

**Lydebrook Dingle SSSI
Woodland Improvement Grant Project 2009 – notes**

Introduction

Lydebrook Dingle SSSI is a narrow, steep-sided wooded dingle. The Lyde Brook is a tributary to the River Severn and runs through the dingle. Three distinct types of woodland vegetation dominate the woodland:

- i) Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and Wych Elm *Ulmus glabra*,
- ii) Oak *Quercus petraea* and Birch *Betula pendula*, and
- iii) Alder *Alnus glutinosa*.

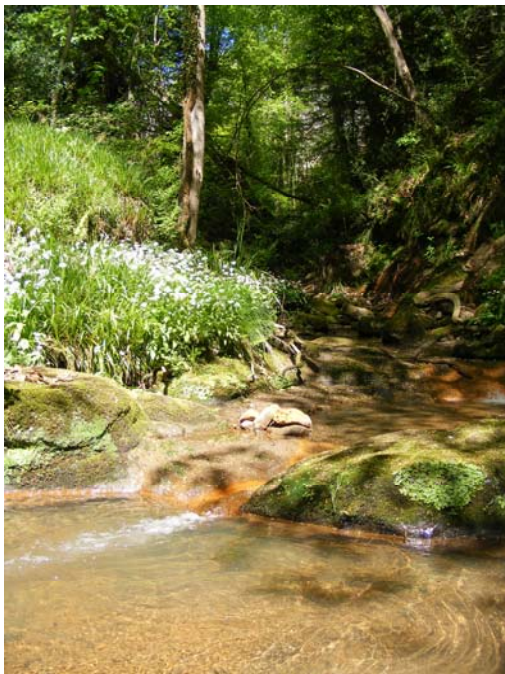
The “Endangered” *Lipsothrix nigristigma* (a crane fly – pictured right) is just one of the notable species of interest to be found on this site. *L. nigristigma* is a saproxylic invertebrate therefore is dependent for part of its lifecycle on dead or decaying wood.



Woodland monitoring

Monitoring on behalf of SGCT, by independent contractors, has shown that the Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* is one of the very few tree species currently regenerating naturally on this site. Sycamore and Beech *Fagus sylvatica* are both able to regenerate in low levels of light under the canopy and are out-competing the regeneration of native tree species to this area of the country. Throughout the woodland there is little natural regeneration of native tree species of more than one year old. A

recent deer survey of SGCT sites has concluded that a further pressure placed on natural regeneration in Lydebrook Dingle is that of browsing by Fallow Deer *Dama dama*.



Description of proposed project

The proposed programme of works includes the erection and maintenance of a deer enclosure (within compartment 1f), covering 0.5-1.0 hectare, constructed using temporary black plastic deer fencing with gates incorporated for maintenance work and public access. Badger gates will also be included where necessary.

The enclosed area will be monitored and naturally regenerated native species identified. These will be encouraged to grow with the addition of Mypex mulch mats around their bases which will deter competitive weed growth; if rabbit browsing is likely, then clear plastic tree guards will be necessary. The

areas will also be monitored for more vigorous competitive weed growth in the form of bramble and bracken and mechanical control initiated if necessary. Similarly any Sycamore regeneration in the form of seedlings will be removed in preference for more typical native species i.e. Oak, Ash.

If natural regeneration is successfully established, at an appropriate point in time (approximately year 2 or 3), a small scale thinning of trees both inside and outside the enclosure will take place to ensure sufficient light stimulus is available to the young trees. This will follow SGCT Continuous Cover Forestry principles retaining standing and fallen deadwood, and promote veteran tree development principally in the form of Oak seed trees. Thinning will favour Oak and better formed Ash stems; and wherever suitable remove Sycamore and Beech.

In a joint aim to lower the presence of Sycamore in the canopy, and increase levels of dead and decaying wood in and around the Lyde Brook, a low intensity thinning programme is proposed that focuses on Sycamore removal with subsequent stump treatment to prevent any re-growth. The operation would principally be conducted on foot by chainsaw operators with felled trees left in-situ. Stems would be left wherever possible full length, felled upstream and left attached to stumps to prevent them being washed downstream.



Currently there is only one right of way serving Lydebrook Dingle in the form of a public footpath (part of the Shropshire Way) located in the far south of the site. Much of the dingle is quite inaccessible to all but the most adventurous with steep sides and poor soils.

The principal route of access for management works on foot is a narrow slippery track into the centre of the dingle which crosses a series of small streams and waterfalls. It is proposed to formalise this principal working access route for woodland operations providing a safe access and exit from the work site with wooden steps and boardwalks equating to a distance of approximately 500m.

Funding

This project is funded by the Forestry Commission's Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG), which funds capital investment in woodlands, over an agreed period, to create, enhance and sustain an increase in the quantity and quality of public benefits delivered.



The project has been approved by Natural England.

Details of proposed work

- Manually cut holly understorey within the proposed enclosure area and mulch outside of the enclosure area.
- Manually cut sycamore within and adjacent to the proposed enclosure. Also manually cut other selected trees along the boundary of the proposed deer enclosure to minimise probability of future failures damaging the fence.
- Erection and maintenance of a deer enclosure (within compartment 1f), covering 0.75-1.0 hectare, constructed using temporary black plastic deer fencing with gates incorporated for maintenance work and public access (see map below).
- Install access gates (x3) in the perimeter of the deer enclosure.
- Install gates to allow badgers occupying setts in the adjacent woodland to enter and exit the deer enclosure.
- Cut, clear and reprofile seasonal working routes.
- Formalise working access route for woodland operations with steps and boardwalks equating to a distance of approximately 500m.
- Selective felling of sycamore and beech within the dingle to reduce their presence in the canopy. Achieved where necessary via climbing and section-felling to protect adjacent natural regeneration. Felled stems to be left in-situ to increase the level of dead and decaying wood.
- Application of chemical stump treatment to felled sycamore.
- Protect natural regeneration and suppress weed competition through selection of stems and placement of 1m square biodegradable mats around base. Where necessary, stems shall also be protected from rabbit browsing by tree shelters.
- In a bid to manage light levels reaching the forest floor i.e. controlling bramble and bracken whilst facilitating natural regeneration of trees, selective thinning will be carried out. This will be achieved via a sensitive approach i.e. climbing and section-felling to protect the naturally regenerated trees, within and immediately adjacent to the deer enclosure to gradually increase levels of light reaching the ground. Favour oak and ash ahead of sycamore, sweet chestnut and birch. Felled material to be left on site in a safe position to increase the level of dead and decaying wood.
- Carry out an annual inspection of the deer fence and carry out any repair works if necessary.



Please note: no improvements will be made to access to the “waterfalls” (in compartment 1b). This footpath here is currently steep and can be slippery but it was decided to keep this area as “wild” as possible, and avoid adding steps or boardwalks to it. A 360 degree panoramic photo of this area can be seen on our website at <http://www.severngorge.org.uk/media/SGCT%20gallery/virtual%20tours/06.html>.

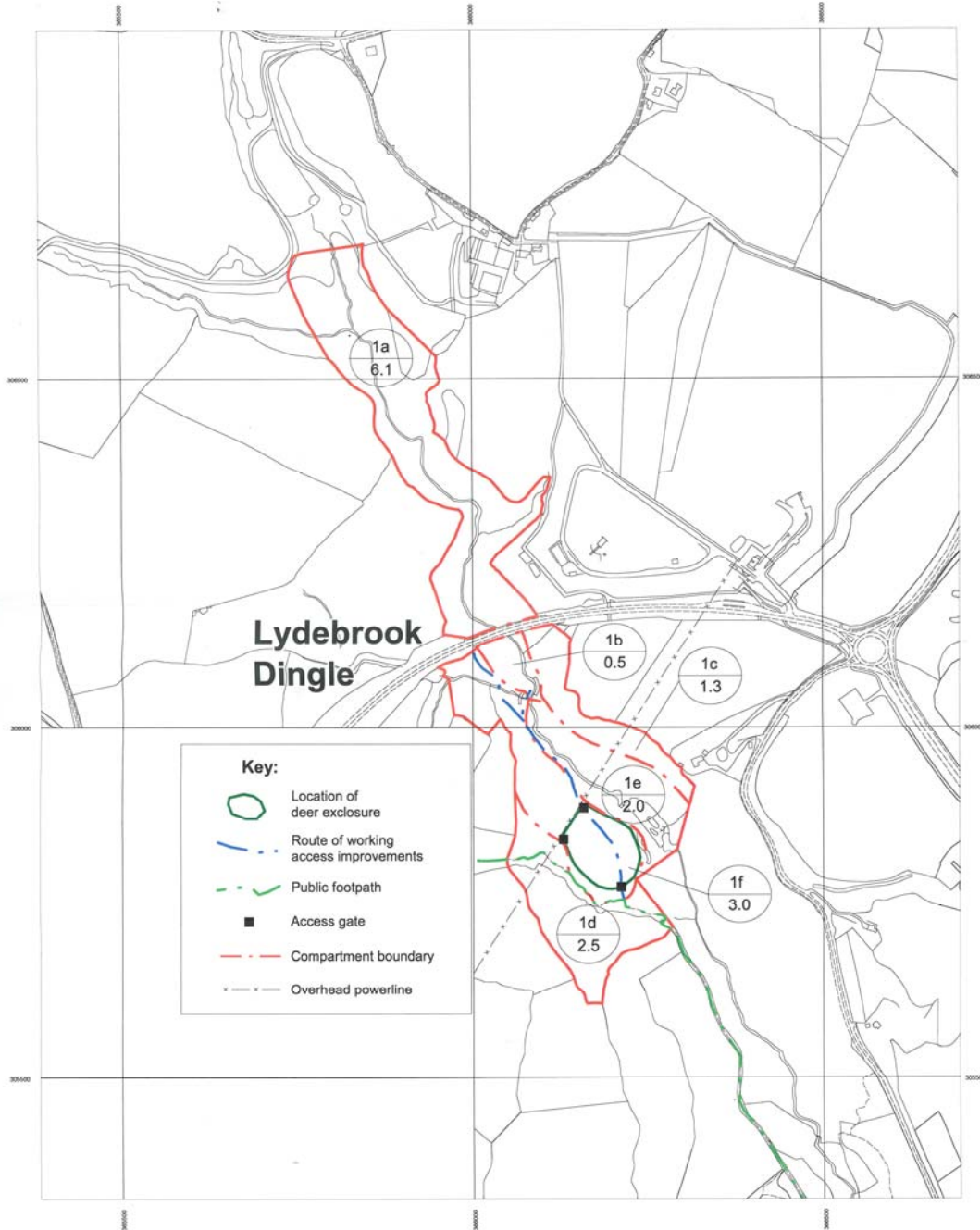
Map of site and proposed work

Severn Gorge Countryside Trust

Woodland Improvement Grant application - Compartments 1a 1b 1c 1e 1f

Scale 1:5000

Severn Gorge
COUNTRYSIDE
Trust



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