

Management plan notes for Llanfair Waterdine Community Trust, The Triangle

Site description

From a landscape conservation perspective, the broader area would have historically been lowland heathland due to key features present. Ongoing and future management of The Triangle site should aim to enhance these features so that the site will continue to be of high biodiversity value in the landscape, both for nature conservation and visitor enjoyment.

What is lowland heathland?

It is a broad term, typically referring to a mosaic of wet, damp and dry habitats, with flowering dwarf shrubs, including heathers and gorses. These areas are generally found on poor, acidic soils, in relatively wet areas at moderate altitudes such as the Triangle and at the drier southern end of Lower Short Ditch. Open heathland is a rare habitat type and in the UK we only have about 16% left of the area that existed in 1800.

The following information is to help inform the brilliant work of the Llanfair Waterdine Community Trust, to help guide the long-term management of this site.

What makes The Triangle special?

Existing key features to enhance:

Diverse mixture of vegetation types

Including heathers, gorses, grasses, some flowering plants, some tree cover and areas of open or bare ground. This mosaic of flora supports diverse number of birds, animals and insects.

Site survey in summer 2022 – small area of Bilberry halfway along the roadside which is most likely a remnant of the original moorland hilltop. There were small areas of bluebell and a few other acid grassland plants such as Tormentil and Heath bedstraw.

Variety of bird life

It is a valuable site for birds, providing cover for feeding and nesting.

Site survey in summer 2022 – range of species observed: Whitethroat, Chiffchaff, Stonechat with young, Bullfinch, Wheatear, Great tit, Blue tit, Redstart, Chaffinch and Meadow pipit.



Site Management – for the benefit of wildlife and people

Bracken control and Management

Bracken is a crucial component of many habitats and supports a number of animal species. It's also an important feature adding structure and colour to the landscape. It can become over dominant and suppress other plants, so managing bracken ensures a healthier habitat for more plants and animals.

Where bracken is dominant and dense on a site there are methods, other than chemical to reduce its cover, such as cutting or crushing. This needs to be an ongoing practice over several years to have any effect.

With The Triangle site specifically in mind and the aspirations of the Community Trust group, the following practices may be best for the site:

Management by hand- using bracken cutting or crushing methods to maintain a lower density of bracken across the site. Community volunteers would perhaps be interested in undertaking such work at planned work party days. This would avoid herbicide treatment, which is typically used on vast areas and needs to be carried out repeatedly with necessary permissions in place.

The site already has some diversity in plant life and so the bracken management could be at a low level over the longer period. A plan could be drawn up to identify defined areas for bracken reduction, perhaps starting with the north end of the site or alongside the road site. This could help to existing areas of heather and bilberry to establish and regenerate further.

At the north end a small area could be cut several times a year for several years to reduce the bracken and also along the roadside to allow the small area of Bilberry to regenerate. Obviously it is important to look out for nesting birds and cutting would ideally be done by hand if done during the nesting season.

See appendix for further guidance on bracken management.

Tree and grassland management

The site has some good well-established tree cover which adds to the mosaic features of the site. With the aspiration to focus on enhancing lowland heathland features, it would be advisable not to carry out any further tree planting here. Those trees recently planted will help to ensure some future tree cover of the site, alongside encouraging other species such as bilberry and heather to establish.



At the south end of the site there is a rough grassland area which could be encouraged to be have more flowering species [possibly cut/topped and removed each year late in the season].

Visitor information and experience

Provision of an information board, signage and picnic facilities will significantly help to connect people to the landscape, helping them to learn more about the plants, animals and history of the area.



Site Management – for the benefit of wildlife and people

Bracken control methods:

	Bracken cutting	Bracken crushing/ bruising
How	<p>Method needs to be planned with practicalities and site features in mind</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential use of small machinery such as Robocut which is effective at cutting bracken • Or by hand – hand tools or strimmers? 	<p>Method needs to be planned with practicalities and site features in mind</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May wish to consider specialist equipment hire, such as bracken crushing rollers fitted with deep cross-ribs (e.g Cuthbertson, Holt) or purpose built machines (e.g Landbase, Bracken Bruisers) • Horse drawn rollers may be another option
	<p>Both methods need to carefully consider site features and minimising disturbance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works should not be carried out where ground-nesting birds are present • Awareness of archaeological sites and remains – need to check as bracken may be obscuring features – use hand-held strimmers only if other machinery may cause disturbance 	
When	<p>Aim is to cut twice each season with the first cut in approximately mid-June (mid-July if ground nesting birds may be present) when the bracken is 5-75cm high. The first cut may need to take place later in upland environments. The second cut would then be carried out 6 weeks later.</p>	<p>Usually best carried out repeatedly on young fronds that are brittle and easily snapped. Repeat the treatment for at least 3 years if crushing twice per season</p>
Why	<p>Good as a method of management although it is never likely to eradicate bracken.</p>	<p>Some feel it is less effective than cutting but good option for more difficult terrain which might damage cutter blades.</p> <p>Rolling or bruising bracken over 1-3 years often results in a high density of shorter fronds and shorter stems, therefore reducing the vigour of the plant</p>

There is further guidance on bracken management from organisations including Natural England and Plant Life.

Example of Robocut machine cutting bracken:

[Demo of McConnel Robocut cutting bracken and Molinia on Mountain - YouTube](#)