



*What areas are eligible for scoring using the Scrub/Woodland Scorecard?*

Any area of scrub or (non-forestry) woodland that is greater than 0.2ha that is designated as Special Protection Area (SPA) is eligible to be scored for the Hen Harrier Programme. Areas that score 3 or less will not be eligible for payment.

*When should scoring be carried out?*

Fields must be scored between <sup>May</sup> 15<sup>th</sup> and July 31<sup>st</sup> in any given year.

\*Note that scores must be submitted to the Hen Harrier Project team on or before July 31<sup>st</sup> to be eligible for payment

*Walking the field*

Scrub and woodland areas have been identified from aerial photographs and so any differences on the ground (merging/ dividing fields, incorrect habitat assigned etc.) must be noted and submitted to the HHP Project Officer.

To score the unit, walk around the unit to assess the species present in it and to assess the overall structure. If there are pathways through the scrub/woodland they should also be walked to assess threats to the site.

If discrete areas within a management unit look likely to differ by one or more score, mark these areas on the map. The overall score should be calculated for the entire management unit, if necessary considering the proportion of higher/lower scoring areas within the unit.

*Time Allocation*

Make sure you allow sufficient time for carrying out the assessments. It will probably take longer than you think the first time you assess a field but will become faster as you become more familiar with the assessment criteria and the individual farms.

*Comments/recommendations*

Note any comments or management actions in the box provided on the sheet which may be useful to the farmer as management advice to improve score, should they wish to do so. Management actions may include increase or decrease in stocking rate, scrub removal, weed control or removal or change in location of supplementary feeding areas.

*Calculating the HHP Scrub/Woodland score*

Add up all marks awarded for Section A (A.1) and Section B (B.1 to B.3) to get the score for the management unit. If a score totals a half point e.g. 5.5, then the field should receive a score of 6.

**Section A. Ecological Integrity Assessment**

Section A assesses the current situation in the field in relation to the ecological integrity of the site.

A.1. What is the scrub/woodland diversity and structure?

The more diverse the scrub or woodland, the higher the contribution to plant diversity and the more habitats available to small birds in the local area. Woodland refers only to non-commercial forestry.

*Guidance for scoring A.1*

Identify areas labelled on the farm plan as scrub/woodland. To score these areas, walk around the perimeter of the unit to assess the species present in it and to assess the overall structure. Be sure to read through the description of scrub and woodland carefully and score the correct one. Woodland is not a key target of the HHP, but it is an important farmland biodiversity feature and so the maximum score it can receive is 80 out of 100. See below for details.

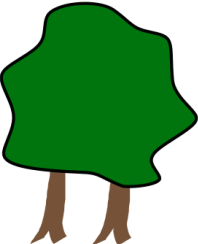
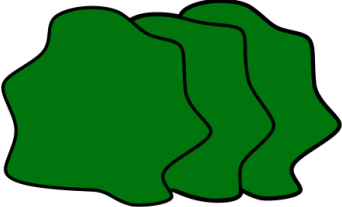
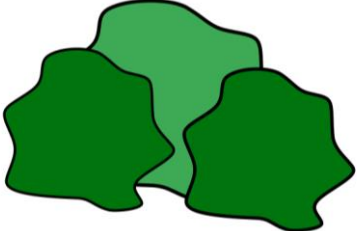
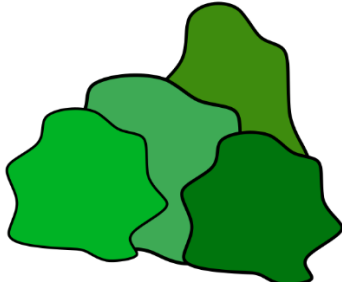
A1.	Structure profile	Diversity and structure
Poor		One species only Open structure without a significant shrub layer, exposed base unsuitable for nesting birds Gorse dominated Homogenous shape
Moderate		One species only Vegetated base suitable for nesting birds Gorse dominated Homogenous shape
Good		Two species Vegetated base suitable for nesting birds Not gorse dominated Heterogenous shape Emergent trees may be present
Excellent		Three or more species Vegetated base suitable for nesting birds Heterogenous shape  Emergent trees are not positive as 1) they offer a vantage point for Hooded Crow and 2) they indicate succession from scrub to woodland.

Table 1. Scrub structure and diversity

*Management advice*

Where large areas of gorse occur consider whether cutting rides through the scrub might be a suitable supporting action.

Where structurally diverse areas of scrub have numerous emergent trees and may be transitioning to woodland consider removing the emergent trees (felling license exemption applies). Also consider coppicing some areas if required.



## **Section B. Threats and Future Prospects Assessment**

Section B assesses threats to the ecological integrity of the field. It also considers issues that will result in a further degradation of the ecological integrity if they persist.

### **B.1 Bare soil and erosion**

The soil integrity of a site is important as these have potential to contribute to pollution of nearby water sources particularly where there is bare soil or damage.

#### *Guidance for scoring B.1*

As you walk the site make regular notes where you see bare soil patches and possible causes. Bare soil outside of trackways or damage caused by vehicles should be noted. Excessive poaching should also be noted. Any of these in isolation will result in poor score.

### **B.2 Damaging activities, e.g. Dumping and burning.**

Scrub and Woodland can be damaged by dumping/ burning or supplementary feeding. Consider controlling (not necessarily stopping livestock access if they are causing excessive damage to the herb and shrub layer. Be aware that cattle and ponies will shelter in scrub/ eat vegetation and damage the shrub layer. Ponies and Donkeys can eat the bark of Gorse and other scrub plants and break up scrub patches if they are short of food. The risk of this is particularly high in the winter/ early spring period.

If passage through scrub is restricted to narrow channels it can contribute to localised damage to soil structure.

#### *Guidance for scoring B.2.*

As you assess the species present, the general structure and bare soil and erosion also keep an eye out for dumping, burning or any other damaging activities. Where they are present they will have a big impact on the score.

Advise participants to remove dumped material, cease burning, cease supplementary feeding. Coppice emergent trees in the winter (Sept- Feb). Cut material can be allowed to decay naturally. Participants in the Hen Harrier Programme are covered by a general derogation from the requirement for a tree felling licence in this situation.

### **B.3 Presence of Invasive species i.e. Rhododendron, Japanese Knotweed etc.**

Invasive alien plant species compete with native plants and compromise the available habitat for insect, small birds and mammals.

#### *Guidance for scoring B.3.*

Familiarise yourself with Rhododendron, Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam and note where it occurs if you see it in the field.

Invasive alien species such as Giant Hogweed, Montbretia, Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed can have a serious impact on ecosystems. Removal strategies depend on the species involved and the



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extent of the problem. In serious cases and in all cases involving Japanese Knotweed or in close to watercourses specialist advice should be sought.

Giant Hogweed can be controlled by spraying with a herbicide, remember that the sap can cause serious damage to unprotected skin. It is a biennial and the first-year plant is small and can easily be dealt with by herbicide applications. The 2<sup>nd</sup> year or flowering stage can be difficult where growth is dense or in difficult to reach sites such as river banks. Physical control such as cutting can be considered after appropriate planning and the use of protective clothing and eye protection.

Himalayan Balsam is a garden escape that has explosive seed pods which scatter their contents if touched. Often found by watercourses complicating planning for removal.

Japanese Knotweed is capable of propagation from very small pieces or root and stem. Cutting increases the risk of spread. Often found along roadsides or watercourses. Can even be found on bog roads where contaminated soil was used as fill. Management is often made more difficult when it is established beside watercourses. Control requires specialist advice.