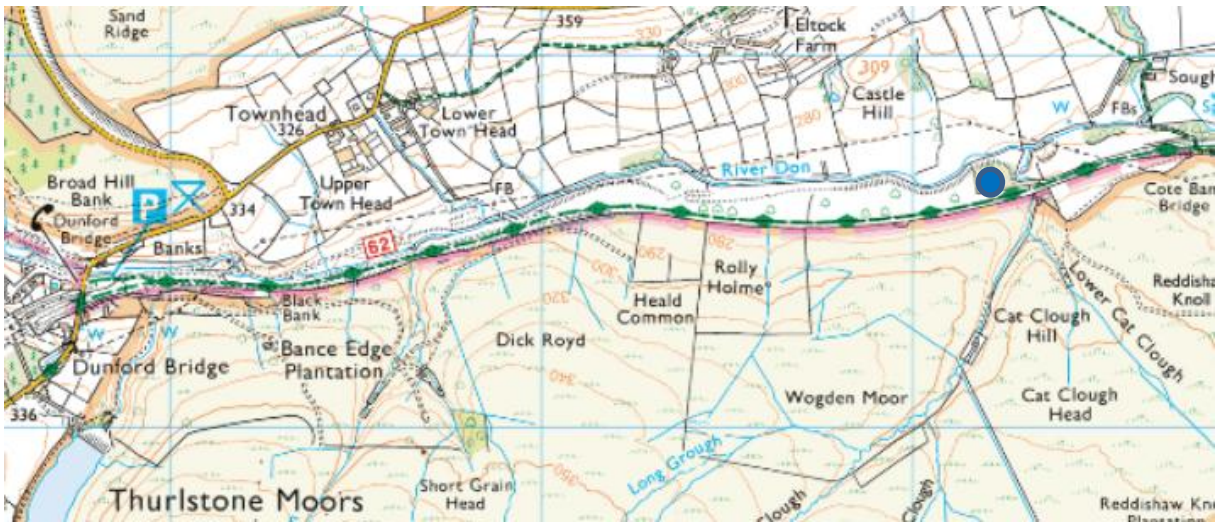
National Grid Visual Impact Provision – Peak District East

Potential Areas for Willow Tit Enhancement in the East of Wogden Foot Local Wildlife Site

Following discussions at the meeting held with Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC) and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT) at Potteric Carr on the 10th March 2020, opportunities to enhance the existing habitats for willow tit (*Poecile montanus*) within the eastern part of Wogden Foot Local Wildlife Site (LWS) along the River Don corridor have been further considered. The River Don corridor has been the main focus when seeking areas/sites where enhancement or habitat creation measures for willow tit could be achieved as part of the Proposed Project. This is in addition to the mitigation measures included in the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) submitted as part of the planning application.

General Location:



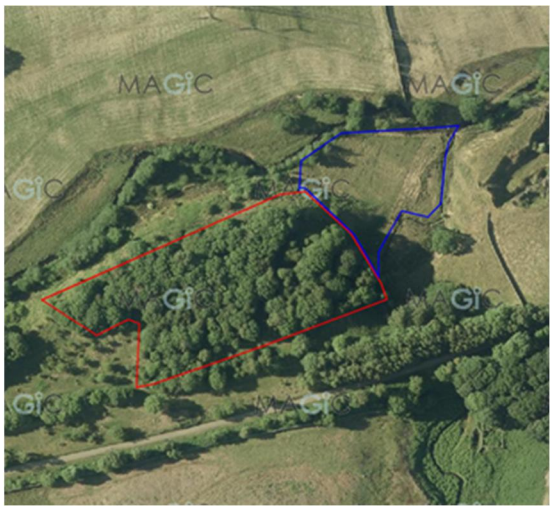
Location within Wodgen Foot LWS:



Areas Proposed

Two areas located in the eastern extent of Wogden Foot LWS (as shown on the plan overleaf) were identified as offering the potential to enhance existing scrub habitat for willow tit (the Red area) and create additional willow tit habitat (the Blue area). These areas were identified due to their location and topography offering suitable opportunities to enhance and strengthen the habitat corridor along the River Don for future use and colonisation of the local area by willow tit and other bird species.

Specific Areas Proposed:



The higher-level principles of the proposed enhancement of these two areas would be as follows:

1) Red Area – Enhancement of Habitat for Willow Tit

This area comprises approximately 0.8ha of dense hawthorn and blackthorn dominated scrub, currently with negligible understorey due to access by sheep grazing this out. It is proposed that this area could be enhanced for willow tit by excluding grazing and selectively thinning out some of the current scrub to allow light into the under/ground storey. This would over time allow the understory layer to develop and provide enhanced foraging and nesting opportunities. The scale of thinning and period over which it is undertaken would be matters of detail to be agreed with BMBC and YWT. Installation of dead wood stumps/sections attached to existing mature scrub/tree would also be beneficial. Again the number, locations and any maintenance of wood stumps/sections would be matters of detail to be agreed with BMBC and YWT. Partial fencing is present along the north and eastern boundaries of this area therefore stock fencing on the southern and western boundaries to enclose it would be undertaken (access gates could be installed within the fencing for maintenance as required).

2) Blue Area – Proposed Willow Tit Focussed Planting

This area equates to approximately 0.3ha of low-lying grassland bordered by the River Don and a tributary. It is proposed that tree and shrub planting is undertaken in this area focussed on providing suitable habitat requirements for willow tit. The key principles of the proposed planting are:

- Species – planting would involve a suitable mix of native species appropriate to the local setting and environmental conditions; likely to include elder (*Sambucus nigra*), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), willow (*Salix* sp.), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*).
- Density - approximately 2m to 3m spacing to allow future growth of the understorey – i.e. to allow light to get between the plantings over time.
- Protection - trees would be provided with tree guards and stock fencing used where necessary; there may also be a requirement for rabbit proof netting to be installed.
- Deadwood stumps could also be provided to act as nesting habitat – these could be free-standing, or sections could be attached to existing trees/mature scrub.
- An ecologist will oversee the initial planting phase, with future management and monitoring undertaken for the period committed to within the Outline LEMP for all on-site created/restored habitats.

The grassland was identified as being of semi improved (acidic in nature) grassland by AECOM in the Phase 1 habitat surveys conducted in the original stage of the project. Having reviewed the LWS citation report, it appears that the Blue Area is not specifically included within the LWS boundary. Land ownership has been confirmed through the land registry for the Title Number SYK390524 (as shown in Appendix A below) which is the same Title number as that for the remainder of Wogden Foot LWS. Confirmation of this ownership by Barnsley Council and whether this area is considered outside of the LWS is requested, though the latter does not negate progression of the proposed tree and shrub planting in this area. It is proposed that a botanical survey would be undertaken as part of the pre-construction works phase to establish the grassland condition in the Blue Area and confirm that it is only low wildlife value and a suitable area for planting.

If the above enhancement measures are agreeable in principle with stakeholders (BMBC and YWT), they would be presented within a short addendum report (to append the Outline LEMP) and would be submitted along with the updated biodiversity net gain proposals to Barnsley Council in mid-April. We are also therefore seeking agreement in principle from BMBC and YWT to the inclusion of both the Red and Blue Area in the Outline LEMP addendum. Detailed information such as the planting specification, fencing location, specification and level of thinning, etc., would be included as part of a final LEMP.

The above measures would be commissioned and funded by National Grid alongside other measures in the LEMP, and formalised as part of the land agreements between Barnsley Council and National Grid.

Appendix A - Title Number SYK390524 – map insert extracted from LandRegistry.gov.uk

