

SECTION 3 Scrub / Track

The following 3 NPIs are only available to select on a NPI -AWP for ACRES CP participants in the Burren Aran CP Zone that are managed by the ACRES Burren Aran CP Team.

Scrub Removal Areas (Hand Tools)

Objective

To encourage the removal of areas of scrub species which are encroaching onto or invading priority habitats. This NPI can be used by CP Teams in a Landscape Action -Annual Works Plans to remove scrub from sites where they deem necessary.

Background

Scrub encroachment can greatly alter local biodiversity, impact on archaeological and geological features and restrict livestock and human movement. The removal of scrub from certain species rich habitats can be vital where there is a threat to the habitat.

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.
This action can only be selected on fields with the following scorecards submitted: Grassland, Winterage and Scrub/Woodland.
- This action can be considered on:
 - Fields with significant amounts of scrub encroaching onto areas of grassland, where the field has more than five positive indicator species.
 - Scrub interfering with the structure of walls or fences used for stock management of a priority habitat.
 - Scrub encroaching onto archaeological monuments where the Conservation of Cultural Heritage Sites NPI is not selected.
- Areas of mature woodland or established scrub where the ground flora has changed from grassland to woodland dominated species must not be removed.
- Where scrub removal is recommended on a Winterage field, it will be important that any proposed work is properly planned out by the farmer and the advisor in to ensure it is appropriate and permissible.

This NPI can be used by CP Teams in a LA-AWP where it is not limited to Burren Aran CP Zone or the 3 listed scorecards above to remove scrub in the following scenarios where deemed appropriate:

- Gorse scrub which poses a high ignition risk and where an area has been identified in the Local Area Plan as a control zone for fire resilience purposes.

- Scrub encroaching onto peatland or priority habitat on scored fields.
- Scrub removal on Breeding Wader Sites

Scrub is rarely present in uniform areas in the landscape. When mapping scrub for removal a polygon must be drawn around the target area for scrub removal. To claim the payment, all of the encroaching scrub within this area must be removed. Any established scrub/mature trees that may be present within the mapped area should be left uncut/untreated. It is important to draw the polygon accurately around the target area while minimizing, within reason the areas of woodland or limestone pavement within the polygon.

In most cases, there will be a proportion of the drawn area where there is no scrub for removal. In these cases, it is important to determine the removable scrub cover within the drawn area and select the appropriate NPI on GLAM (High, Medium, Low, or Scattered). Selection must be based on percentage cover as outlined in Table 19. below. Areas which are deemed to be incorrect will be rejected by the CP team at the screening stage. If some areas 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 19. Percentage Removable Scrub Cover of Drawn Area

NPI Label on GLAM	Percentage range of scrub cover within the drawn area	Description
NPI Area Scrub Removal Hand Tools High	71-100%	Most of the drawn area consists of scrub to be controlled i.e. area drawn closely around the target scrub. Note: This cover option is not to be used for regrowth or briar-only scrub.
NPI Area Scrub Removal Hand Tools Medium	41-70%	Scrub covers over 40% of the drawn area.
NPI Area Scrub Removal Hand Tools Low	6-40%	Scrub cover at low levels, likely occurring as a few dense patches within an otherwise open area.
NPI Area Scrub Removal Hand Tools Scattered	1-5%	Where scrub is scattered at a low density in a large open area.

Requirements

1. There are four levels of scrub cover to choose from in this NPI category, Scrub Removal Hand Tools-High, Medium, Low or Scattered. The applicable option must be selected and drawn on GLAM.

2. All areas mapped on GLAM for scrub removal must have their outline marked in the field with hazard tape (i.e. visibly tied to perimeter bushes at regular intervals) for screening. As part of the screening process the CP Team will conduct a site visit for all scrub removal works.
3. The marked bushes should be cut up to and including the taped bushes on the edges of the marked area, unless specified otherwise.
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 Annual Works Plan.
5. Scrub can only be cut outside of the bird nesting season so removal can only take place from 1 September to end of February.
6. Subsequent scrub regrowth must be controlled in the paid areas for the duration of the ACRES 5 Year contract. On organic farms the regrowth on all bushes must be cut back down to the stumps at least once in the two years following initial cutting.
7. A machine-mounted brushcutter/flail or tractor mounted hedge trimmer is not permitted for this NPI. Scrub removal requiring machine work should be discussed with the CP Team.

Additional Guidance

- Hazel growing on bare limestone pavement may be retained if there is no grazing benefit for its removal.
- 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. Where only side branches are to be cut back (on mature trees or hazel), the stumps are not to be treated with herbicide.
- Brash may be chipped and removed from site where accessible.
- Scrub should be cut as low as possible, i.e., less than 30cm/1ft above the ground when using a chainsaw/ bladed strimmer.
- If scrub is being removed from within or on an archaeological monument, all brash must be piled away from, or outside of the monument buffer zone.
- If treating stumps with herbicide, ensure herbicide is applied within 15 minutes of cutting and that there is no drift onto surrounding ground and vegetation.
- Participants should 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.