

Scrub Removal Strips (Hand Tools)

Objective

To encourage the removal of scrub species in a linear manner i.e., scrub paths or scrub bands which are encroaching out from established scrub patches or to remove such scrub which is hindering livestock access to grazeable areas. The removal of scrub for the purpose of increasing the edge effect of the scrub grassland interface and to provide hunting opportunities for Hen Harriers and other birds of prey may also be desirable.

Background

Scrub encroachment can greatly alter local biodiversity, impact on archaeological and geological features, and restrict animal and human movement. The removal of scrub from certain species rich habitats can be vital where there is a threat to the habitat. Scrub paths are linear features where the aim of the scrub removal is to link up grazable areas through patches of scrub or woodland. Scrub bands are essentially linear areas of scrub i.e., the removal of band of scrub along the edges of a mature woodland or established scrub where the established scrub and woodland are not to be removed.

Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on Burren Aran CP parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the ACRES contract.
- On Burren Aran CP Parcels, this action can only be selected on fields with the following scorecards submitted: Grassland, Winterage and Scrub/Woodland.
- This action can be considered on CP parcels that have:
 - Fields with significant amounts of scrub encroaching onto fields of grassland with more than five positive indicator species.
 - Scrub interfering with the structure of walls or fences used for stock management of a priority habitat.
- Areas of mature woodland where the ground flora has changed from being grassland dominated species must not be removed.
- Where scrub removal is recommended in a Winterage field, it will be important that any proposed work is properly planned out by the participant and the advisor in to ensure it is appropriate and permissible.
- Scrub Removal Strips should only be selected on Scrub/Woodland scorecard to create paths to facilitate movement of livestock through areas.
- Scrub cutting should not be planned within 10 metres of a watercourse or waterbody to reduce the risk of nutrient export.
- Where stone walls are in need of repair, and are not accessible due to presence of scrub, Burren Aran CP Participants can apply for NPI Scrub Removal Hand Tools.

It is important to determine the cover within the linear strip and select the appropriate NPI on GLAM (2m or 4m strip, high or low cover). Selection must be based on percentage cover as outlined in Table 20. below. Lengths which are deemed to be incorrect will be rejected by the CP team at the screening stage. If some lengths are rejected after site visit, the CP team can resubmit the proposed scrub removal works as part of a Landscape Action- Annual Works plan.

Table 20. Percentage Cover of Scrub Strips

NPI Label on GLAM	Description
Strip 2m Scrub Removal Hand Tools High	At least 2m wide scrub path must be cut. Over 50% of the 2m path is removable scrub. Open, grassy path needs 1m of scrub removal on both sides.
Strip 2m Scrub Removal Hand Tools Low	At least 2m wide scrub path must be cut. Below 50% of the path/band is removable scrub
Strip 4m Scrub Removal Hand Tools High	At least 4m wide scrub path must be cut. Over 50% of the 4m path is removable scrub. Open grassy path needs 2m of scrub removal on both sides.
Strip 4m Scrub Removal Hand Tools Low	At least 4m wide scrub path must be cut. Below 50% of the 4m is removeable scrub.

Requirements

1. To be eligible for this action, the minimum continuous length is 1m and at least the 2m or 4m width chosen must be delivered.
2. There are 2 levels of scrub cover to choose from in this NPI, high and low and 2 widths 2m and 4m. The location and length (metres) must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted.
3. All lengths mapped on GLAM for scrub removal must be marked with hazard tape to identify the plants for removal. As part of the screening process the CP Team will conduct a site visit for all scrub removal works.
4. Only scrub approved for removal can be cut or spot treated. Such scrub work, along with any relevant instructions, will be indicated on a returned NPI Plan.
5. All marked bushes must be cut, up to and including the taped bushes on the edges of the marked area, unless specified otherwise.
6. Scrub can only be cut outside of the bird nesting season so removal can only take place from 1 September to end of February.
7. Subsequent scrub regrowth must be controlled along the strips following initial removal for the duration of the ACRES contract.
8. A machine-mounted brushcutter/flail or tractor mounted hedge trimmer is not permitted for this NPI.

Additional Guidance

- Scrub should be cut as low as possible, i.e., less than 30cm/1ft above the ground when using a chainsaw/ bladed strimmer.

- Brash (cut scrub) should be properly gathered and piled in suitable locations and left to rot down. Brash should be piled in large, consolidated piles where possible in order to minimise their surface area on priority habitat. Brash may also be piled underneath the canopy of mature woodland.
- Native trees such as Oak, Ash, Scots Pine, Burren Pine, Whitethorn, Mountain Ash/ Rowan, Holly, which may be present within the area of scrub, should not be cut once they are not blocking access along a path.
- Where only side branches are to be cut back (on mature trees or hazel), these stumps are not to be treated with a herbicide.
- Brash may be chipped and removed from site where accessible.
- If scrub is being removed from within an archaeological monument, all brash must be piled outside the boundary of the monument. Additional labour time should be factored in in these cases.
- For scrub along wall repair tasks: Scrub along an intact section of wall should not be removed unless it poses future risk to the structure of the wall. The environmental cost of removing a hedgerow must be weighed up against the need for access to the gap in the wall.
- If treating stumps with herbicide, ensure herbicide is applied within 15 minutes of cutting and that there is no drift onto surrounding ground.
- Participants must follow Storage and Record Keeping Requirements for End Users of Professional use Plant Protection Products where applicable. See up to date document outlining requirements [here](#).
- All management methods described here should be carried out with due care and attention, with consideration to health and safety requirements and, by trained and competent personnel.
- Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to be worn when using herbicides.