

Woodland Condition Assessment for Whinney Hill No. 1 & No. 2, Accrington, Hyndburn by John Lamb, Lancashire Wildlife Trust, May 2019

It is important to ascertain the condition that habitats are in and whether management targets are being met. The following condition assessment should be carried out for woodland areas every five years. The area of assessment is that which can be seen in front of, and to the sides of, the assessor. Using a good scale map walk the site stopping ten times to make assessments, ideally taking a GPS, so that the stops can be refound and the assessments repeated. The stops should be evenly spaced throughout the woodland, but can be positioned anywhere.

At each stop record the answers to the following ten questions (see overleaf for stop descriptions and map for their locations):

Extent – (Stops 1-5 are in No. 1 (East/Cricket Club), 6-10 are in No. 2 (West/Pond).)

1. Is the area or boundary of the woodland as it should be?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Structure –

2. Can you see mature trees?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N

3. Can you see at least five individual native shrubs or coppice stools?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

4. Can you see at least a 50% coverage of native ground flora?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Y*	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

5. Can you see any standing or hung-up deadwood?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

6. Can you see any laying deadwood over 2m long?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

* Stops 1 and 3 are close to the 50% coverage in response to question 4.

Regeneration –

7. Can you see at least five native tree seedlings over 2m tall?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Undesirable species (name any seen - different species can be substituted) –

8. Is your field of vision free of non-native shrubs (eg Rhododendron, laurel etc)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

9. Is your field of vision free of non-native trees? (e.g. Grey Poplar: GP and Sycamore: S)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Y	N(S)	Y	N(S)	N(S)	Y	Y	Y	Y	N(GP)

10. Is your field of vision free of other non-natives (JK = Japanese Knotweed)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Y	Y	Y	N(JK)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

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Of the 100 possible points, the two woodland areas at Whinney Hill scored 84 Yes's and 26 No's, i.e. 84% in May 2019. This can be broken down into 40/50, or 80%, for area No. 1 (East or Cricket Club End), and 44/50, or 88%, for area No. 2 (West or Pond End)

For comparison, the other sites assessed in Hyndburn in May 2019 are as follows:

- Huncoat No. 1 (West) scored 81%,
- Martholme Greenway scored 77%,
- Huncoat No. 2 (East) scored 70%,
- Abbot Clough scored 66%,
- Warcocks Green scored 66%, and
- Rushton Green Farm scored 63%.

The average for the sites assessed in Hyndburn in May 2019 is 73.9%, hence with 80 and 88%, Whinney Hill No. 1 (East). and No. 2. (West) scored significantly more than the Hyndburn average.

For an additional comparison, other woodland condition assessments in Hyndburn have been as follows:

- Oak-birch woodland above Arden Hall scored 86% in 2018,
- Ash Plantation below The Coppice scored 86% in 2018,
- Arden Hall Plantation scored 80% in 2018,
- Hollins Wood scored 80% in 2018,
- Priestley Clough scored 75% in 2018,
- Foxhill Bank in Oswaldtwistle scored 74% in 2008,
- Rothwell Heights scored 74% in 2018,
- Plantation House scored 67.5% in 2018,
- Ooze Castle & Rock Haugh Clough Ancient Woodland scored 67% in 2009, and
- Park View Forest School woodland scored 60% in 2018.

The average score for the 18 woodlands assessed in Hyndburn to date is just under 75.5%, hence with 80 and 88%, Whinney Hill No. 1 (East). and No. 2. (West) scored significantly more than the average in Hyndburn.

Whinney Hill No. 2. (West) is the highest (18th lowest) scoring woodland assessed in Hyndburn to date, whereas Whinney Hill No. 1 (East) is the equal 5th highest (equal 12th lowest) scoring woodland assessed in Hyndburn to date.

The negative points at Whinney Hill can be addressed through management by, for example;

2. It will take time (decades) for trees to become mature and over-mature so progress cannot be made quickly to address item 2 (10 points in the long-term).
7. The canopy can be thinned to let more light in, and/or young trees planted, to address item 7 (1 point at Whinney Hill East in the short to medium-term).

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9. The non-native tree species (Grey Poplar and Sycamore in this case) can be selectively felled, either as part of canopy thinning, or a separate operation, to address item 9. Any natural regeneration of these species will need to be controlled/removed in the future (3 points at Whinney Hill East and 1 point at Whinney Hill West in the short to medium-term).
10. Non-native plants (Japanese Knotweed in this case) can be controlled to address item 10. This will be an ongoing process if the species isn't controlled on adjacent landholdings. Note: Himalayan Balsam is also present on the site, but was not seen at the stops recorded (1 point at Whinney Hill East in the short-term).

In the short to medium-term, the score for the woodland at Whinney Hill could be increased by up to six points, which would bring the score up to 90, leaving just the 10 points from trees becoming mature in the long-term (item 2). Hence a target of a six point increase to 90% could be applied to the woodland in the short to medium-term.

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1. GPS: SD76380 29960 (163m asl). Two photos taken stood approx 10m in from the corner of the wood at the junction of the three footpaths.
Canopy dominated by: Ash, willow, Alder and birch.
Understorey: Hawthorn, Wild Cherry and Hazel.
Field layer locally dominated by: Bramble and bryophytes with grasses (Rough Meadow-grass, Cock's-foot and Red Fescue), sedge (*Carex* sp.) and bare ground (not approaching 50%).



Left: Stop 1, SE compartment looking west. Right: Stop 1, SE compartment looking northwest.

2. GPS: SD76224 29893 (160m asl). Two photos taken stood on the short path (not shown on the map) in between a litter bin and a gate into the field, one looking west and one looking east (into the sun).
Canopy dominated by: birch, willow, Alder and Ash.
Understorey: Wild Cherry, Hawthorn (plus hedgerow), Hazel and Ash regeneration.
Field layer locally dominated by: Bramble and grasses with Nettle, willow herb species and Soft-rush.



Left: Stop 2, SE compartment looking west. Right: Stop 2, SE compartment looking east (into the sun).

3. GPS: SD76064 29933 (171m asl). Three photos taken stood on a french drain (limestone hardcore) adjacent to & north of a camp/fire site, two looking both ways along the line of the drain and a third of the camp site itself.
Canopy dominated by: willow, Alder, birch and Ash.
Understorey: Hawthorn, oak, Hazel, Blackthorn and Dogwood.
Field layer locally dominated by: Bramble, bryophytes, Wood Avens and Nettle.

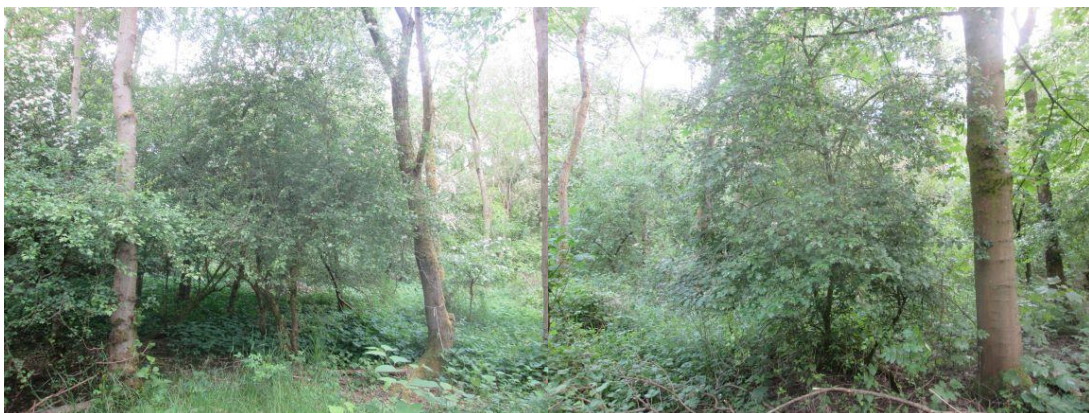
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Left: Stop 3, SE compartment looking east. Right: Stop 3, SE compartment looking west.
Below: the camp site itself (looking south).



4. GPS: SD75991 29898 (160m asl). Four photos taken stood in a small glade looking north, east, south and west.
Canopy dominated by: Alder, willow and Sycamore.
Understorey: Hawthorn, Wild Cherry, Blackthorn, Hazel, Dog-rose and Rowan regeneration.
Field layer locally dominated by: Bramble, Wood Avens, bryophytes and bare ground with other flora including bindweed, Ground-elder, Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed.

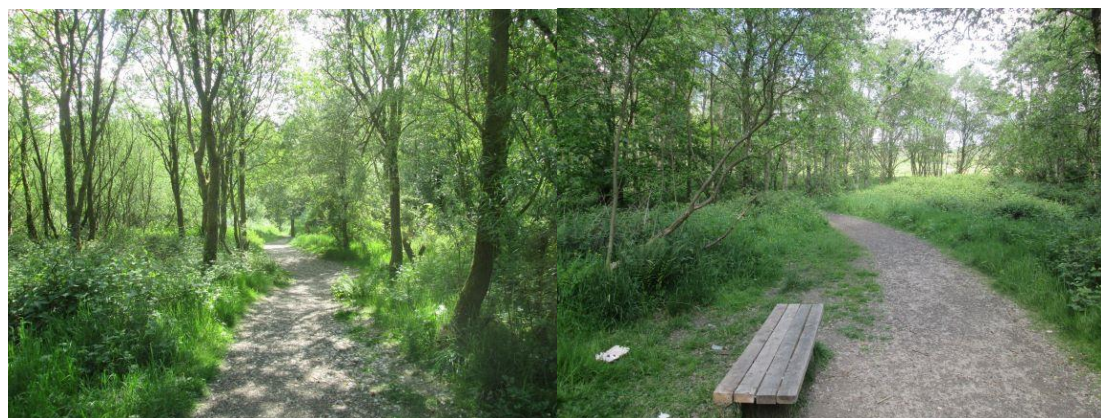


Above Left: Stop 4, SE compartment looking north. Above Right: Stop 4, SE compartment looking east. Below Left: Stop 4, SE compartment looking south. Below Right: Stop 4, SE compartment looking west.

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5. GPS: SD75988 29980 (154m asl). Two photos taken stood on the edge of a surfaced path next to a wooden, one looking south and one looking north.
Canopy dominated by: willow, Alder and birch.
Understorey: Sycamore, Alder, Hawthorn, Wild Cherry, Dogwood and oak.
Field layer locally dominated by: Bramble and Creeping Buttercup. Other flora includes Broad Buckler-fern, Nettle, Broad-leaved Dock, willowherb species, Soft-rush, Field Horsetail and Male-fern.



Left: Stop 5, SE compartment looking south. Right: Stop 5, SE compartment looking north.

6. GPS: SD75879 30105 (159m asl). Two photos taken stood in the south-eastern corner of the NW compartment, one looking northwest and one looking east.
Canopy dominated by: birch, Alder, Aspen and Rowan.
Understorey: Hawthorn, Hazel, Blackthorn, Wild Cherry, Rowan, Holly, Aspen, Dog-rose and Bird Cherry.
Field layer locally dominated by: Bramble and Yorkshire-fog. A willowherb species was also present.

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Left: Stop 6, NW compartment looking northwest. Right: Stop 6, NW compartment looking east.

7. GPS: SD75861 30262 (183m asl). Two photos taken stood in the north-eastern corner of the NW compartment, in between a desire line and Whinney Hill Road, one looking northeast and one looking southwest.

Canopy dominated by: Ash, Bird Cherry, birch and willow.

Understorey: Alder, Whitebeam and Blackthorn.

Field layer locally dominated by: Tufted Hair-grass, Cock's-foot, Bramble and bryophytes.



Left: Stop 7, NW compartment looking northeast. Right: Stop 7, NW compartment looking southwest.

8. GPS: SD75563 30334 (167m asl). Two photos taken stood next to a blue gas pipe (WHB-149), one looking east and one looking west towards the edge of the wood.

Canopy dominated by: willow and Ash.

Understorey: Field Maple, Bird Cherry, Blackthorn and Hawthorn.

Field layer locally dominated by: Bramble, Tufted Hair-grass and bryophytes.

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Left: Stop 8, NW compartment looking east. Right: Stop 8, NW compartment looking west towards the edge of the wood.

9. GPS: SD75635 302686 (172m asl). Three photos taken stood on a desire line up the wooded slope with a gas pipe and yellow-topped marker post to the west, one looking downhill, one looking uphill and one looking at the gas pipe & marker post. Canopy dominated by: Alder, Ash, Whitebeam, birch and Wild Cherry. Understorey: Hawthorn, Rowan, Hazel, Whitebeam and Guelder-rose. Field layer locally dominated by: Bramble with Rough Meadow-grass, Cock's-foot, Nettle, Creeping Cinquefoil and Ribwort Plantain.



Left: Stop 9, NW compartment looking downhill. Right: Stop 9, NW compartment looking uphill.
Below: Stop 9, NW compartment looking at the gas pipe.



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10. GPS: SD75811 30146 (178m asl). Two photos taken stood in the woodland having walked in from the corner in the garden fence line, one looking SW back towards the houses, and one looking NE.

Canopy dominated by: Alder, willow, birch, Wild Cherry and Grey Poplar.

Understorey: Hazel, Rowan, Grey Poplar, oak and Blackthorn.

Field layer locally dominated by: Tufted Hair-grass, with Soft-rush, Lady-fern and Hairy Sedge.



Left: Stop 10, NW compartment looking SW back towards the houses. Right: Stop 10, NW compartment looking NE.

Risk assessment checks: Steep &/or slippery slopes, trip hazards, watercourses/waterbodies (specify), culverts, mine shafts/adits, wet/boggy areas, hung-up trees, thorny bushes (Blackthorn, Dog-rose, Hawthorn, Holly etc.), rocks, scree, quarry faces, internal fencing/barbed wire etc.