



MELTON PARISH COUNCIL

REC(21)57.02

Suffolk Wildlife Trust Conservation Report – Land Opposite Fayrefield Road

Suffolk Wildlife Trust were invited to visit the newly acquired land between the railway line and river, near to Fayrefield Road and the Deben Boatyard. The land owner of the adjacent patch of land/reed beds also attended the site visit which took place in May 2021.

The report is contained within this paper. The suggested actions to be taken are listed below:

- Wildlife Recording
- Reed Bed Management/Cutting
- Scrub management
 - Buddleia removal
 - Removal of some bushes/trees
 - Bramble cutting back
- Drainage Channel Management
- Bankside Vegetation – cutting back of brambles
- Creation of viewpoint

Recommendations

Councillors are asked to:

- Note and comment on this report.
- Agree if they wish to proceed with any of the recommended actions

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pip Alder', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Pip Alder
Asst Clerk and Management Officer
June 2021



CONSERVATION ADVISOR SITE VISIT REPORT

Advisor's Name: Cathy Smith, Community Wildlife Advisor

Tel. 01473 890089

Date of visit: 13/05/2021

Name of Project leader: Pip Alder, Assistant Clerk & Management Officer Melton Parish Council

Email: .finance@melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk

Owner: Melton Parish Council

Location of site: opposite Fayrefield Road IP12 1BJ.

Land between railway line and river wall.

Grid Reference: TM279495

Enquiry

We've taken over a patch of land adjacent to the riverbank between the sewage works and Melton boatyard. A small section next to this land is owned by a local resident who is keen to investigate joining up the land into a conservation area – perhaps making some of it accessible to the public.

Summary of the site

1.7ha designated as Green Space in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Much of the habitat is reed bed. Scattered scrubs have established along with a more established scrub belt on the river wall side and grading into tree cover at the northern end. Within is a water course which drains via a sluice controlled by the Environment Agency into the River Deben.

Proposals:

Wildlife Recording

- Wildlife recording would be valuable on this site and could become a Parish wide endeavour. There are many forms it could take but can be more widely beneficial if lodged with Suffolk Biological Records either directly or through i-Record. The i-record platform allows for groups to set up their own space for collective records and has a process for verification. We do also receive records placed on the People's Trust for Endangered species website.

[Suffolk Biological Recording Online](#) | [Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service \(suffolkbis.org.uk\)](#)
[iRecord](#) | [Manage and share your wildlife records \(brc.ac.uk\)](#)

This is a useful video: [Setting up an iRecord activities for local groups - YouTube](#)

Reed Bed habitat

Reed beds are traditionally managed by cutting. Cutting reduces the rate of succession to scrub, reduces the rate of litter accumulation and stimulates the growth of new reeds. Winter cutting maintains its' dominance, summer cutting reduces its competitive ability, allows more diverse vegetation but ultimately eliminates the reed. Commercial cutting is usually undertaken in January-February.

Cutting is usually undertaken by brush cutter or walk-behind mower.

Traditional conservation management has been based on 7-15 year rotational coppicing. Shorter rotations are common in commercial reed beds and cutting a third in year is not believed to have negative conservation impacts. Unmanaged reed beds tend to create thinner stands and ultimately

succeed to scrub and wet woodland. Advice from a thatcher would be required to know if there is any commercial value to the reed.

As the water levels are controlled by the Environment Agency, there is little opportunity to manage the reed bed by altering the water regime.

If active management is decided upon, there is opportunity to work with the neighbouring landowner to establish rotational management of the reed beds.

Open scrub habitat

An assessment has been made from the public path along the river wall.

- There are several Buddleia plants which whilst known as magnets for butterflies are garden escapes and often associated with neglected brown field sites. In order to demonstrate a kept appearance, these are probably best removed.
- The scrub, mainly hawthorn and willow are providing good nesting bird habitat, willow and hawthorn are good pollen and nectar sources, and the latter provides a supply of winter berries.

Consideration could be given to rotational management to maintain some open habitat rather than allow the site to become totally wooded.

Mixed scrub stands begin to develop into woodland after about 15 years, so a rotation of around that duration will ensure that all stages of scrub, including open ground are present within a stand or site. Bear in mind that some scrub is already established so initial intervention may be required sooner.

Coppicing, the cutting of scrub back to near the ground encourages regeneration from the stump and rootstock, maintains and when used in small areas, enhances scrub stand.

Coppicing produces large volumes of arisings. Some could be stacked on site to provide dead wood habitat and shelter, others chipped prior to removal. Note equipment should have as low a ground pressure as possible to reduce soil compaction.

- Any scrub renewal work should be done between 1st September- end of February , outside of the bird breeding season.
- There also appears to be some bramble establishment. Bramble has wildlife value, flowers, berries, nest sites and winter shelter. Some judicious cutting of runners may be desirable to allow access for management. This could be undertaken at the same time as scrub management.
- If any tree maintenance work is carried out to the mature trees, Bat Conservation guidance regarding bat roosts should be referred to see note below
- In some of the drier areas, felled logs could be used to create a stag beetle log pyramids. The People's Trust for Endangered Species design is a good one to follow.

Drainage channel

It is understood that there may be an obligation to the Environment Agency to maintain the ditch at least near the sluice.

- Ditches can support a great deal of aquatic wildlife, with open sunny ones attracting the most aquatic invertebrates.
- Bank side vegetation can be controlled using a rotation of 2-5 years, with no more than half the length cut at one time.
- Ideally maintenance should be done between August- end of February, outside the bird breeding season.

- If silted up, the channel could be reinstated by removing the silt back to the original bank profile.

Bank side vegetation

- There is potential for some interesting wildflowers to establish. Already noted are Dittander *Lepidium latifolium*, Common vetch *V. sativa*, and Field forget-me-not *Myosotis arvensis*.
- Some brambles are establishing in the sward. An additional late summer cut may be necessary to prevent spread into public walkways and the loss of the wildflower sward.

Access

- Public access was discussed as a possibility. Complications over the level crossing to the south may be a barrier to this plan. An alternative idea would be to create a viewing point, maybe with an 'open' bird hide/screen. This would have the advantage of minimising disturbance to nesting birds.

Important considerations

- Some of the more mature hedge trees may be providing bat roosts. Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (amended) and Conservation of species regulations 2017 (amended). The protection makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat or group of bats in their roost or to damage or destroy a place used by bats for breeding or resting (roosts) (even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time). Any tree surgery carried out to the mature trees should follow the guidelines from the Bat Conservation Trust.
- The drier areas could be used by hedgehogs, the accompany guidelines advice of ways to reduce the likelihood to injury during management work.

It was a pleasure to meet you and discuss the opportunities for managing the land to enhancing the wildlife value.

We would love to hear how you get on, do share any results of your project.

Yours sincerely

Cathy Smith
Community Wildlife Advisor

References:

Bat Conservation Trust: [Roosts in trees - Bat roosts - Bat Conservation Trust \(bats.org.uk\)](https://bats.org.uk)

Hedgehog ecology and land management: <https://ptes.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/HEMP.pdf>

The scrub management handbook:

[The Scrub Management Handbook: Guidance on the management of scrub on nature conservation sites - IN124 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](https://naturalengland.org.uk)

Bringing reedbeds back to Life

[bringing reedbeds to life tcm9-385799.pdf \(rspb.org.uk\)](https://rspb.org.uk)



Accompanying factsheets:

Land management guidance for hedgehogs