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APR 2009

# **Five Year Habitat Management Plan**

For

1 The Oxlet

Bishopswood

Ross on Wye

HR9 5QX

December 2009

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL  
PLANNING SERVICES  
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

31 MAR 2010

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## Revision History

Date and Version	Author	Reason
October 2009	Platinum Consulting	First version
December 2009		Rewrite

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## **1. Background**

1 The Oxlet is a registered smallholding of approximately 5 Ha within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Some of the smallholding lies within the southern edge of a Special Wildlife Site (SWS) (Woodlands East of Kerne Bridge), an area of ancient woodland. The majority of the land on the smallholding within the SWS is grassland varying between semi improved and improved in classification.

The need for this plan arose from works to install a micro hydroelectricity generation system, using water from a spring to generate carbon free electricity. The works involved renewal of land drains, installation of two tanks and low covers, laying of pipes and the construction of a small shed to be used to house the generator and control gear. Some of these works are within the SWS.

Following these works an ecological assessment has been performed.

The disturbance to each area is described below; each area is shown on the maps to be found in Appendix 2:

### **1.1 Area A – Pasture and Orchard.**

In this area the works involved the replacement of existing land drains. This required the digging of trenches disturbing the pasture. None of the fruit trees were affected.

### **1.2 Area B – Pasture.**

Here a tank was installed and a pipe run from top to bottom of the field, 3m from the boundary of the field, that also being the boundary of the SWS.

Disturbance in this area was:

- Removal of a post and wire fence
- Digging of a trench to install pipe
- Construction of tanks and covers – leading to loss of grassland and localised earth movement around the site of the tanks

### **1.3 Area D – Woodland.**

In this area a small shed was constructed with a base area of 4m<sup>2</sup>. The disturbance in this area consisted of a small trench to lay the pipe to the shed, and the construction of the shed. No trees or shrubs were impacted by these works.

### **Other Areas – Pasture and domestic curtilage.**

These areas are not part of the SWS. Disturbance here was limited to trenching to lay pipes. In the area close to the house trenching was kept shallow and dug by hand to avoid damage to the root plate of nearby mature trees. Subsequent assessment showed it unlikely that these trees had been disturbed.

## 2. Objectives

The objectives of this management plan are twofold:

- to detail the steps that will be taken to mitigate the disturbance caused by the development works, reinstating where possible to the same state as before works.
- to detail the steps that will be taken to enhance the diversity of species supported by the land.

This plan extends for a period of 5 years.

The details of this plan are described below in narrative form and are detailed in Appendix 1 in tabular, chronological order showing activities by period for each year of this plan.

## 3. Mitigation and reinstatement

Below is a narrative description of the actions planned. This is also shown in chronological form in Appendix 1.

### 3.1 General.

1. Removal of invasive weeds such as dock, nettle, ragwort, thistle and other ruderal weeds from disturbed areas. Spot treating where necessary then hand pulling once under control. This will allow more beneficial species to re-establish more readily.

### 3.2 Area A.

2. Reseeding of disturbed area using seed collected from majority of the field that has not been affected to help those species already present on the land re-establish themselves on the disturbed land.
3. Replacement of fencing between area A and area B to enable grazing.

### 3.3 Area B.

4. Landscaping of earth around tanks to remove spoil heaps and return the disturbed areas back to closer to their original profile. This work will be limited to those areas already disturbed and temporary fencing will be utilised to ensure that undisturbed areas remain so. Any tall areas of grass will be strimmed in the preceding winter, and kept low until landscaping is completed to make the affect areas less attractive to wildlife and hence reduce the possibilities of disturbance.
5. Reseeding of disturbed area using seed collected from majority of the field that has not been affected to help those species already present on the land re-establish themselves on the disturbed land.

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6. Replacement of fencing between area A and area B to enable grazing.
7. Ensure all spoil and building waste is removed from the site. This will be performed by hand where possible with awareness that piles of waste may be being used by amphibians or reptiles.
8. Replacement of missing section of fencing between area B and neighbouring field to enable grazing.

### **3.4 Area D.**

9. Ensure all spoil and building waste is removed from the site. This will be performed by hand where possible with awareness that piles of waste may be being used by amphibians or reptiles.

### **3.5 Other areas.**

10. Prevent any further development within the vicinity of the root plates of the mature trees near track. This will eliminate the possibility of disturbance to these trees,
11. Low intensity grazing by sheep and horses to re-establish the traditional use of these fields and to help improve sward depth and forb diversity.
12. Reseeding of disturbed area using seed collected from majority of the field that has not been affected to help those species already present on the land re-establish themselves on the disturbed land.

## **4. Enhancement**

Below is a narrative description of the actions planned. This is also shown in chronological form in Appendix 1.

### **4.1 General**

13. During the first 3 months of this plan Natural England will be approached with the intention of entering into a High Level Stewardship Agreement for the whole of the smallholding. Initial discussions have been held and this is now on hold until the outcome of the outstanding planning issues is known. This would enable a much greater range of initiatives to be undertaken and would provide targeted support and guidance. Contact point Chris Ruddle.
14. Avoid use of herbicides and pesticides to prevent degradation of the habitat for molluscs. This will help maintain the suitability of the land to support Glow Worms,

#### **4.2 Area A.**

15. Low intensity grazing by sheep and horses to re-establish the traditional use of these fields and to help improve sward depth and forb diversity. This will require existing trees to be protected to stop bark damage.
16. Commence a 5 year program of restorative pruning for the established traditional mature cider apple trees. The program will not make use of any herbicides or pesticides. This will help elongate the expected lifespan of these trees and prevent wind damage whilst also supporting lichens, fungi and mistletoe (a Herefordshire BAP species) along with the invertebrate and bird use of the trees. Dead wood will not automatically be removed due to the potential uses by nesting birds and invertebrates including less common species of beetle such as the Noble Chafer which is known in 12 sites in Gloucestershire, including the Forest of Dean.
17. Plant an additional 6 standard cider trees. These will be traditional local varieties sourced from suppliers based in Herefordshire – advice will be sought from the Marcher Apple Network and local cider makers. This will help ensure continuity of use and habitat as the existing trees approach the natural end of their life as well as extending this type of habitat in the medium term.
18. Locally sourced, species rich hay will be spread over the disturbed ground help to increase the diversity of the site within a locally consistent manner.
19. 5 bird boxes will be mounted in the existing mature trees. These will be aimed at encouraging small to medium birds including Spotted Flycatcher (a UK and Herefordshire BAP species) which has been seen on site. Designs will be based on BTO Guide 23, Nestboxes (1993 edition) by Chris du Feu.

#### **4.3 Area B.**

20. 7 native species trees will be planted along the replaced fence lines. This will include 3 wild service trees (which have a Herefordshire BAP), 2 chestnut and 2 holly. All but the wild service trees will be sourced from other areas of the smallholding. This will increase diversity and will increase nesting opportunities and food sources for various species of bird.
21. Doors to the tank structures will be constructed to leave a 15 to 25mm gap to enable bat access and hence provide potential roosting sites.
22. Bat access slots such as the Schwegler 1FE Bat Access Panel or an access panel to enable flying access for Horseshoes will be constructed in the gable ends of each tank structure and hence provide potential roosting sites.

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23. Timber crevices of 15 to 20mm gap and 1.2m length will be suspended in the apex of each tank roof to provide more attractive roosting sites for crevice roosting species.
24. Access to the tanks will be limited to essential maintenance. This will include locking the access to the structures. This will help ensure that any species using the structures for shelter are not disturbed.
25. Whilst not actually barns, the Barn Owl Trust will be approached to gauge the suitability of the structures for nesting sites. If opinion suggests there may be value then access and a nesting platform and box will be constructed in one of the tanks.
26. Low intensity grazing by sheep and horses to re-establish the traditional use of these fields and to help improve sward depth and forb diversity. This will require existing trees to be protected to stop bark damage.
27. Locally sourced, species rich hay will be spread over the disturbed ground help to increase the diversity of the site within a locally consistent manner.

#### **4.4 Area D.**

28. The hazel stools will be coppiced on a 7 year rotation. This will allow more light to the ground layer and stream, helping increase the species diversity present and allowing the hazel to fruit.
29. A 15 to 25mm access will be left on the shed door to allow bats to access. The door itself will be locked to prevent disturbance. The shed will only be entered for essential maintenance. This will make the structure more accessible for bats to use as a roosting site and will prevent disturbance.
30. 4 small bird boxes will be mounted in the area to encourage Spotted Flycatchers as well as other species.

### **5. Monitoring**

The progress of this plan, the results being achieved and the continued suitability of the plan in its current form will be regularly monitored. Should changes be found necessary then the plan will be revised accordingly. This review will take place at the end of each year.

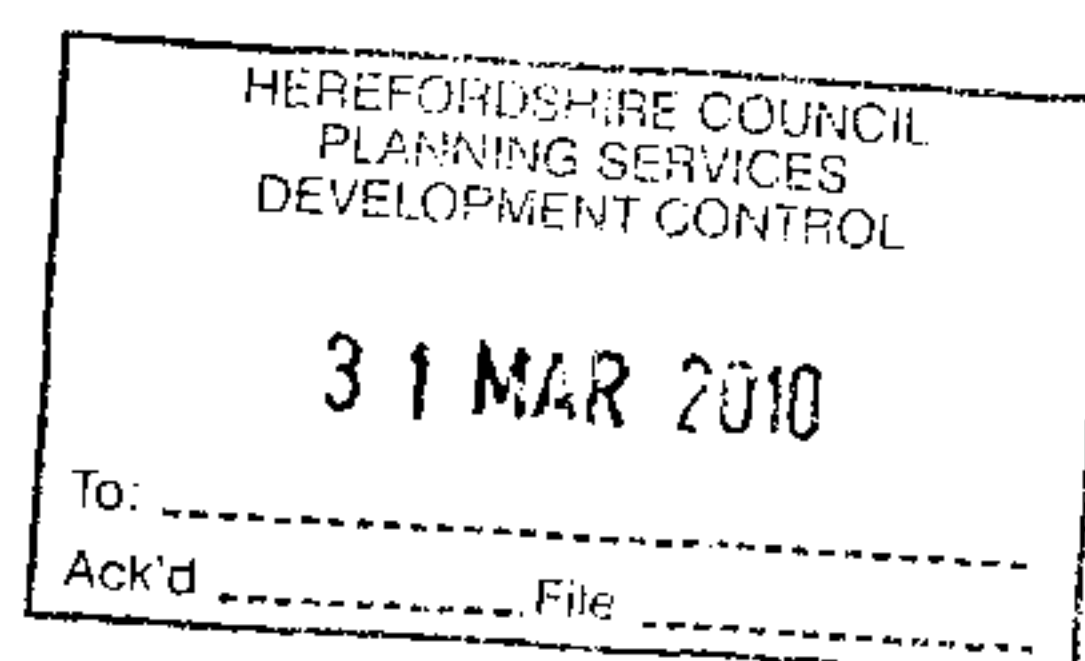
During the year specific elements of the plan will be directly monitored: for example during the bird nesting season any nest boxes installed will be observed to identify which are being used and by which species. Identifying usage of any enhancements for bats will need to be made in a way to ensure that no disturbance is caused to any bats present according to the laws covering this area. Should there be any doubt regarding this, specialist assistance will be sought from a local bat group or a licensed ecologist.



The major review will be driven by a revisit of the habitat assessment upon which this plan is based. This will be performed on a 3 to 5 yearly cycle.

## **6. Responsibilities.**

Due to the small nature of this project all of the actions required by this plan will fall to the land owner to perform or hire specialists as required. Use will be made of local specialist groups for advice where available and appropriate.



## Appendix 1.

The tables below show, for each year, what actions will be performed in which months. The actions are described in more detail in the main body of the text.

### Year 1

Month	Area	Reference/ Description of Action
All Year	Areas A & B	1. Invasive weeds removed, spot treated if required.
		14. Avoid use of herbicides and pesticides.
		15 & 26. Graze with sheep and/or horses, will be on rotation with other pasture and will only be as appropriate given the growth of grass, weather and ground conditions. Grazing will only be able to commence when fences have been made secure and trees protected.
Jan	All	13. Contact Natural England Herefordshire and Worcestershire – commence application for High Level Stewardship Agreement.
	Area A & B	6 & 8. Replace fencing.
	Area B & D	7 & 9. Remove all building waste.
	Area A	16. Commence restorative pruning
	Area B	4. Strim all areas which will need landscaping.
		25. Approach Barn Owl Trust to assess suitability of tank structures for nesting sites. If suitable, actions to attract bats in one tank will be delayed for one year to allow installation works.
Feb	Area B	4. If weather allows, landscape around tanks. If not this will be delayed: assessment will be made regarding nesting birds, glow worm activity in this area and landscaping will be rescheduled to Autumn.
	Areas B & D	21, 24 & 29. Install doors on tank structures and generator shed, and lock.
	Areas A & B	15 & 26. Protect existing trees to prevent damage from grazing livestock.
Mar	All	Stop all works near potential bird nest sites
Apr		

May		
Jun	Areas A & B	Stop works or mechanical topping which might disturb glowing 2, 5 & 12. Collection and distribution of plant seeds from undisturbed areas. Will continue as long as plants continue to set seed.
Jul	Areas A & B	18 & 27. As available, spread species rich hay over disturbed ground: work in conjunction with Ragman's Lane, Crooked End and other local organic farms to source
Aug		
Sep	All	End glowing season
Oct	All	End bird nesting season
Nov	Areas A & D	19 & 30. Install 5 new bird boxes and 4 small bird boxes
	Area B	22 & 23. Install bat access and roosting crevices – note this will be delayed for one tank should the structures be suitable for Barn Owls. 25. Make modifications for Barn Owl nesting if appropriate.
Dec	Area A	16. Restorative pruning 17. Plant 6 new cider apple trees.
	Area B	20. Plant 7 new trees along restored fencing.
	Area D	28. Coppice hazel

## Year 2

Month	Area	Reference/ Description of Action
All Year	Areas A & B	1. Invasive weeds removed, spot treated if required. 14. Avoid use of herbicides and pesticides. 15 & 26. Graze with sheep and/or horses, will be on rotation with other pasture and will only be as appropriate given the growth of grass, weather and ground conditions. Grazing will only be able to commence when fences have

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		been made secure and trees protected.
Jan	Area B	25. If installations of bat access and so on were delayed due to investigations related to Barn Owls then these tasks must be rescheduled during this year.
Feb	All	Stop all works near potential bird nest sites, start monitoring bird boxes for use.
Mar	Areas A & B	Stop works or mechanical topping which might disturb glowing
Apr	Areas A & B	2, 5 & 12. Collection and distribution of plant seeds from undisturbed areas. Will continue as long as plants continue to set seed.
May		18 & 27. As available, spread species rich hay over disturbed ground: work in conjunction with Ragman's Lane, Crooked End and other local organic farms to source
Jun	Areas A & B	End glowing season
Jul	All	End bird nesting season
Aug		
Sep	Areas A & D	Clean bird boxes
Oct		
Nov	Area A	16. Restorative pruning
		17. Prune new apple trees
Dec		

### Year 3

Month	Area	Reference/ Description of Action
All Year	Areas A & B	1. Invasive weeds removed, spot treated if required.
		14. Avoid use of herbicides and pesticides.
		15 & 26. Graze with sheep and/or horses, will be on rotation with other pasture and will only be as appropriate given the growth of grass, weather and ground conditions. Grazing will only be able to commence when fences have

		been made secure and trees protected.
Jan		
Feb	All	Stop all works near potential bird nest sites, start monitoring bird boxes for use.
Mar	Areas A & B	Stop works or mechanical topping which might disturb glowing
Apr	Areas A & B	2, 5 & 12. Collection and distribution of plant seeds from undisturbed areas. Will continue as long as plants continue to set seed.
May		18 & 27. As available, spread species rich hay over disturbed ground: work in conjunction with Ragman's Lane, Crooked End and other local organic farms to source
Jun	Areas A & B	End glowing season
Jul	All	End bird nesting season
Aug		
Sep	Areas A & D	Clean bird boxes
Oct		
Nov	Area A	16. Restorative pruning
		17. Prune new apple trees
Dec	All	Consider commissioning new survey

#### Year 4

Month	Area	Reference/ Description of Action
All Year	Areas A & B	1. Invasive weeds removed, spot treated if required.
		14. Avoid use of herbicides and pesticides.
		15 & 26. Graze with sheep and/or horses, will be on rotation with other pasture and will only be as appropriate given the growth of grass, weather and ground conditions. Grazing will only be able to commence when fences have been made secure and trees protected.

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Jan		
Feb	All	Stop all works near potential bird nest sites, start monitoring bird boxes for use.
Mar	Areas A & B	Stop works or mechanical topping which might disturb glowing
Apr		
May		
Jun	Areas A & B	End glowing season
Jul	All	End bird nesting season
Aug		
Sep	Areas A & D	Clean bird boxes
Oct		
Nov	Area A	16. Restorative pruning
		17. Prune new apple trees
Dec	All	Consider commissioning new survey if not previous done so.

## Year 5

Month	Area	Reference/ Description of Action
All Year	Areas A & B	1. Invasive weeds removed, spot treated if required.
		14. Avoid use of herbicides and pesticides.
		15 & 26. Graze with sheep and/or horses, will be on rotation with other pasture and will only be as appropriate given the growth of grass, weather and ground conditions. Grazing will only be able to commence when fences have been made secure and trees protected.
Jan		
Feb	All	Stop all works near potential bird nest sites, start monitoring bird boxes for use.

Mar	Areas A & B	Stop works or mechanical topping which might disturb glowing
Apr		
May		
Jun	Areas A & B	End glowing season
Jul	All	End bird nesting season
Aug		
Sep	Areas A & D	Clean bird boxes
Oct		
Nov	Area A	16. Restorative pruning
		17. Prune new apple trees
Dec	All	Commission new survey if not previous done so.

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