

Natural Basingstoke

***Group Management & Planning
Workshop***

- **Course Lead: Gill Smallman/ Marion Wolstencroft** (Natural Basingstoke)
- **Participants will be introduced to:**
 1. **The Planning Timetable**
 2. **Planning and priorities** – translating Site Management Plans into annual action plans/ juggling priorities
 3. **Resourcing action plans** - identifying critical bottlenecks and how they might be resolved
 4. **Additional resources available**
 5. **How to maximise impact of additional resources** - shared experience/case histories.

Outcome - Awareness of:

- How critical forward planning is – especially when calling on external resources
- Resources available
- The pros and cons of using 3rd party resources, and what they need from you to succeed
- How the impact of additional resources can be maximised.

- Participants to feed in questions/ issues, to be discussed in part 2, as they arise during part 1.
- These will be logged, aggregated and listed, during the interval, to form a rough agenda for part 2.



Group Operations:

This takes the form of a workshop, where everyone can contribute based on their experience and the features of their sites. Groups can raise questions and share experience about what has worked for them.

Potential topics:

1. *Habitat management*
2. *Planning work*
3. *Running work parties*
4. *Recruitment, resources and equipment*
5. *Knowledge and skills*
6. *Publicity, communication and events*
7. *Group administration*

For these topics, insight into groups' experiences, successes and failures, is welcome. How can NB or joint working help?

Group Management & Planning Workshop

Part 1

PLANNING TIMETABLE (I)

Planning Action	April	May	June	July	August	September
Summer events groups participation planned						
Site Visit Schedule for April – October developed						
Invasive non-native species removal, infrastructure works, culvert checks						
Quarterly Statistics Return - to NB and BDBC						
Next Work Season activities pre-planning by groups						
Annual Site visits & planning						
Seed Collecting & processing						
Annual summer social event – Groups, NB & Rangers etc.						
Ecological surveys, management plan writing, site visits/work programme mapping.						
Mowing season						
Chainsaw/chipper, felling & scrub removal work						
New Season action plans issued by Rangers & Feedback by groups						Early
Work Party Dates list to NB and Rangers						
Skills training requests to NB (Hedge laying/ coppicing/ dead hedging etc)						

PLANNING TIMETABLE (2)

Planning Action	October	November	December	January	February	March
Quarterly Statistics Return - to NB and BDBC						
Seed Collecting & processing	Continued					
Mowing season	Continued					
Chainsaw/chipper, felling & scrub removal work	Continued					
Skills training requests to NB (Hedge laying/ coppicing/ dead hedging etc)	Continued					
Site Management Work Season						
Tree planting, seed sowing, bulb planting						
Mowing season ends						
Skills training courses held						
End of work season - clean & maintain tools, requests for new season tools						First Half
Summer Training Course requests to NB						
Summer Events schedule announced - NB & Rangers						

Translating Site Management Plans into Annual Work Plans/ juggling priorities

- Site Management Plans vs Annual Work Plans
- Planning cycles in conservation – Medium term and annual
- Work planning considerations:
 - Timing within the year/ priorities
 - Engaging BDBC Ranger Services (timing/ impact on later actions)
 - Weather, volunteer numbers - Fallback strategies



Annual Work Plans are:

- informed by the Site Management Plan
- agreed annually in advance between Ranger Services and the conservation group, following guidance shared with groups
- based on priorities raised by BOTH PARTIES – if you need access to expertise ask NB
- Inclusive of ALL activity done by anyone working on a conservation site
 - Rangers to raise all activity that they are proposing is undertaken on a site, including surveys
 - If you are planning anything (plug planting, tree guard removal....) ensure that it is raised so that BDBC recognises it as part of the plan
- the basis for allocation of tasks between different groups – conservation groups can request support from Corporate Work Parties for bulk activity
- recorded by the Rangers in a site map and supporting table – this must be formally agreed with the group.

Priorities

Each site has its priorities depending on the range and extent of each habitat type:

- **Grassland management regimes** - mowing (timing and frequency), scarifying (timing), invasives control
- **Woodland management regimes** - coppicing, path clearing, invasives removal, felling & managing its consequences, managing arisings
- **Scrub & clump management regimes** - limiting spread, thinning, maintaining balance & managing arisings
- **Hedgerow management regimes** – trimming, live laying, recreating dead hedging
- **Wetland management** – pond and stream edge maintenance, invasives management and managing arisings
- **Seeding & planting projects** – seed harvesting periods, seed processing and storage, seed sowing periods.

The medium-term Site Management Plan should indicate clearly the long-term priorities for good management. But.....how are these translated into short term priorities, which actions can be left for a year...2 years... 3 years and what are the consequences?

Site Management Plans/ Annual Work plans are driven by habitat type and key species on site.

Priorities – Timeframes and consequences

Deterioration will be evident if management actions are not taken within the timeframes below:

- **Grassland management regimes** - mowing (1-2 years), scarifying* (3-5 years), invasives (2-4 years)
- **Woodland management regimes** - coppicing cycle (8-16 years), path clearing (annual), invasives (2-4 years), felling (20-40 years)
- **Scrub & clump management regimes** – spread (2 -4 years), thinning (5-10 years), balance (3-8 years)
- **Hedgerow management regimes** – trimming (1-2 years), live laying (15-20 years), dead hedging (3-4 years)
- **Wetland management** - banks (2-4 years), invasives (2-3 years)
- **Seeding and planting projects** - seed harvesting/ seed sowing depend upon many factors (see NB 'Flora identification, seed harvesting, storage and sowing manual' for more information) .

When intervention lapses for longer than suggested above, recovery will take twice or three times as much effort to return to a good state of habitat management. Example – Mill Field Dogwood invasion!

**Note: Scarifying - Depends on type of grass, for example, downland turf may not need scarifying .*

Critical bottlenecks:

- Mowing – timing & extent (dependence on BDBC' mowing resources and weather).
- Felling – timing & extent (dependence on BDBC' chainsaw operators).
- Seeding – where the site is dependent on BDBC' herbiciding (rare) and scarifying/rotovating prior to seeding
- Arisings management – where the site is dependent on BDBC' removal of arisings or, chipping material on site.

Planning to alleviate them:

- Plan 'B' - if not now, when..... if not all, how much.....if not this way, what way.....?
- Additional volunteer resource – external sources of volunteer labour.
- Additional tools and operators – resourced within NB.

RESOURCING ACTION PLANS: PRIORITISING, IDENTIFYING CRITICAL BOTTLENECKS (3A)

Bottleneck	If not now – when?	If not all - how much?	If not thus – how?
Felling	Can be done any time in work season (Oct-Mar)	Prioritise: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - diseased & dangerous trees - ‘work area obstructions’. 	Some issues can be managed by coppicing or brush cutting.
Arisings Management	Chipping – Can be done any time in work season (Oct-Mar – but ideally early)	Prioritise: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ‘work area obstructions’ - by condition of paths. 	Re-use materials for dead hedging where possible.
	Sacrifice area clearance – Can be done any time in summer season (June-Aug – but species dependant.)	Escalation to Rangers to prioritise critical sites.	Use grass cuttings for habitat creation.

RESOURCING ACTION PLANS: PRIORITISING, IDENTIFYING CRITICAL BOTTLENECKS (3B)

Bottleneck	If not now – when?	If not all - how much?	If not thus – how?
Mowing	<p>Rangers can consider early cuts in critical areas – discuss during site visit.</p> <p>Late cut may be possible if there is a dry spell November/ December.</p>	Prioritise by grassland quality	Brush cutting on lower quality grassland.
Seeding: - Brush harvesting - Scarification - Seed sowing	<p>Brush harvesting - Can be done any time in summer season (end Jun-end September)</p> <p>Scarifying – No fall back as linked to seeding..</p> <p>Seed sowing - Can be done any time between Sept-Nov</p>	<p>Brush harvesting – Not an issue (resilience in our seed stock).</p> <p>Scarifying – No fall back as linked to seeding.</p> <p>Seed sowing – prioritise by grassland quality</p>	<p>Brush harvesting – Manual harvest.</p> <p>Scarifying – Manual.</p> <p>Seed sowing – No alternative.</p>

RESOURCING ACTION PLANS: PRIORITISING, IDENTIFYING CRITICAL BOTTLENECKS (4)

Period being planned	Volunteer activities	Shared Resource	Coordination with Rangers	Adding 3 rd Party Resources
April	2 weeks catch up + Planning/ Training	Ideas/ expertise from other groups	Feedback to Rangers.	Third party sources of info (e.g., HIWWT)
Summer (May – Sept)	Summer activity programme	Promotional events/ equipment	Mowing Schedule (planning and execution).	BDBC contractor appointment.
Autumn/ Winter (Oct-Dec)	Work Party Programme – Part 1	Tools & operators	Mowing Schedule status/ Seeding prep (scarifying).	Use of corporates/ community payback.
Winter/ Spring (Jan-March)	Work Party Programme – Part 2	Tools & operators	Chipping & chip supply schedule	Use of corporates/ community payback.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE: VOLUNTEERS

Resource	Pros	Cons	Good for...
Corporate Work Parties	High attendee numbers Good PR opportunity	Experience Need supervision Weekdays only	Resource intensive activity
Community Groups (youth/ adult)	Enthusiasm Good PR opportunity	Experience, & capability Focus Need supervision	Group promotion
Community Payback	High attendee numbers Fitness	Experience & motivation Need <u>conservation</u> supervision Constraints on what they are permitted to do Organising (planning, scheduling, timing)	Heavy unskilled work
BCV	Experience Competence	Charge (per person per day) BDBC approval needed Weekends only	Plugging capability gaps

Case studies:

- Marnel & Popley Group – Corporate Work Parties
- Kempshott (Orchard) Group/ Chineham Group – Community Groups
- Community Payback
- BCV



Group Management & Planning Workshop

Part 2

Possible topics:

1. *Habitat management*
2. *Planning work*
3. *Running work parties*
4. *Recruitment, resources and equipment*
5. *Knowledge and skills*
6. *Publicity, communication and events*
7. *Group administration*

- Facilitated discussion/ break-out groups:
 - What issues is your group experiencing?
 - What potential solutions are available?
 - What support/ solutions can your group offer to others?
- Session wash-up and actions.

