

## **Report on works undertaken at Poles Coppice Countryside Heritage Site**

### **Shropshire Council Outdoor Partnerships Team**

#### **Introduction**

Poles Coppice Countryside Heritage site is a 30 hectare Countryside Heritage Site located approximately 1km to the south-west of Pontesbury.

Quarrying has taken place on site since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and only ended in 1971. The ancient woodland is dominated by sessile and hybrid oak with occasional silver and downy birch and rowan. There are wonderful views across the Shropshire hills, endless possibilities for walking, car parks and a picnic area

Under the Stiperstones and Corndon Landscape Partnership Scheme, the site benefitted from woodland management work, habitat conservation tasks and access improvements. That grant-funded programme of work finished in March 2018.

#### **Site management**

The site is managed by the Shropshire Council Outdoor Partnerships Team. Overall site management, managing contractors and budget management is the responsibility of the Country Parks and Heritage Sites Officer for the southern area. Volunteer work parties are held monthly on site and are led by the Volunteer Ranger Co-ordinator. The Volunteer Ranger Co-ordinator brings skills and expertise in practical site management and also brings tools and equipment for the work days.

#### **Tasks undertaken**

Scrub regrowth in the quarries have been cut back to keep the open glade areas, with benefits for wildflowers and other wildlife



The cut material has been used, with help from the Pontesbury P3 group, to create a dead hedge around the top of the smallest quarry. This was a task that was agreed at the last parish council site meeting. Through the winter months, the dead hedge will be added to with arisings from site management work.



In time the plan is to improve species diversity in the quarries by 'green hay strewing'. This is a method of introducing wildflower seed from other meadows.

### **Woodland management**

The oak woodland on site has traditionally been managed through coppicing. Now that there is an up-to-date site management plan, we are aiming to enter the site into stewardship to help fund regular woodland management work to help improve the biodiversity value of the woodland. Tasks will include managing the rides and glades and coppicing the over-stood parts of the site. Some areas will be left as minimum intervention and others will be re-coppiced. The overall aim is to create a woodland with a varied age-structure. This allows light into the woodland and encourages the growth of ground flora, attracting other wildlife. Some woodland management work will be undertaken this winter with the volunteers.

### **Public events**

Public events are a great way of getting people engaged with the site and interested in wildlife and conservation.

Three Bat walks have been carried out for scout groups to educate them about the importance conservation efforts for bats and how correct woodland management can help their numbers.

The scouts will be producing bat boxes that will go up around the site.

The final piece of good news is that a group from Mary Webb School will soon be starting to carry out practical conservation work regularly on site.

### **Land ownership**

At the November 2018 parish council meeting that Edward Andrews attended, a parcel of land was highlighted where land ownership was in question. We are still pursuing investigations into this. It does appear that it was originally included in the Poles Coppice lease in the 1930s but current ownership and management is still unclear.

### **A big thank-you!**

Thanks to Pontesbury Parish Council for your support with the management of Poles Coppice. Any questions about site management, please contact Edward Andrews (Country Parks and Heritage Sites Officer) or Lee Fraser (Volunteer Ranger co-ordinator)

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