

## New Forest Land Advice Service

providing independent land management  
advice across the New Forest and Avon Valley

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire, SO41 9ZG

7<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Dear Mr Smith,

**Re: Blackwell Forest, Chapel Lane, Langley SO45 1YX**

Thank you for inviting me to give nature conservation and best practice land management advice to you in your small woodland in Blackfield last week which you acquired earlier this year in March.

I am pleased to give you best practice management advice, particularly focused on nature conservation, for the woodland and happy to continue to work with you if you have further questions or require more assistance.

The woodland is situated immediately adjacent to the New Forest SSSI and is therefore in a very important location, providing a natural buffer between the highly valuable habitats of the open heathland and the urban area of Blackfield.

**Non-native plants**

You have already carried out a significant amount of *Rhododendron ponticum* clearance. This is to be encouraged as it is a non-native invasive shrub which is extremely detrimental to woodlands and other habitats in the UK for a variety of reasons. It is very important that non-native plants do not spread from your land into the New Forest SSSI and by removing them from your woodland you are ensuring this does not happen. I would recommend removal over the winter period, outside the bird breeding season (September to end February) in order to minimise disturbance.

In your woodland the presence of the *Rhododendron* has prevented any natural regeneration, putting the woodland at risk in future. There is now no shrub layer or understorey to the woodland and very little herb layer. Therefore your intervention will have a positive impact on the woodland if it is now managed the right way into the future under your stewardship. With increased light levels you should start to see some recovery although you will have to continue to manage the regrowth of the non-native plants you have removed.

You have created a 'dead hedge' with the arisings and this may help to deter deer, to some extent, from entering the woodland which could be an advantage as the woodland enters a much needed regeneration phase.

There is still more to remove and also some *Prunus laurocerasus*, or Cherry Laurel, which I would recommend also gets removed as soon as possible before the start of the bird breeding season next March.

I would recommend that you allow regrowth to grow for a full year and knock it back during the second summer using a foliar herbicide. This needs to be done very carefully so as not to affect other vegetation in the woodland. A contractor with particular expertise who we have used many times is Matt Cheetham at SC Forestry [www.scforestry.co.uk](http://www.scforestry.co.uk) and I would suggest you

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might like to get a quote from him next summer to spray any regrowth of Rhododendron and Laurel.

I would also recommend that you fell the non-native cedars that you have in the woodland. SC Forestry would also quote for that. The main reason for this is to let some light in through the canopy of the woodland which is very dense in most areas. Rather than remove a small number of oak trees over time, which may still be necessary in future in order to create a healthy woodland, it makes sense to start with the non-native trees you have in there. It is important that your woodland, however small, has openings in the canopy to create glades and corridors of light penetrating to the ground. This will encourage growth of native woodland flora and attract invertebrates such as butterflies.

The bamboo growing from your neighbour is very invasive. It will be impossible to eradicate it without a coordinated approach with him. If you can acquire his agreement I would recommend you ask Matt Cheetham to look at it if you ask him to visit and quote for the various work we have discussed. As it is next to a watercourse any use of chemicals will need to be carefully monitored and may need Environment Agency consent which the contractor will need to seek.

#### Hazel coppicing

We talked about you carrying out some coppicing to your hazel. This should be done on rotation so that some is done each year rather than all at once. We discussed the issue of deer browsing which commonly kills off hazel when it has been coppiced if the stumps are not protected. We talked about temporary internal fencing around coppiced areas and I offered to take you to a woodland near Lymington where we have done this. Please let me know if you would like to go and have a look. I would not recommend putting up deer fencing around the perimeter of your woodland but instead protecting areas from deer damage through temporary measures. If you decide to do this you can monitor how the vegetation recovers within the fenced area compared to an unfenced area adjacent and this will give you some indication as to the impacts deer are having there.

#### Holly

You have removed some holly from the understorey of the woodland in order to help with light levels. I would recommend that you retain some holly across the woodland as it is a valuable native woodland shrub. However, where you have dense stands of holly you could thin it out and perhaps pollard some plants above the height of a deer's reach.

#### Tree/shrub planting

We discussed your thoughts about planting trees in the woodland. My advice would be to wait for a few years until the ground has recovered from the rhododendron removal and you can see how well the woodland is naturally regenerating. In the meantime you could grow on some acorns in pots with a view to planting them out, protected from deer, in future if the woodland needs a helping hand to regenerate. After a few years if there is little sign of the shrub layer or saplings coming up you could put in a few native understorey trees such as hawthorn and rowan. I can help guide you with this nearer the time.

The possible exception to this is the boundary of the woodland with the road. Once you have removed the non-natives a long that edge you could plant a row of native trees, protected by guards; we discussed the value of *Tilia cordata*, the Small-leaved Lime, for example, although there are several native trees which would attract wildlife which you could choose from.

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/british-trees/a-z-of-british-trees/small-leaved-lime/>

All advice given by NFLAS is done so in good faith and every effort is made to ensure that it is accurate and appropriate. However it is the sole responsibility of the landowner/land manager to ensure that any actions they take are both legally and contractually compliant. Therefore, NFLAS does not accept responsibility or liability for any losses incurred or arising from the advice we give.

In addition we discussed that you would like to plant a screen, or woodland edge hedgerow, along the boundary with the New Forest SSSI. As it is very shaded I would recommend you plant hazel, hawthorn, holly and hornbeam. I can't guarantee they will all survive but it's worth a try. They will need to be protected from deer using tree guards. We use these as they have a lower carbon footprint than the standard tubes, allow better ventilation, are more wind resistant and are more friendly to wildlife which can escape if they get inside.

<https://www.farmforestry.co.uk/tree-shelters-and-guards/fine-mesh-shelters/continental-fine-mesh-shelters>

### Seeding

I would not recommend adding any more seed to the woodland. My preference would be to allow natural regeneration to occur. This will happen in time if there is enough light coming through the canopy. The removal of non-natives and holly that you have already done, and will continue to do, plus some hazel coppicing will help to encourage this natural process.

### Consents and licences

In order to take timber out of the woodland you may need to gain permission from one or more authorities. You are able to remove up to 5 cubic metres per calendar quarter but any more than that requires a Felling Licence from the Forestry Commission. You can find out more here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-felling-licence-when-you-need-to-apply>

You are in the New Forest District Council area, not New Forest National Park. I would recommend you alert the Tree Team at the Council about any management activity you have planned so that they can issue you with any necessary advice and consents in advance.

### Public awareness

As you are adjacent to an urban area and also have a well used track running along one end of the woodland which people use to access the New Forest SSSI, it will be prudent to keep people informed of activity in the woodland so that they understand what management you are undertaking and why. This will help to prevent any unnecessary complaints in future. I suggest putting a notice up on the gate in advance of any non-native removal, tree felling, burning of brash, changes to fencing etc which explains that you are managing the woodland for wildlife and gives reasons for your activity. If you have received permissions for the work e.g. a felling licence, you can also state that in your notice.

Please do contact me if you have any further questions or would like any further guidance.

Yours sincerely

Julie Melin-Stubbs  
New Forest Land Advice Service Manager

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