



Land off Highfield Road

Habitat Improvement Proposal

Context

Severn Trent Water has committed to reviving over 4500 hectares of habitat by 2027 as part of their Great Big Nature Boost campaign (*Severn Trent PLC, 2020*). As part of this, The Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT) have been working with Severn Trent to help deliver the habitat improvement targets.

A Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping process supported by multiple organisations across the Sherwood region identified an area from Rainworth to Clipstone as one of the highest priorities for habitat enhancement, creation, and restoration.

Severn Trent and the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust have an agreement in place to supply capital funding to support habitat creation and restoration within a Rainworth-Mansfield-Clipstone focal area. This funding is not limited to a single type of habitat and can be applied to enhancement of woodland, heathland, grassland, and other land types provided that it achieves a biodiversity benefit. By March 2025, over 100 Ha of land is targeted for improvement,

Site Description

Location

Land off Highfield Road
(adjacent to Clipstone Cemetery and Intake Wood)

Highfield Road
Clipstone
Mansfield
NG21 9ET

Grid Reference: SK 59290 63684

What3Words: <https://what3words.com/masses.ignites.phantom>

Size

~1.1 Ha

Current State

The site is predominately modified grassland bordered by scrub and woodland. It is cut regularly which maintains a low sward height and allows grass species to dominate restricting species diversity

and wildflowers. Recent intervention to remove rubbish/litter has knocked back scrub and bracken, though this is quickly re-establishing.



Common lizards are known to inhabit the site. The regular cutting of the land inhibits identification of flora, particularly grasses however Sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), Lady's bedstraw (*Galium verum*), and Meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) have been observed on site.

The neighbouring woodland, Intake Wood, consists of plantation pine species with a smaller number of broadleaf species such as oak and birch. The aim for Intake Wood is to allow a gradual reversion to native oak-birch woodland with open areas of heathland, particularly along wayleaves and rides.

The soil was tested to provide confirmation that it is relatively well draining sandy acidic soil (pH 4.5-5.5), which is typical of area.

Proposed State

Lowland heathland/acid grassland habitats have seen a decline in Sherwood Natural Character Area (NCA). In 1774, based on historical maps, there was an estimated 23,560 Ha of lowland heathland/acid grassland habitat. This has declined to an estimated 1075 Ha by 2023 (*Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group, 2023*). As a priority habitat, there is aim to restore lowland heathland/acid grassland within Sherwood to help reconnection of a mosaic of habitats across the area.

The conditions of the site suggest that it would be appropriate to manage the site as lowland dry heathland/acid grassland (Figure 1). This would complement the management of Intake Wood and the wider recovery aims of the area. Similar restoration has occurred on nearby sites such as Vicar Water Country Park and recently a patch of Intake Wood was cleared to re-establish heathland.

The diversity of the site can be improved through a combination of acid grassland seed introduction, bare ground creation, heather seeding in patches, and a change to current maintenance frequency. Space can be left for future recreational needs such as outdoor gym equipment. Any heather brash seeding would take place closest to the North-East end of the site next to Intake Wood. This favours the presence of common lizards on the site and would avoid any recreational infrastructure that maybe installed in the future (on the South-West end of the site). The scrapes/bare ground would benefit invertebrates, reptiles, and provide conditions for target vegetation to establish.

The costs of the habitat work such as cutting, scraping, and seeding would be covered by NWT/Severn Trent funding and carried out by a reputable contractor with appropriate risk management and public liability insurance in place. Any work is subject to approval and agreement of the landowner – Clipstone Parish Council.

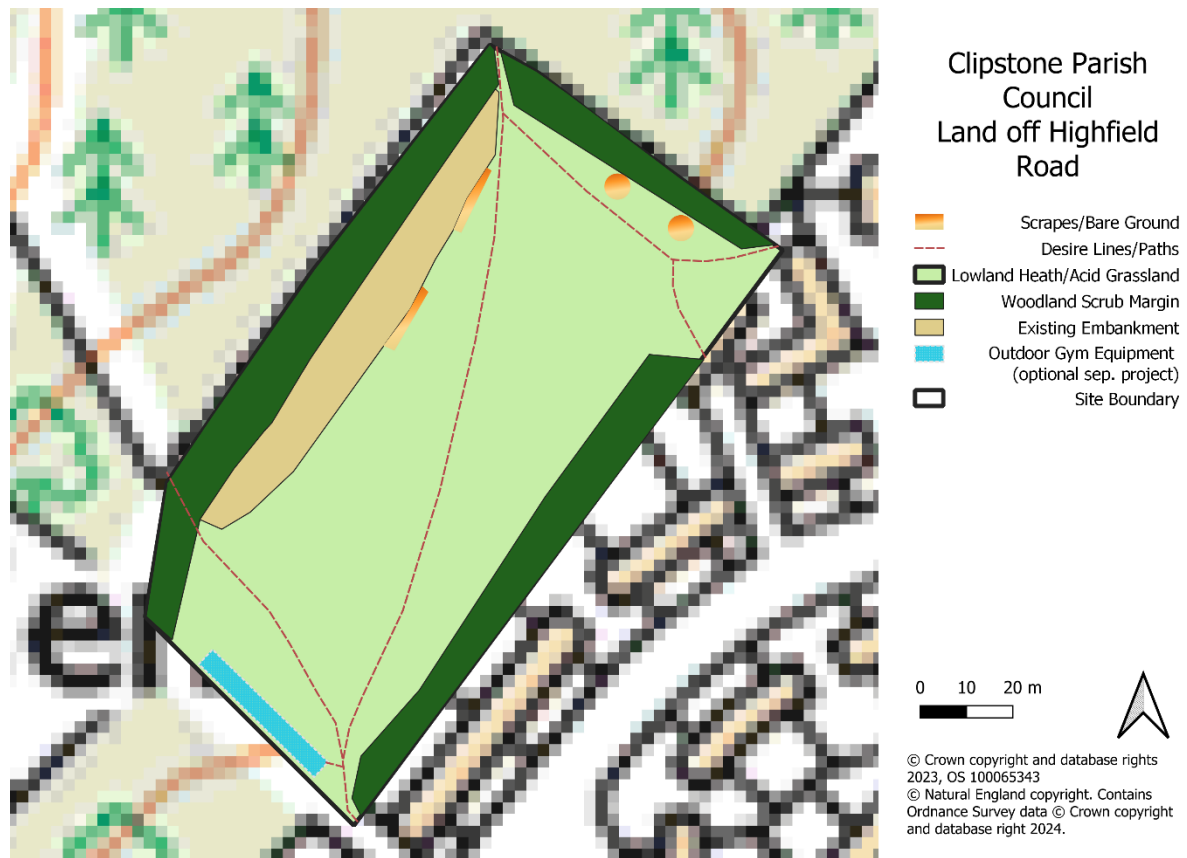


Figure 1: Draft proposal for habitat improvement on the site showing lowland heath/acid grassland creation and scrape positions.

Future Management

Broadly there are three options for management:

- Grazing
- Mechanical management
- Burning

Due to the open nature of the site and limited size, grazing is unlikely to be an option in the short-term. As part of the vision for grazing across the wider landscape recovery and the emergence of technology such as 'NoFence' collars (<https://www.nofence.no/en-gb/>), it is possible that this can be reconsidered in the future.

Burning is not appropriate for the site due to its open and semi-urban state. Controlling the fire and smoke nuisance is not viable.

In the immediate term, a modification of the current mechanical maintenance is likely to be the preferred option. Rather than a complete regular cut of the entire site, a less frequent, rotational cut of different areas of the site would be preferred to create a mosaic of vegetation age class and maintain the nutrient status of the site. Where dwarf shrub management is required (e.g. Heather)

then this should be flail/cut on a rotational basis over years to achieve structural diversity with arisings collected. Other vegetation on site such as grasses can be cut annually in Summer to prevent unpalatable species becoming dominant. Cuttings should be collected and cut length should not be too low. Desire lines/paths can continue to be maintained to provide routes through the site for dog walkers and alike.

Contact

Martyn Joynes
South Sherwood Nature Recovery Network Project Officer

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust
The Idle Valley Rural Learning Centre
North Road
Retford
Nottinghamshire
DN22 8RQ

Tel: 07872 403 827

<https://www.nottinghamshirewildlife.org/>

References

Severn Trent Launches Great Big Nature Boost Campaign: News Releases: Media: Severn Trent plc (2020) *Severn Trent launches Great Big Nature Boost campaign | News releases | Media | Severn Trent Plc*. Available at: <https://www.severntrent.com/media/news-releases/severn-trent-launches-great-big-nature-boost-campaign/> (Accessed: 10 June 2024).

The State of Nature in Sherwood Report 2023 (2023) *Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group*. Available at: <https://nottsbag.org.uk/state-of-nature-2023/> (Accessed: 10 June 2024).