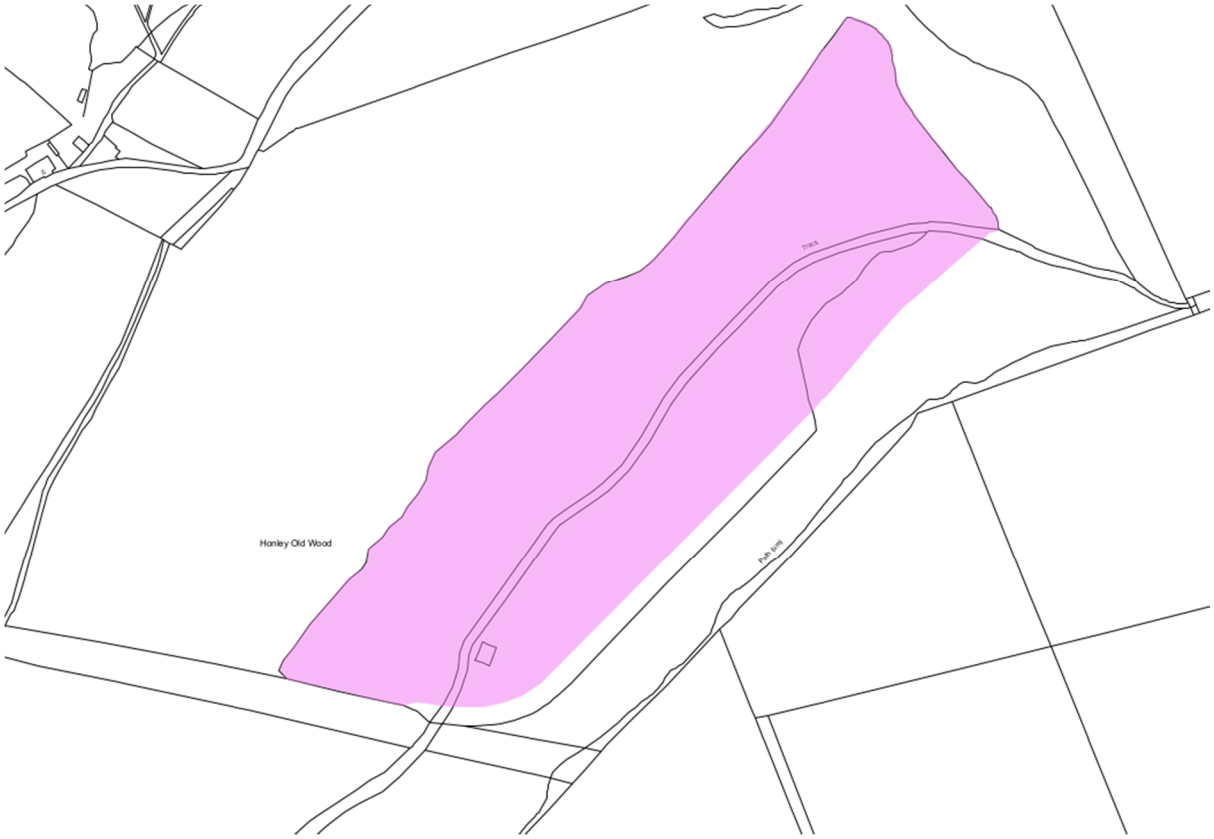
Honley Old Woods Northside Site Management plan

The Honley Old woods Northside site is an ex-landfill site which ceased operation in 1996. Since then, the site has not received much management being largely left to its own devices.



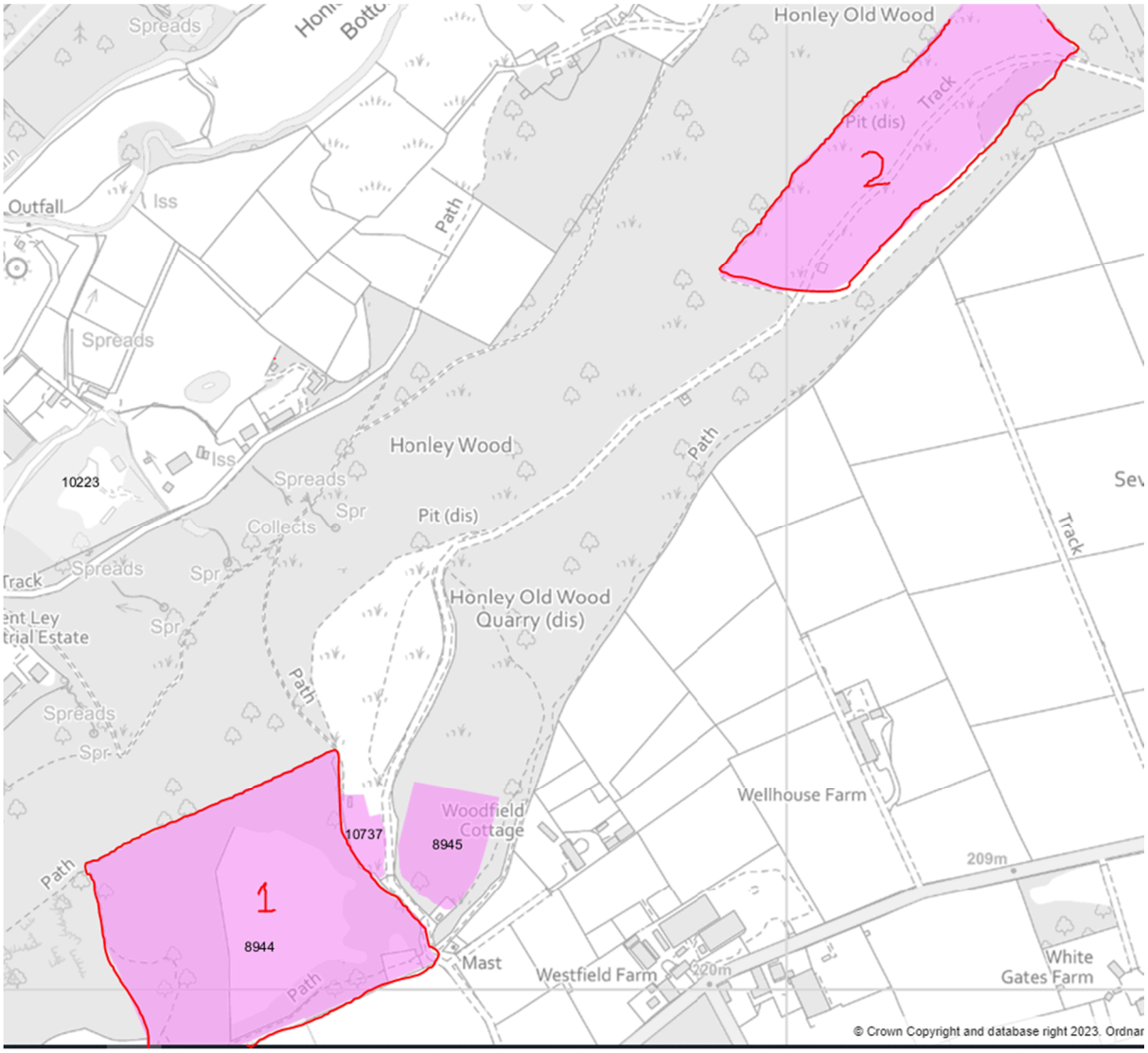
Boundary map showing extent of land referred to as Northside.

Honley Old Woods Northside ex-landfill site rehabilitation

This paper is a brief on the ex-landfill site within Honley Old Woods known as Northside. Due to the environmental conditions left after the landfill operations the site has started to develop into a heath habitat which is a nationally rare habitat. There are some flora and fauna species on this site which make it particularly interesting ecologically.
This site is currently under threat due to the rapid encroachment of the woodland which surrounds the site. If action is not taken to halt this succession of the site into woodland, then the species that have colonised the site will be lost to the detriment of the Kirklees district.

Location map

1. Knowle Top site
2. Northside site.



Species found on Northside.

The Western end of the site has been developing a cover of Common Heather.

The Eastern end of the site has been colonised by saplings (self-seeded) from the existing woodland.

The arial photograph shows the encroachment of the tree cover onto the Northside site. A few short years ago this entire area was free from trees and being colonised by grasses and heather. The spread of self-seeded trees is rapidly compromising the viability of the heath habitat.

The heathland nature of the site has meant that some locally rare species have established themselves at Northside. The most noteworthy of these being a number of Orchids (Common Spotted, Southern Marsh Orchid, Bee orchid. See list at end of document for species list).

One of the notable fauna species on the site is the Dingy Skipper (*erynnis tages*) This butterfly is on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan as a priority species with its conservation priority being listed as high. (Please see below for further information)

- Section 41 species of principal importance under the NERC Act in England
- Listed on Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016
- Northern Ireland Priority Species
- Scottish Biodiversity List
- UK BAP status: Priority Species
- Butterfly Conservation priority: High
- European status: Not threatened.
- Fully protected under the Northern Ireland 1985 Wildlife Order.

Information from Butterfly Conservation

The site is also home to the Mother Shiptons Moth

The basic management prescription for the site is to reduce the spread of trees on the site. This may seem contrary to the actions of many organisations where planting trees is high on the agenda for carbon capture. The heath habitat also has carbon capture ability. It is also vital for biodiversity.

Heathlands and semi-natural grasslands are important habitats for UK biodiversity. They reflect traditional management over centuries but support distinctive species and typically store more carbon than modern agricultural systems. Whilst creating new heathlands and semi-natural grasslands may not be the top priority for carbon, it is important to protect old established sites due to their importance for biodiversity. Natural England 2021

To preserve and develop the heath nature of the site a reduction of tree cover by 80-90% would be in order. The rapid spread of the trees means that if action is not taken very soon the site may reach a tipping point where the heath nature of the site is lost.

<u>Next steps for preserving Northside.</u>
Access to the site is needed for the removal of the trees to start as soon as possible.
If permission for access to the site can be established there are a number of mechanisms which may be employed to remove the trees.

- The Friends of Honley Old Woods volunteer group will aid to the best of their ability.
- Corporate volunteer groups could be scheduled in to aid in the removal of the trees.
- Other voluntary groups from within Kirklees could aid in the site management.

<u>Action plan for activities to preserve the Heath habitat.</u>

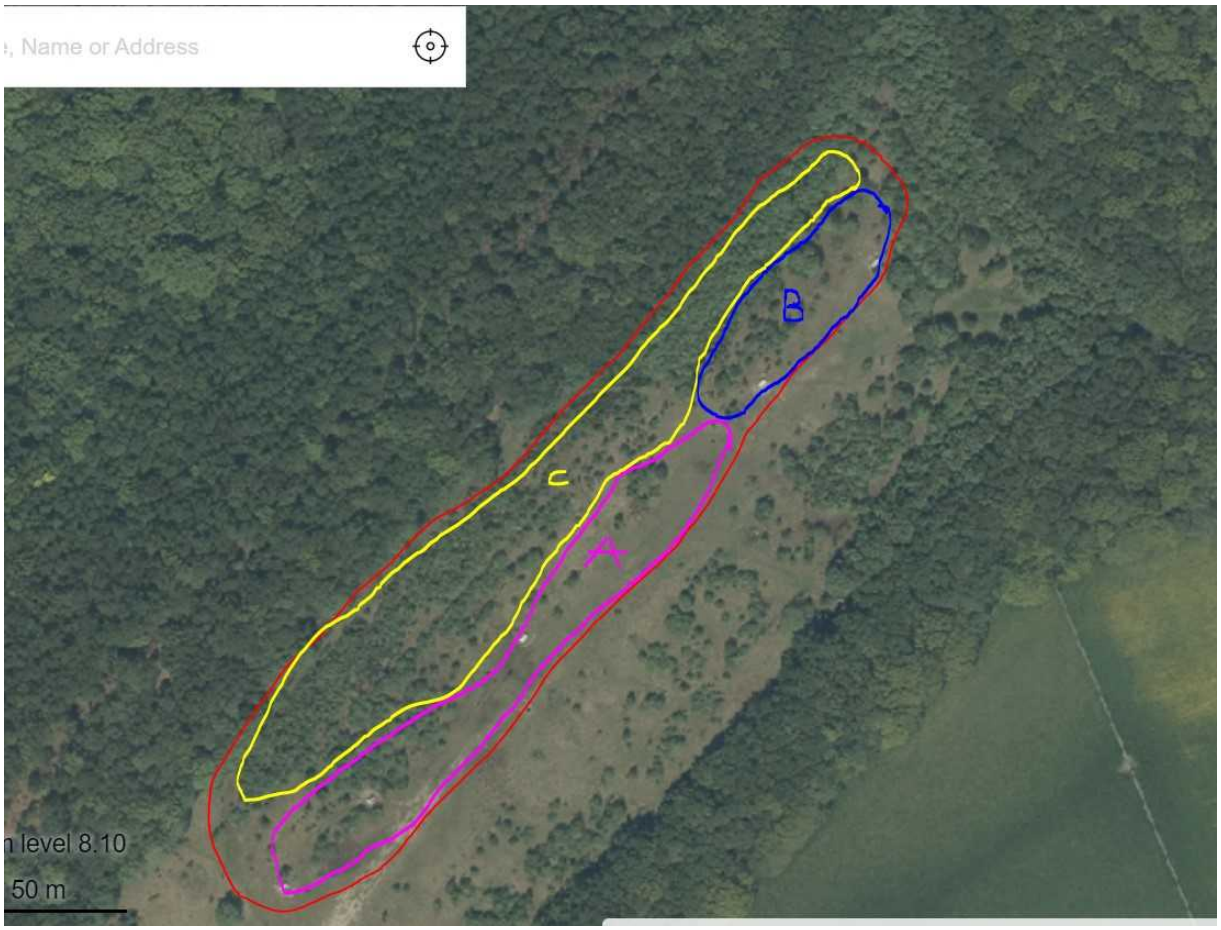
This action plan is a short-term plan to aid in the removal of the tree encroachment on the Northside site. The tree removal should be completed as soon as possible. It is estimated that using the tools / people power available at the time of writing this plan it will take a minimum of five years to reduce the tree encroachment to the levels seen in 2012.
Due to the nature of the work needed, tree removal is only possible during the winter months when the breeding season for birds, invertebrates is over.
The volunteer groups that would do the works required are constituted groups with insurance cover through the Natural Kirklees organisation to £10 million.
Risk assessments would be provided for the tasks to be undertaken. These would include manual handling, manual gardening, etc.
Before every practical task, a toolbox talk is given on the appropriate use of the tools to be used and on the practical task to be undertaken.

To manage the reduction in tree, cover the Northside site has been split into three broad areas. Areas 1, 2 & 3.

Area 1 (2027/28)
Area 1 in the southwest of the site while having some tree encroachment is the least troubled area on the site. The ground flora is developing a good cover of Heather and given time this heather should spread. There are a number of self-seeded trees that have established themselves, but these could relatively easily be removed with hand tools by volunteers to keep the open aspect of the site.

Area 2 (2024-27)
Area 2 has been subdivided into three compartments. Priority should be given to compartments A and B, outline in pink and blue on the plan. These compartments have flora and fauna which is in jeopardy of tree encroachment.
Compartment A: A number of Orchids have populated this area which provides biodiversity value to the site. Tree encroachment is rapid in this area, a priority must be the removal of saplings. Clearing compartment, A of self-seeded trees is a priority to be achieved by the end of winter 2025/2026
Compartment B: A healthy population of Birds foot Trefoil occupies compartment B particularly towards the eastern end. This area is of particular value to the Dingy Skipper. This area will shortly suffer from shading from the tree cover. As in compartment A the immediate priority is to remove self-seeded trees to allow the herb layer to flourish. This should be done by winter 2025/2026.
Compartment C: This area has already been largely colonised by trees. There are still remnants of Birdsfoot Trefoil amongst the trees along with sporadic Common Heather and

Orchids. In order to try and reestablish the conditions before the tree encroachment the creation of cleared glades is recommended. Clearing the trees in this manner would allow greater light penetration to ground flora and allow heath species to start reestablishing themselves. Over time the glades can be linked together creating the open aspects required. (2026/28)



Area 3 (2024-26)

Area 3 while having less tree encroachment than area 2, area 3 is where the rarer Bee Orchid is found. There is also a quantity of Birds foot trefoil towards the northeast of this area. The high priority for the area is to remove saplings from the area where the Bee Orchids are as the shading from the saplings will deplete the Orchids of the aspect they require.

Priority would be given to the works in areas 2 (compartment A & B) & 3. The areas around the Orchids and where food plants for butterflies are present would be the first areas to be tackled. (2024/26)

Time scales

With the resources available now, it is hoped that the majority of the tree removal could be accomplished in 5 years. This plan has been written to outline the tasks which need to be done to achieve this. Once the tree thinning has been achieved a new management plan will need to be written to maintain the site and improve its biodiversity through proactive management.
Over the 5 year period proposed we would be asking for a removal of the Tree Preservation Order in place on the Northside part of Honley Woods in order to remove the saplings and encroaching scrub.

Usage of trees which have been removed.
There are a number of uses for the trees which will be removed.
The smaller saplings could be removed with their root system intact allowing them to be relocated to other sites where tree cover is desirable.
Larger, dead saplings could be used on adjoining moorland where leaky dams are being installed to slow water flow from these uplands.
Habitat piles (neatly stacked piles of deadwood) can be created which provides a good habitat for mammals and reptiles as well as being invaluable for invertebrates, mostly beetles life cycles.
Apart from the saplings which may be used for leaky dams all arisings from the site will be kept on site.

Information to the public
While undertaking the works notices informing the public on what is going on would be put at the main access points to the Northside site.

Conclusion
While the Northside site has become degraded in recent years there is still time to restore the biodiversity value of the site. Action is required swiftly if the Heathland nature of the Northside site is to be preserved.
If permission can be gained for remedial works outlined in this plan to be undertaken, then the Northside site can be preserved and expanded on to increase the biodiversity of the Honley Old Woods site.
This is an opportunity to be proactive for nature conservation for the betterment of the whole community of individuals and organisations involved in Honley Old Woods.

Bee Orchid

Dingy Skipper

		TAXON DETAILS	
BRC Number	Complete list of latin names to select from (includes species qualifier). If you can't find the species you want, you can	Taxon Name matched by species entry. Hide column if not required	Common name of recommended taxon. Hide if not required

ID	Full Name	Matched Name	Common Name
39		Agrostis stolonifera	Creeping Bent
	Alchemilla mollis	Alchemilla mollis	Garden Lady's-mantle
121			Sweet Vernal-grass
169		Arrhenatherum elatius	False Oat-Grass
240		Betula pubescens	Downy Birch
309		Calluna vulgaris	Ling
376		Carex flacca	Glaucous Sedge
	Carex leporina	Carex leporina	Oval Sedge
467		Cerastium fontanum	Common Mouse-ear
515		Cirsium arvense	Creeping Thistle
520		Cirsium palustre	Marsh Thistle
569		Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn
1822		Cytisus scoparius	Broom
607		Dactylis glomerata	Cock's-foot
608		Dactylorhiza fuchsii	Common Spotted-orchid
612		Dactylorhiza praetermissa	Southern Marsh-orchid
627		Deschampsia cespitosa	Tufted Hair-grass
640			Foxglove
661		Dryopteris dilatata	Broad Buckler-fern
665		Dryopteris filix-mas	Male-fern
662		Dryopteris affinis	Golden-scaled Male-fern
838		Fragaria vesca	Wild Strawberry
841		Fraxinus excelsior	Ash
907		Geranium dissectum	Cut-leaved Crane's-bill
983		Holcus lanatus	Yorkshire-fog
1023		Ilex aquifolium	Holly
1063		Juncus conglomeratus	Compact Rush
1067		Juncus effusus	Soft-rush
1077		Juncus tenuis	Slender Rush
1116		Lathyrus pratensis	Meadow Vetchling
1183		Lolium perenne	Perennial Rye-grass
597		Cynosurus cristatus	Crested Dog's-tail
1020		Hypochaeris radicata	Cat's-ear
824		Festuca rubra agg.	Red Fescue
40		Agrostis capillaris	Common Bent
692		Epilobium hirsutum	Great Willowherb
712		Equisetum arvense	Field Horsetail
572		Crepis capillaris	Smooth Hawk's-beard
695		Epilobium montanum	Broad-leaved Willowherb
	Carex demissa		Common Yellow-sedge
1054		Juncus articulatus	Jointed Rush
1454		Phalaris arundinacea	Reed Canary-grass
5486		Centaurium erythraea	Common Centaury
502		Leucanthemum vulgare	Oxeye Daisy
1735		Rumex acetosella	Sheep's Sorrel
	Dactylorhiza x gra	Dactylorhiza x grandis	#N/A
1191		Lotus corniculatus	Common Bird's-foot-trefoil
1201		Luzula campestris	Field Wood-rush
1382		Ophrys apifera	Bee Orchid
1463		Phleum pratense	Timothy
1487		Plantago lanceolata	Ribwort Plantain
1488		Plantago major	Greater Plantain
1495		Poa annua	Annual Meadow-grass
1507		Poa trivialis	Rough Meadow-grass
1619		Pteridium aquilinum	Bracken
	Quercus sp.	Quercus sp.	#N/A
1642		Ranunculus acris	Meadow Buttercup
1708		Rosa canina agg.	Dog-rose
1728		Rubus fruticosus agg.	Bramble
1734		Rumex acetosa	Common Sorrel
1748		Rumex obtusifolius	Broad-leaved Dock
1767		Sagina procumbens	Procumbent Pearlwort
1788		Salix caprea	Pussy Willow
	Salix cinerea	Salix cinerea	Grey Willow
1815		Sambucus nigra	Elder
1899		Senecio jacobaea	Common Ragwort
1960		Sorbus aucuparia	Rowan
2034		Taraxacum agg.	Dandelion
2080		Trifolium campestre	Hop Trefoil
2092		Trifolium repens	White Clover
2126		Urtica dioica	Common Nettle
2189		Vicia cracca	Tufted Vetch
1194		Lotus pedunculatus	Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil
1361		Odontites vernus	Red Bartsia
1610		Prunella vulgaris	Selfheal
	Vicia sativa	Vicia sativa	Common Vetch
4516		Pilosella aurantiaca	Fox-and-cubs
2191		Vicia hirsuta	Hairy Tare
2198		Vicia sepium	Bush Vetch
1548		Polystichum setiferum	Soft Shield-fern

Botanical species found on the Northside site. Recorded 29/06/2021.