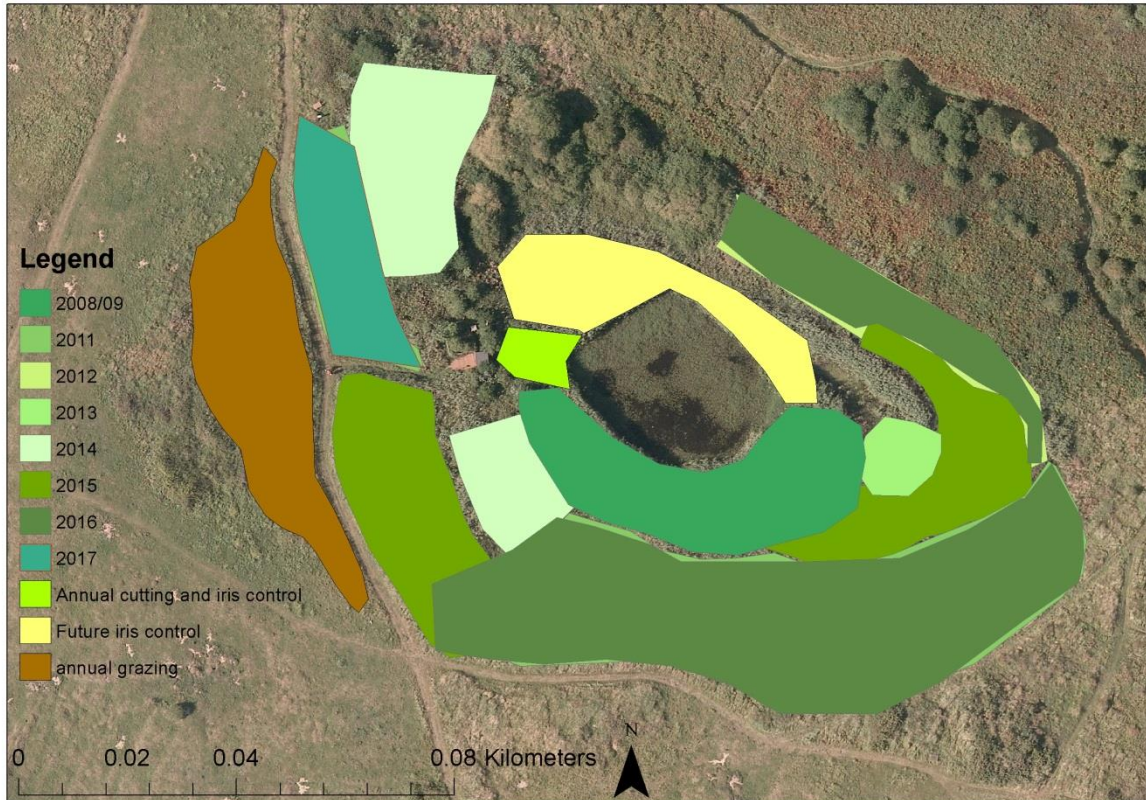
Both 2016 and 2017 have been low water years for Alderney and as such, the water level has been significantly lower than has been seen in recent years, reducing the open water areas available.

All management work taking place at or near Longis Pond has been undertaken in consultation with the ABO.

##### **4.2.1. Reedbed cutting**

The reedbed was cut in November according to the proposed cutting area laid out in the Annual Action Programme (Fig. 3). The area was agreed with the ABO Warden prior to work commencing, including a site visit and then cut with topper. The cut material was raked and removed by hand but flail collection was not possible due to technical issues.

The area in front of the birdhide was cleared by hand in September in order to maintain a view across the pond. The area of reedbed on the Western side of the footpath was grazed between March and May.



**Figure 3:** Longis reedbed management 2017

#### Recommendations

- Reedbed cutting in 2018 should focus on the internal area of the reedbed, particularly that not cut since 2008/09 and cover an area similar in size to the 2017 cut.
- This may require use of the powerscythe and/or hand cutting if the ground is wet and soft underfoot in this area.
- Consideration must be given to how the internal area of the reedbed can be accessed to minimise disturbance at the pond edge by dogs etc.
- The viability of lowering the reedbed has not been assessed. This could be a project for 2018 and is a key area of interest for the Alderney Bird Observatory, and as such should be treated as a joint project.

#### 4.2.2. Iris control

Yellow Flag Iris in front of the bird hide was dug and removed in September 2017 (Fig. 3).

#### Recommendations

- Iris control should be continued in 2018 focussing on the area to the North of the pond (Fig. 3). Timing should be agreed with the ABO but for optimal control should be carried out in late summer (August/September).

#### **4.2.3. Tree planting and non-intervention**

The elder hedge planted in 2016 was reviewed in December 2017. All trees were inspected and tree guards removed from dead saplings. The sapling success rate here has been poor, presumably due to the dry conditions and competition for water and nutrients with grass. Due to the closure of the footpath above the pond, there is less need for these trees as a barrier.

There has been no intervention in the scrubby area at the back of Longis pond this year. This may be reviewed as part of the feasibility study for pond/reedbed lowering.

##### Recommendations

- The remaining elder trees should be kept clear of grass and monitored.
- No further planting is required in this area.

#### **4.2.4. White Poplar**

White poplar was cut in November 2016 at the Northern edge of the pond, near the ringing ride (Fig. 4). Cut material was piled on site and care was taken to not allow re-rooting. Subsequent cutting and glyphosate treatment was not carried out and the poplar stand there has returned vigorously in 2017.

Poplar control here is not favoured by the ABO due to the proximity of the ringing ride and the exposure that would result from the removal of the poplar. However, continued growth would very quickly result in the poplar becoming dominant in this area and contribute to the drying of the site, possibly affecting the reedbed and pond levels in future.

In December 2017 white poplar encroachment from private land on the Eastern side of the pond was managed by cutting and treatment of stumps with Glyphosate (Fig. 4).

##### Recommendations

- White poplar management should be reviewed with the ABO in early 2018 to determine longer term priorities and aims in this area. If necessary alternative cover plants, which are less likely to cause drying or invasion of site might be planted as the poplar is removed
- If possible, white poplar in both areas should be cut and treated with glyphosate in spring 2018 in order to prevent regrowth. Glyphosate application will be more successful in spring as the plants come out of winter dormancy.



**Figure 4:** Longis white poplar control

#### **4.3. Mannez Pond management**

Management work at Mannez Pond in 2016 and 2017 has been carried out in collaboration with the ABO.

##### **4.3.1. Lesser Reedmace**

Lesser Reedmace in Mannez pond was cut by hand and by topper in November 2016 and raked and burnt on site. In autumn/ winter 2017 the reedmace provided an abundant source of seeds for birds. In 2017, the decision was made not to cut the reedmace pending a review with the ABO in early 2018 to determine longer term priorities and aims in this area.

Recommendations

- Reedmace management should be reviewed with the ABO in early 2018 to determine longer term priorities and aims in this area.

##### **4.3.2. Rusty swallow**

In 2016 several mature rusty swallow trees were removed near to the Mannez Pond, to open the canopy and allow more light to reach the understory. Rods were planted along the footpath from Mannez birdhide to create a living screen to separate the path from the wooded areas and reduce disturbance and access to the pond side. Many of these rods have taken well and will provide an effective screen in a few years.

Mature trees were also removed to the east of the Pond in an effort to introduce greater age structure around the net rides and to lower the height of the canopy.

In 2016 and 2017, sallow encroachment into a glade near the pond has been managed to maintain an open area, which is known for a flourishing specimen of Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) (Fig. 5)



**Figure 5:** Mannez Pond management areas

#### Recommendations

- Rusty sallow should be monitored and action taken to prevent encroachment into the open pond area or into the open glade when necessary.
- Planted rods should be monitored and supplemented where necessary with new rods to create a good screen between the footpath and the pond area.

#### 4.3.3. Control of undesirable species

In 2017, a non-native Cordyline (*Cordyline australis*) was removed from the Mannez Pond area and a stand of Umbrella Grass (*Cyperus alternifolius*) was dug from the pond edge (Fig. 5).

In addition, the presence of what appears to be an increasing distribution of Yellow Flag Iris (*Iris pseudocorus*) was noted within the wooded South-Western corner of the pond.



## Recommendations

- The Umbrella Grass stand should be monitored for regrowth which should be removed by digging as necessary. It might be possible to use a herbicide such as glyphosate here if necessary, with careful application.
- The Yellow Flag Iris should be monitored and potentially actions taken to limit its spread if it appears to be becoming an issue.

### **4.3. Control of undesirable species**

#### **4.4.1. Ragwort**

3 volunteer sessions removing ragwort were carried out in June/July 2017. These covered Nunnery, Coastguards and Targets. The plant material was removed from site and disposed of either by burning or at Green Waste.

## Recommendations

- Ragwort control should be continued in 2018 as described in the LRMP.

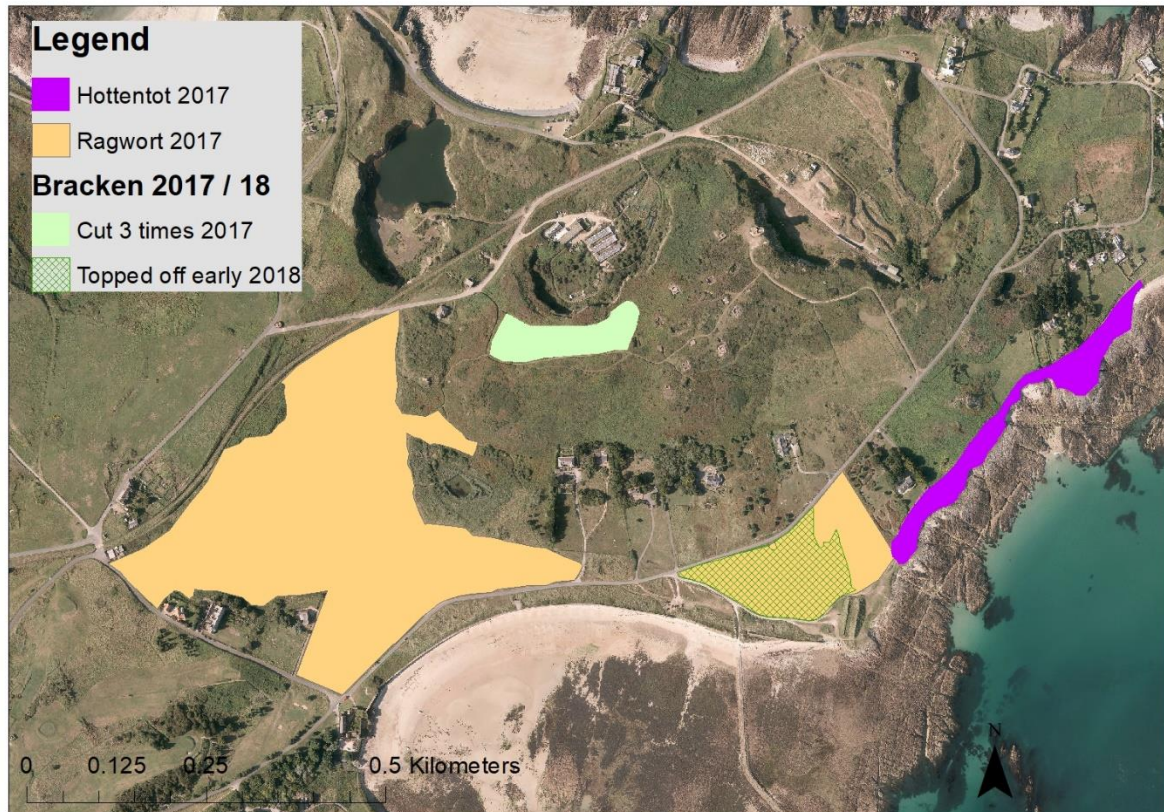
#### **4.4.2. Bracken**

Bracken control was carried out in June and July 2017 with the Mannez Garenne area cut 3 times according to best practice. The other sites were not cut in 2017 due to a failure to carry out an early cut in spring meaning that later cuts might risk disturbing breeding birds.

The coastguards area for bracken control was grazed throughout summer 2017 which contributed towards bracken control in this area, although not as effective as cutting.

## Recommendations

- An early topper cut should be carried out on all bracken control areas in 2018 to allow them to be cut frequently in the summer.
- All areas should be cut or controlled 3 times through the growing period as described under the LRMP.
- If volunteer time allows, hand control using lashers and scythes is as likely to be effective as mechanical control, and this is recommended if it is not possible to carry out control by tractor cutting. Bruising and damaging is a more effective way to weaken and damage bracken rhizome than clean cutting which is easier achieved by hand without special equipment.



**Figure 6:** Hottentot Fig, Ragwort and Bracken control in 2017 and early 2018

#### 4.4.3. Bramble

Bramble control was only carried out on one occasion when an area of the Mannez Football grazing plot was topper cut in mid-March. The aim is to maintain valuable open grassland habitats and restrict the spread of bramble into these areas. Approximately a quarter of the area was cut, nearest the Mannez Quarry (Fig. 7) This was topper cut and the cut material was not removed. Ideally the area should have subsequently been flail collected to prevent build-up of thatch and enrichment of the soil.

#### Recommendations

- Bramble encroachment on Mannez Football Pitch, Targets and Longis Common should be monitored and action taken if necessary.
- Ideally cutting for bramble control should take place in late summer/autumn (Sept – Nov) and cut material should be removed from site.

#### 4.4.4. Hottentot Fig

Only one Hottentot Fig control session was carried out in 2017. This covered the area from Fort Raz to Houmet-Herbe. Pulled material was disposed of at Green Waste.

There are still significant areas of Hottentot Fig in the Longis Reserve along the coastline.

## Recommendations

- In 2018, more effort should be directed to Hottentot fig control as there are some larger areas which were missed in 2017.
- This can include mulching with the heavy flail in areas of tall grass and vegetation.
- Enquiries should be made into the possibility of disposing of material by incineration at the Impot rather than Green Waste as this will reduce the risk of material being spread.

### **4.4.5. Crassula and Parrot's Feather**

No Management of Crassula and Parrot's Feather was undertaken in 2017.

## Recommendations

- Reminders of the importance of biosecurity when ringing in Mannez and Longis Ponds should be discussed with the ABO to ensure good practice in the 2018 ringing season by both resident and visiting ringers.
- The potential for Crassula and Parrot's Feather control should be reviewed with the ABO in early 2018 to determine longer term priorities and aims in this area.
- If considered appropriate, a full feasibility study should be carried out to develop a long term plan for the Mannez Pond area.

### **4.4.6. Brown-tail Moth**

One session was carried out in January 2017 to manage Brown-tail moths near footpaths, as a joint effort with the Watch group. This was carried out in the areas around Mannez Lighthouse and included burning of tents and cutting out tents to be burned later.

The larger area next to the lighthouse was tractor cut to remove nests and reduce the impact on occupants of neighbouring houses.

There does not appear to have been significant proliferation of nests within the reserve in 2017 (pers. comm. David Wedd to Roland Gauvain) reducing the effort required in 2018.

## Recommendations

- Control should continue in 2018, on a reactive basis. The situation should be monitored and where large concentrations of nests are present near footpaths and public areas, these should be controlled as necessary.

## **4.5. Footpaths and access**

The AWT aims to manage the Reserve for people and wildlife, maintaining access and accessibility and managing these in a way that allows us to protect important species and habitats.

### **4.5.1. Path cutting**

Footpaths through the Longis Reserve are well used and a complete cut by tractor was only carried out once in June 2017. Handcutting was undertaken more frequently in key areas such as the steps

down to Mannez Birdhide and through the willows, and through the scrubby areas of Mannez Garenne and down to Mannez Football.

An area which did require more frequent cutting by tractor is the footpath through the daffodil field to Fort Corblets which is quickly dominated by bracken in the summer.



**Figure 7:** Footpaths within the Longis Reserve and Eastern end of Alderney which were managed during 2017.

#### Recommendations

- Paths should be cut in 2018 as required but key areas which tend to become overgrown as listed above should be monitored and cut more frequently.
- Potential for disturbance to breeding birds in these areas should be considered and cutting undertaken in a way that will minimise disturbance during the breeding season (March – July).

#### 4.5.2. Marker stones

Marker stones were all repainted and cleared in April before the main visitor season and trimmed or cleared by hand several times through the summer months. The decision was made not to continue to distinguish Reserve marker stones with a green line.

#### Recommendations

- Monitoring and maintenance of marker stones should continue as laid out in the LRMP.

## **4.6. Amenity features**

### **4.6.1 Birdhides**

The Longis Birdhide was renovated in early 2017 to provide an improved facility for the larger groups of visitors coming to the Island for the Bird Observatory and on Naturetrek and other tour groups. The improved facilities include wheelchair access and a large viewing window for children and wheelchair users. In December 2017, the roof of the hide blew off in high winds but was successfully repaired with little long term damage.

The Mannez birdhide was treated in Autumn 2016 with wood preservative and the Perspex in the windows was replaced in early 2017 to replace the old yellowed acrylic.

Recommendations

- Maintenance and monitoring of the bird hide facilities should continue to be undertaken with the ABO as laid out in the LRMP.

### **4.6.2. Signage and Information points**

No additional information boards were created during 2017 by the Alderney Wildlife Trust. Those removed due to work on the new bird hide were restored inside the new birdhide once works were complete.

The signboards at the Houmet-Herbe Trenches were repaired and re-treated with wood preservative in August 2017. The hinges in this site are very susceptible to rusting and need to be monitored.

New signboards have been erected in spring/summer 2017 by the States of Alderney, providing information on the Victorian Forts. Those for Fort Raz and Fort Houmet-Herbe fall within the Longis Reserve.

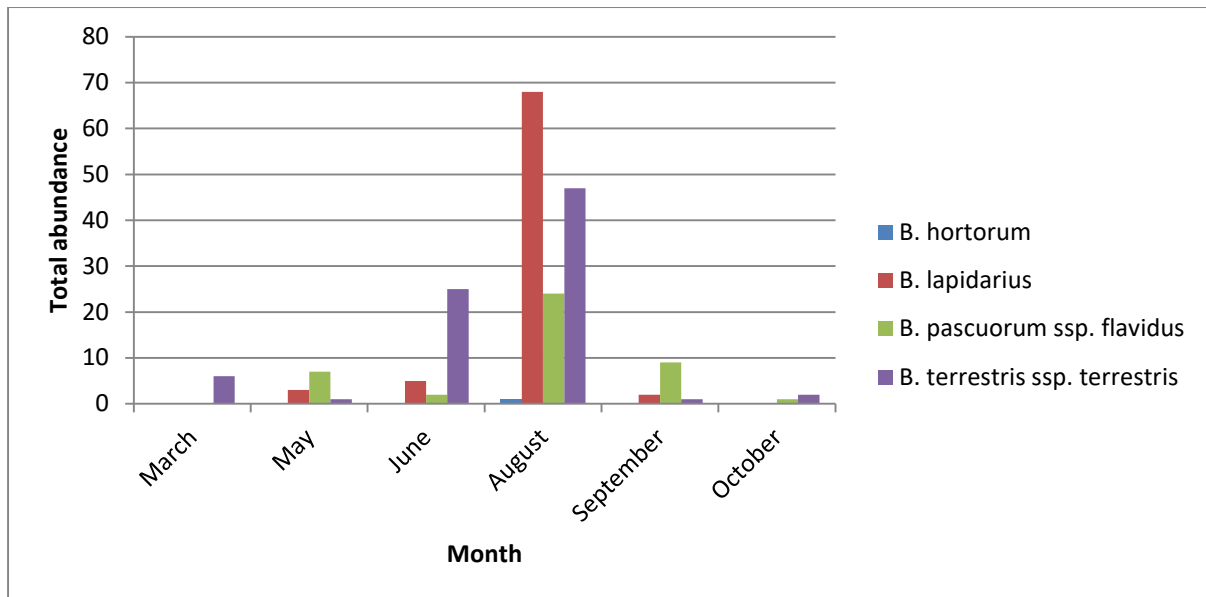
Recommendations

- Existing information boards should be maintained within the reserve
- Where additional signage is considered desirable it must be installed and maintained sensitively to its position in the natural landscape.

## **4.7. Surveying and monitoring**

Existing surveys and monitoring schemes were continued in 2017. The Annual Action Plan proposed a series of surveys for 2017 and the successes and results of these are summarised below.

In addition to those listed under the Longis Reserve Annual Action Plan, the Bumblebee Conservation Trust Beewalk was also introduced. This was carried out using the same transects as are already established for the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme and use a similar methodology (Fig. 9). 4 different species were recorded, with greatest abundance during the August Survey.



**Figure 8:** Bumblebee abundance within the Longis Reserve in 2017

#### Recommendations

- The Beewalk survey should be continued in 2018 if possible to develop survey skills and begin to build a dataset.

#### 4.7.1. Phase 1 and NVC surveys

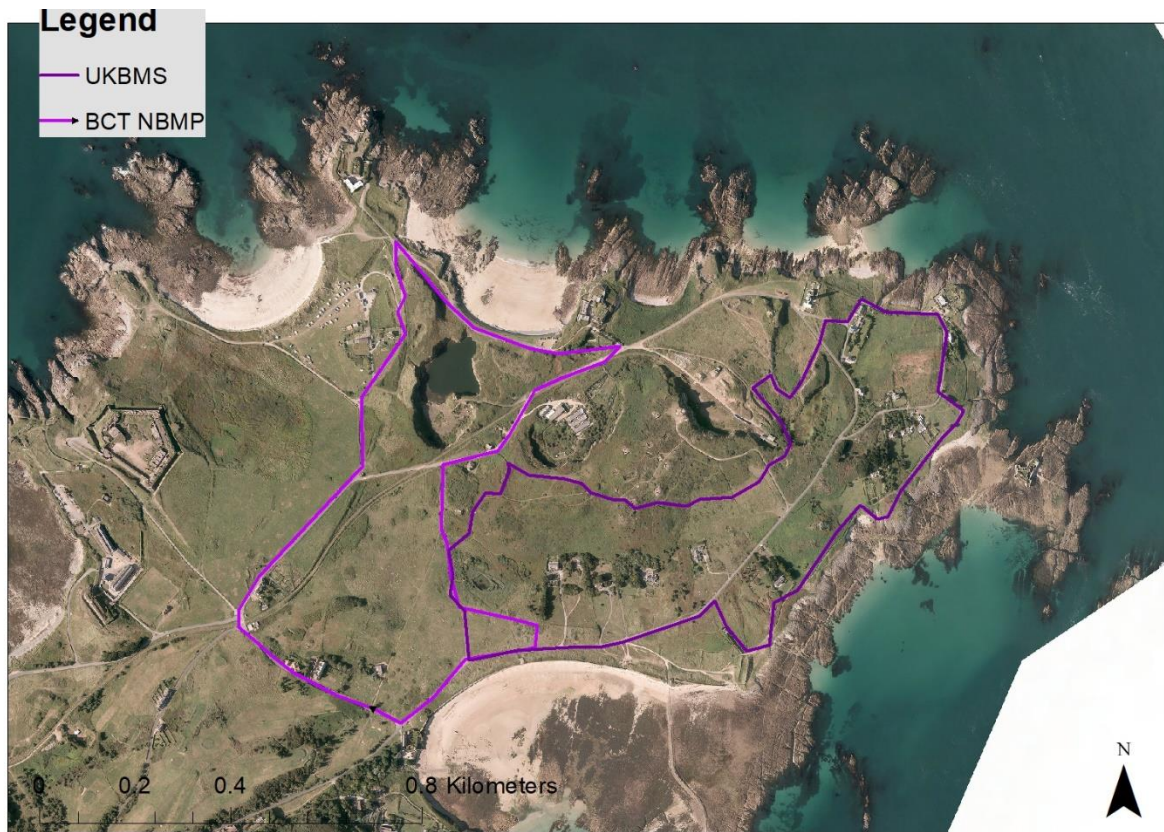
A full Phase 1 Survey was not completed for the Longis Reserve in 2017. Casual observations during a Beach Clean along the Longis Coastline found Small-flowered Catchfly (*Silene gallica*), Bastard Toadflax (*Thesium humifusum*) and Small Hare's Ear (*Bupleurum baldense*) in close proximity on a relatively small patch of ground between the anti-tank wall and the Houme-Herbe Grassland.

#### Recommendations

- A full Phase 1 survey should be completed in 2018 if possible, following JNCC Phase 1 methodology in May-July.
- A more detailed survey establishing presence of important species as identified in the LRMP is a secondary priority, ensuring an up-to-date knowledge of priority species, the importance of which was highlighted by the Alderney Land Use Plan works in 2016/17.

#### 4.7.2. Butterfly transects

The established UKBMS transect (Fig. 9) in the Longis Reserve was surveyed on 15 of the 29 survey weeks in 2017. This transect has been surveyed since 2006 providing valuable long-term data, although some work is still required to pool the data into a comparable format between years. In total 17 different species were recorded in 2017 with a maximum of 14 species recorded on a single survey in June (Table 1). The most abundant butterfly species recorded was Meadow Brown, with Common Blue and Small White being most frequently recorded (12 out of 15 surveys completed).



**Figure 9:** Route of UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme and National Bat Monitoring Programme transects within the Longis Reserve.

Week	Meadow Brown	Gatekeeper	Common Blue	Small Heath	Small White	Glanville Fritillary	Large White	Wall	Speckled Wood	Small Copper	Peacock	Red Admiral	Small Tortoiseshell	Painted Lady	Holly Blue	Grayling	Clouded Yellow	Total
1											12		4					16
2					8						4		4					16
4			4		10		4	4		8	4	2						36
7			132	12	10			22		4								180
8			228	22	4			38										292
10	14		80	16		38			20	2				4				174
11	76		28	40	8	34	2		6	4		4						202
12	366	10	6	50	71	20	18		2	10	14	2	2	2	2			575
14	272	196	20	26	26	8	32			16	10	6		2	2			616
15	250	840	216		14		14			4		8				4		1350
17	28	48	8									8				2		94
21	14	6	48	27	34		8	4	8				4		4			157
24	2		12	4	4		10	4	10	4	4						2	56
26			12	5	2	2		2	10			4						37
28					2			2	4									8
<b>Total</b>	<b>1022</b>	<b>1100</b>	<b>794</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3809</b>

**Table 1:** Butterfly species counts on the Longis Reserve UKBMS transect in 2017

Recommendations:

- The UKBMS transect should be continued as part of the established monitoring programme in 2018.

- Work should continue in the long-term to maintain a useable database of records, simplifying future analysis and providing an evidence base for future management decisions and successes.

#### **4.7.3. Bat transects**

The National Bat Monitoring Programme (NBMP) Field Survey transect within the Reserve (Fig. 9) was surveyed twice in July 2017 according to BCT methodology. The early survey carried out on 14<sup>th</sup> July recorded a total of 3 Pipistrelle bat passes while the late survey carried out on 24<sup>th</sup> July recorded 22 passes.

Recommendations

- Two surveys should be carried out in July 2018 as per the established programme to build up a long-term dataset.

#### **4.7.4. Breeding Bird Surveys**

Review of the established Breeding Birds Survey (BBS) programme on Alderney has revealed that there is no established BBS transects within the Longis Reserve and no surveys were carried out in 2017. An extant survey square is located just outside the Reserve at Essex Hill but there has not been any data obtained for this location to date.

As a centre for the bird ringing effort conducted by the Alderney Bird Observatory, there is a continuous ongoing recording effort within the Reserve.

Recommendations

- Bird recording data should be shared between the ABO and AWT where possible to ensure information is available to inform management and effort is shared.
- There is potential to introduce a BBS square within the Longis Reserve and this should be discussed with the ABO to confirm that this would be of value.

#### **4.7.5. Wetland Bird Surveys**

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) surveys were carried out during 2017 at Longis Bay, Longis Pond and Mannez Pond. The data collection and collation for these surveys has been sporadic due to staff turnover and is not available for analysis at this time.

Recommendations

- Surveys should continue in 2018, with particular focus on standardizing reporting and data collation by AWT and developing on-island survey effort.
- WeBS survey effort and value of data should be reviewed with the ABO if possible to ensure that data is useful and useable.



#### **4.7.6. Intertidal and Marine surveys**

Marine and intertidal surveys are co-ordinated under the Living Seas programme by the Living Seas Co-ordinator.

#### **Evaluation**

In general delivery has been good on most aspects of management within the Longis Reserve in 2017. This review has allowed some key areas to be identified as requiring greater effort in 2018, including Hottentot Fig control, White Poplar control, grazing management and survey and monitoring effort.

By producing ongoing reviews annually, a longer-term picture of management success will be developed and enable future work programmes to be produced in a more targeted manner.

#### **References**

Whyte (2017). *Longis Reserve Annual Action Plan 2017*. Alderney Wildlife Trust.

Manzano-Rubio & Whyte (2017). *Longis Reserve Management Plan 2017 – 2021*. Alderney Wildlife Trust.