

Project Newsletter No2 - March

With Spring now upon us, it heralds the start of our first full year on 'The Ridge', and so, I feel that this is an opportune time to update members of the group with the progress (and success) of our recent efforts.

Mowing Weekend

After a fantastic effort from the many who turned out, the majority of the grass cuttings were raked up and loaded in the skip by mid afternoon Saturday.

This 'early finish' gave us opportunity to tackle other areas on the Sunday: -

- Remove dead vegetation from the previously burnt areas near to both outcrops.
- Prune some damaged branches from vandalised trees.
- Remove some large items of rubbish.

Approximately 40 cubic metres of vegetation were removed from the site, which has helped to reduce nutrient levels on the grassland closer to that of a 'typical' sandstone site.

Within a few days changes to the vegetation in the grassland were apparent, as 'less competitive' plants exploited the new conditions created by the removal of the accumulated thick layer of dead vegetation.

Although it is too early to ascertain the full effect of the

management, so far it appears to have been successful - surveys over the coming months will hopefully confirm this!

Woodland Day

The focus for this session was the area of woodland adjacent to Thoresby Road - this is the least disturbed wooded area on the site, as such, it has the best potential for development.

The aim of the day was to implement improvements in the 'structure' of the woodland: -

- Around 30-40 self-set seedlings (mainly Holly, Rowan and Cherry) were relocated from the bases of the Oaks to more favourable sites, where they should grow a lot better.
- Some of the mature Oaks were pruned to allow more light to reach the ground, which will encourage other species to grow.
- Sycamore seedlings were up-rooted or cut down - these have limited wildlife value and can be very invasive in woodland.
- Pruned limbs were cut up and stacked to provide habitat for insects and small mammals.

Obviously, changes in woodland occur slowly and, are therefore, difficult to report on at this stage. However, as of 3rd March, all the transplanted trees (that I have been able to find) appear to have taken and many are beginning to come into leaf.

This winter we will repeat the process and continue transplanting seedlings to other areas of the site. The goal is to very slowly reduce the dominance of the Oaks and increase the diversity in both age and species of trees.

Litter Pick

Not much to say about this, but it always amazes me how much rubbish you can find if you go looking for it!

Footpath Maintenance

A small group performed a couple of 'test digs' on the footpath across the grassland at the top of the site. The rationale behind this was to ascertain the ground conditions in preparation for the upgrading of the path once funding is obtained.

In spite of the prolonged wet spells since the dig, the path surface appears to be stable and draining well (better than the original path in similar areas).

Much of the turf that was removed during the dig was used to patch areas of bare ground where the path was beginning to widen - these all appear to have taken and are doing well in spite of the heavy trampling that they are subject to.

Forthcoming Events

March 26th Bramble Thinning

Bring some Loppers and/or Secateurs, along with some thick work gloves and we will clear a few small areas of Bramble. This is part of a 'rotational thinning' throughout the site - i.e. we remove one fifth of the bramble each year over a five-year cycle. The cut Bramble is to be used to block some of the desire lines that are forming - this will limit access to some parts of the site and create 'sanctuary areas'.

REMEMBER - Brambles have thorns, so wear long sleeves!

Woodland Visit

Over the next few months there will not be any work undertaken on the Ridge, as Nature is in its most important and busiest period - animals and plants are in their breeding season. On **April 9th** I would like to organise a visit to Treswell Wood (near Retford) - It is under traditional management (by NWT), and demonstrates how many woods came to survive the centuries. If anyone is interested we will get all details and transport arranged at the April 3rd meeting.