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East Lancashire Railway

Buckley Wells Wildlife Area Management Plan

Last revised: 6 September 2022



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This simple management plan is intended to allow the railway, school, and community to get involved with and improve their local environment. It should not be slavishly followed, but reviewed and adapted as time, resources and site development requires

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1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to:

- Explain the background to the project and the current situation
- Explain how the site will be managed, and why
- Describe responsibilities
- Set outcomes and evaluation systems
- Identify resources

The purpose of the project is to:

- Improve the area for wildlife and plants
- Improve biodiversity and help mitigate climate change
- Provide a resource for environmental and climate change education
- Build strong links between the East Lancashire Railway (ELR) and the local community: specifically local schools

This is deliberately a short and simple document for two reasons. First, so that it can be followed easily and that tasks can be carried out as people and other resources are available. Secondly, this is a natural ecosystem that will change over time, and it will need to be reviewed regularly.

It is intended as a practical guide to activity on the site.

2 Introduction

The site is at Baron Street, Bury. It is surrounded school playing fields (at the same level as the site) and on the other side by the operational railway area of the ELR depot at Buckley Wells. There is a photo on the cover. The site is currently accessed from the depot side, but it is proposed to provide a gate to the school side.

The area is mostly grassland on a 1980 aerial image and has probably never been in active railway use. There are no buildings or other structures and no known hazards apart from shallow water. There are no natural constraints although it will be necessary to ensure Japanese Knotweed (a controlled weed, photo in appendix) is not spread, and to monitor the area for active badger setts.

The project came about as part of a project to build a new shed to store and maintain heritage railway items, and the desire to improve biodiversity and to build community links.

Roles – note these need to be updated regularly

Organisation	Person and contact details	Responsible for
East Lancashire Railway	Mike Kelly chair@eastlancsrailway.co.uk	Project Director at Board Level
East Lancashire Railway Project Manager	Andy Hardman (Traction & Rolling Stock Office & Admin Manager) andy.hardman@eastlancsrailway.co.uk	Overall management plan and implementation. Major works (such as digging out the pond).
	Mark Rosebury Mark.Rosebury@eastlancsrailway.co.uk	Japanese Knotweed control programme.
Local wildlife group, or Groundwork or both	TBC	Advice and practical work as required.

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Bury Grammar school	TBC	Ongoing management and interpretation programme.
Management Plan author	Peter Black peterblack62@gmail.com	Initial plan, advice on ecological issues and updates.

3 What is there now?

The site was surveyed by an experienced ecologist. No evidence of legally protected plant or animal species or habitats were found. Species are listed at appendix 2. The main habitats present are:

Scrub and scattered trees

Scattered trees border the site and there is an area of young naturally regenerated woodland to the east. Species include typical pioneers such as birch, oak, sycamore, ash, and goat willow. Ground vegetation is dominated by nettles and other weeds, indicating a high nutrient status and low biodiversity value. There are scattered patches of Japanese Knotweed (appendix one, figure 1).

Marsh/marshy grassland

Part of the site has impeded drainage and a shallow pond (cover photo) with typical plants such as Reedmace (*Typha latifolia*) surrounded by Goat Willow scrub and marshy grassland including a swarm of about 100 spikes of marsh and common spotted orchids (figure 4) on the eastern edge. The area is heavily shaded and encroached on by tipping from the main carriage sidings site. It currently has low ecological value and without management is likely to gradually decline in wildlife value as over shading increases and the pond dries out.

Abandoned Badger sett

In the woodland area there is a partially collapsed badger sett which was not active in 2022, and there were no other signs of badger activity. However the area is suitable for badgers to forage or build setts. Habitat management should avoid the badger sett area. The school could put up relatively inexpensive wildlife cameras to check on animal activity. Foxes and hedgehogs may be present.

Japanese Knotweed

There are several clumps of Japanese Knotweed (figure 1) near the pond, and on the southern edge of the woodland to the east. It does not set viable seed in the UK (male and female flowers are on separate plants and we only have the female version), but it is very easy to spread the underground stems (rhizomes) in soil on boots or machinery. Even tiny fragments will establish a new colony.

If Japanese Knotweed is found, the ELR should be notified, and the area avoided. The ELR will include it in their treatment programme. Treatment over more than one year is usually needed to eliminate the plant. DO NOT TRY TO DIG IT OUT OR OTHERWISE DISPOSE OF IT.

Himalayan Balsam

This plant is present throughout the site and the wider area. No specific control measures are suggested. However where it gets in the way of either paths or planting, then it can be hand pulled by individuals (no precautions or protective gear is required) and left to dry out and die.

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4 Management objectives

- **Improve wetland habitat** by preventing scrub encroachment, deepening the wetland to provide permanent open water, and introducing appropriate additional plant species
- **Improve woodland habitat** by introducing appropriate shrubs and woodland flowers
- Provide **access and education opportunities** by creation of some simple paths in the form of a trail to make it easier for the school to use, together with interpretation material.
- Ensure **Japanese Knotweed is not spread**.

5 Management Plan

Initial operations to make the site suitable for the school/community to form a partnership

- Meeting convened by ELR with the school and any other appropriate organisations (such as Groundwork) to confirm involvement, resources, the management plan, and year one actions.
- Provide access gate (including for habitat management vehicles) to the school boundary
- Dig out an area of open water (about 1m deep) on the boggy area, plus removal of scrub vegetation from the bramble area around the perimeter to create a permanently wet habitat and more diversity. All material to be retained on-site.
- Treat Japanese Knotweed in the area with stem injection and include in regular treatment programme.

Year one

- Wetland area – wait for water to settle and clear; vegetation will return naturally
- Woodland area – some thinning to allow light, and underplanting with a diversity of shrubs and wildflowers.
- Woodland area – provide a simple path network. This could be marked with wood from the thinning, or chippings.
- Preparation of interpretation material for the school (and any other visiting groups) to use which details interesting features, and KS attainment targets that could be met. This could include climate change.
- Provide wildlife cameras so school can monitor activity.
- Report remaining Japanese Knotweed to ELR so that it can be treated
- Review this plan to ensure it is still relevant and achievable.

Years two onward

- Wetland area – ensure scrub and other vegetation does not invade the open water/marsh area. This will require periodic removal of vegetation and digging out.
- Woodland area – maintain shrub and wildflower planting, providing additional planting where required
- Paths/trail – maintain as required
- Monitor and record plant and wildlife activity – school to use this
- Report remaining Japanese Knotweed to ELR so that it can be treated
- Review this plan to ensure it is still relevant and achievable.

6 Resources

Initial works to make the site suitable for the school/community will be managed and funded or carried out directly by the ELR as part of their planning obligation.

Future years work will be relatively low-cost. It is expected that this will be a partnership between the school and the ELR, but grant-aid or direct gifts are often available from a range of local organisations for tools, plants, and other materials.

7 Monitoring and review

Monitoring is usually the weakest spot of any management plan, and there is no point in setting sophisticated targets or a complex procedure that will never be followed. It is proposed that the just two monitoring targets should be:

- Bury Grammar School (and other schools or organisations using the site) consider that their involvement is worthwhile and that they are achieving significant education benefits from their involvement.
- Site retains at least some open water throughout the year.

Review is also a weak point of many management plans. An annual meeting should be convened by ELR to review the plan. Because school involvement is important for success it, should fit with their needs. It is suggested that a review meeting at the start of autumn term (September) would allow the school to programme in changes and activities that would make the most of educational opportunities.

End of report appendix follows.

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Appendix one – photos



Figure 1 Japanese Knotweed



Figure 2 Himalayan Balsam



Figure 3 Abandoned badger sett



Figure 4 Common spotted orchid in wetland area

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Appendix two - plants found June 2019 and October 2021

Marsh Orchids

Common spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsia*)

Common Cudweed (*Filago vulgaris*)

Orange Hawkweed (*Hieracium aurantiacum*)

Hawkweed sp (*Hieracium ssp*)

Weld (*Reseda luteola*)

Nipplewort (*Lapsana communis*)

Sow-thistle (*sonchus oleraceus*)

Pineapple Weed

Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*)

Coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*)

Willowherbs (*Epilobium angustifolium, hirsutum, montanum*)

Teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*)

Great Mullein (*Verbascum Thapsus*)

Self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*)

Dock (*Rumex sp*)

Forget-me-not (*Myosotis arvensis*)

White Campion (*Silene alba*)

Pearlwort (*Sagina procumbens*)

Thistles (*Cirsium arvense* and *vulgare*)

St John's Wort (*Hypericum sp*)

Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*)

Male Fern (*Dryopteris felix-mas*)

Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*)

Nettle (*Urtica dioica*)

Birdsfoot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*)

Buddleia (*Buddleia davidii*)

Rush (*Juncus effusus*)

Reedmace (*Typha latifolia*)

Gallant Soldier (*Galinsoga*)

Common Centaury (*Centaurea*)

Lady's Mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*)

Hedge bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*)

Common toadflax

Herb Robert (*Gernaium robertianum*)

Comfrey

Evening primrose (*Oenothera erythrosepala*)

Michaelmas Daisy (*Aster novi-belgiae*)

Common shrubs (Broom, Bramble, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Elder)

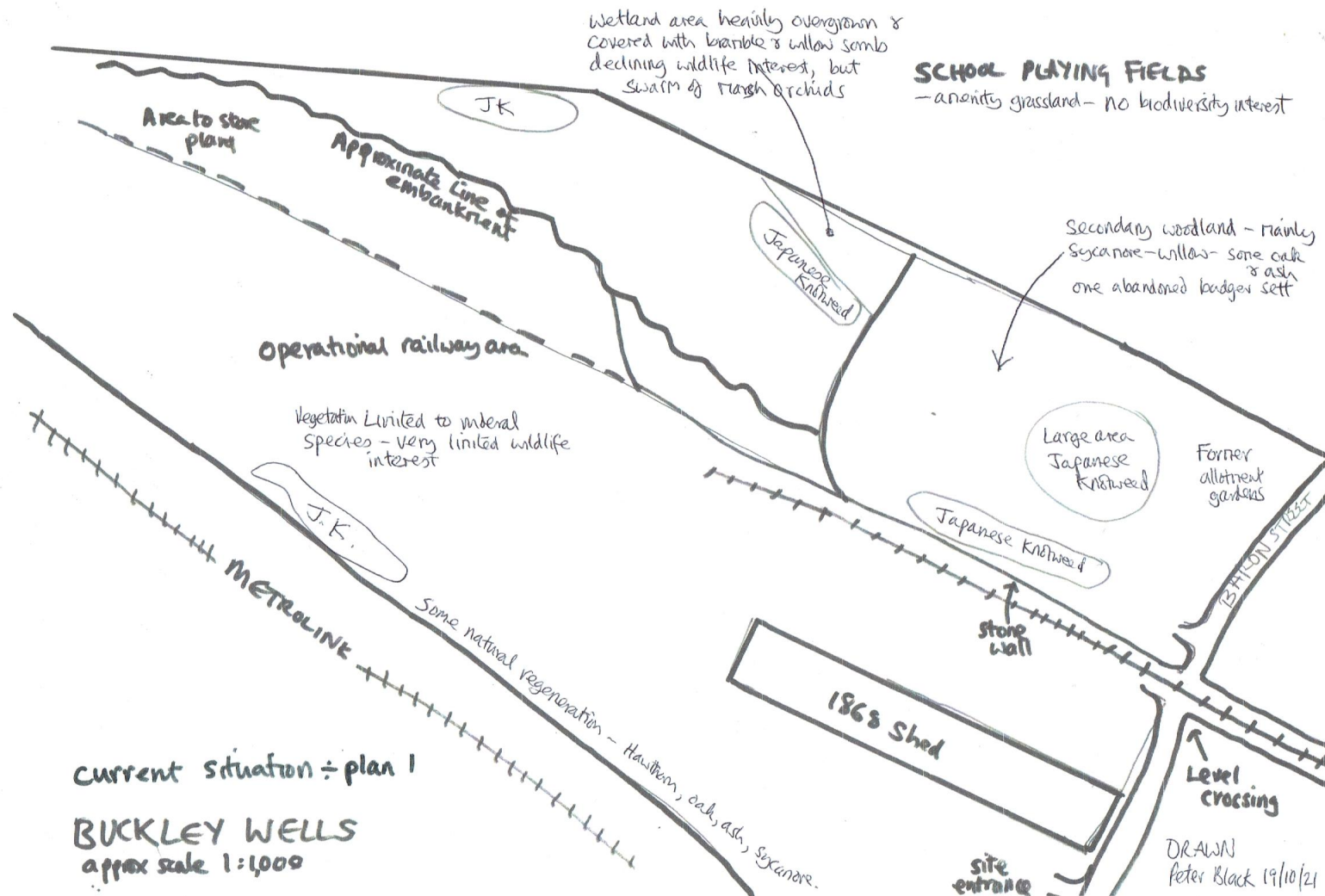
Range of common grasses (*Poa, Lolium, Deschampsia*, etc.,)

Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*)

Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)

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Appendix three – existing situation and proposed management



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DRAFT BIODIVERSITY PLAN
REFER TO SCHEDULE FOR DETAILS

SCHOOL PLAYING FIELDS

- (A) - wetland area enlarged & deepened
A1 - pond dipping point
 - (B) - Woodland management area
B1 - access route
B2 - access point for management & education
- Substantial fence to protect wildlife area & prevent JK spread

