



RAGWORT AND NOXIOUS PLANT CONTROL POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Clanfield Parish Council owns and manages over 20 hectares (50 acres) of land within the villages of Clanfield and Chalton on behalf of the community. The Council has a duty to manage the land in accordance with all relevant legislation and guidance, particularly with regard to Ragwort. Ragwort is also spreading into other areas of Parish land and into the highway verges.

Additionally, the Parish has a need to control the advance of other undesirable and noxious vegetation which currently incur the cost of both volunteer and contracted labour.

Bramble is a particular encroaching problem in Down Farm Park and in South Lane and Sunderton Meadows.

Old Man's Beard is running rampant in many of our hedgerow and trees, which can eventually kill all vegetation it grows on and over.

Ivy can be damaging to trees, buildings and fences.

RAGWORT

The Legislative Framework and Guidance

This comprises the Weeds Act 1959 and the Ragwort Control Act 2003. The guidance is contained within the Code of Practice on How to Prevent the Spread of Ragwort 2004 (the Code).

The Scope of this Policy

This policy concerns the control of Common Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*).

The Delicate Balance

Common Ragwort is harmful, and can be fatal, if ingested by horses and other animals. As a toxic plant, it can also be harmful to humans unless handled appropriately. However, it does contribute to the biodiversity of the flora and fauna in our countryside. For example, it is an important food source for the cinnabar moth. Through the implementation of this Policy, the Council will seek to recognise both interests by following the guidelines of the Code in assessing the risk.

The Policy

1. Inspection

All the Council's land will be inspected annually - preferably in June - for the presence of Common Ragwort.

2. Assessment

At each location where Common Ragwort is found to be present, the risk will be assessed against the following criteria:

High Risk - Common Ragwort is present within 50m of land used for grazing by horses and other animals or land used for feed/forage production.

Medium Risk - Common Ragwort is present within 50m to 100m of land used for grazing by horses and other animals or land used for feed/forage production.

Low Risk - Common Ragwort or the land on which it is present is more than 100m from land used for grazing by horses and other animals or land used for feed/forage production. Account should also be taken of particular local circumstances and other relevant factors such as prevailing winds. The risk factor should be determined by the likelihood of the ragwort spreading to land used for grazing and/or feed/forage production.

3. Action

All ragwort in High Risk areas should be removed; ragwort in Medium Risk areas should be controlled to lessen its risk and ragwort in Low Risk areas should be reduced (if necessary) to manageable proportions and kept under surveillance.

Ragwort growing in highways verges should be reported to HCC.

4. Method of Removal and Disposal

No herbicides are to be used, however Council on 12th July 2022 has approved exceptional usage of herbicide, cutting and ploughing by specialist contractors to control the problem in the short term.

In future years, once manageable, the ragwort should be hand pulled, using hand tools for leverage, and burnt on site (Council Minute 104/21 (a) of 20 July 2021). A Risk

Assessment for the work should be undertaken for each location using the Council's Model Work Implementation Risk Assessment template for this type of work as a base.

BRAMBLE

The Legislative Framework and Guidance

There is no legislative framework regarding the control of Bramble, however the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) has considerable advice and guidance on the need for, and methods of, control.

The Scope of this Policy

This policy concerns the control of Bramble or Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*).

The Delicate Balance

Brambles can be of value to wildlife, providing shelter and food. For example, the flowers of brambles are a food source for bees; the leaves are a food source for caterpillars and the fruits are eaten by mammals and birds.

Brambles have long, thorny, arching shoots, which can grow 1.8-2.5m (6-8ft) in length, and root easily where the tips touch the soil. Brambles can become a problem where seedlings are allowed to take root, or where stems of established plants have rooted at intervals.

The Policy

1. Inspection

All the Council's land will be inspected annually - preferably in June - for the extent of intrusion of Bramble.

2. Assessment

At each location where Bramble is found to be present, the risk will be assessed against the following criteria:

High Risk – may cause injury to members of the public by overhanging footpaths or creeping onto roadways and cycle paths, or excessive intrusion into open land.

Medium Risk – extending to the point of becoming a danger - monitor growth

Low Risk - no immediate threat

3. Action

Woody vegetation such as bramble and ivy can be difficult to eradicate once they have become established. Hand pulling and digging young seedlings as soon as they are seen will save a lot of hard work later.

4. Method of Removal and Disposal

Hand pulling or cutting of isolated problem bramble can be effective, however where significant intrusion occurs mechanical digging to remove all roots should be implemented. Stems and roots shaken free of soil can be finely shredded and used as a [mulch](#). Alternatively they can be removed from site by the contractor or burnt in bonfires on site when wind and weather permit.

OLD MAN'S BEARD (TRAVELLERS JOY, CLEMATIS VITALBA)

The Legislative Framework and Guidance

There is no legislative framework regarding the control of Old Man's Beard in the UK, however it is regarded as a reportable weed and a threat to bio diversity in New Zealand and several states in America where there are many papers written on the threat and control.

The Scope of this Policy

This policy concerns the control of Old Man's Beard (Travellers Joy, Clematis vitalba).

The Delicate Balance

It is native to the south of England, favouring chalky soils, but has now spread to most of the country, growing on top of hedgerows, bushes, trees and fences. It is considered an invasive weed, forming dense thickets blanketing trees and shrubs.

Old man's beard vines can grow up to 100 feet long and can completely blanket trees and other plants. Creamy white flowers in summer are followed by feathery seed heads in late summer and early autumn, giving this vine its common name "old man's beard. These fluffy seed heads are persistent and quite conspicuous in the winter.

The flowers of this plant are visited by pollinating insects during the day, such as bees as well as hoverflies. OldMan's Beard is also a food plant for several butterfly and moth species such as the pretty chalk carpet moth. The seedheads of this plant also provide a food source for birds, such as goldfinches.

The Policy

1. Inspection

All the Council's land will be inspected annually - preferably in June - for the extent of intrusion of Old Man's Beard.

2. Assessment

At each location where Old Man's Beard is found to be present, the risk will be assessed against the following criteria:

High Risk – may cause injury to members of the public by overhanging footpaths or creeping onto roadways and cycle paths, or excessive intrusion into open land. Endangering plant life that it covers and threatening bio diversity.

Medium Risk – extending to the point of becoming a danger - monitor growth

Low Risk - no immediate threat

3. Action

Woody vegetation such as Old Man's Beard can be difficult to eradicate once they have become established. Hand pulling and digging young seedlings as soon as they are seen will save a lot of hard work later.

4. Method of Removal and Disposal

Control of old man's beard can be achieved through a variety of methods and the best success is achieved by a combination of manual and mechanical methods Climbing vines can be cut at waist height, allowing the upper vines to die back. Lower vines and growth along the ground can be dug up anytime

Hand pulling or cutting of isolated growth can be effective, however where significant intrusion occurs mechanical digging to remove all roots should be implemented.

Stems and roots shaken free of soil can be finely shredded and used as a [mulch](#). Alternatively they can be removed from site by the contractor or burnt in bonfires on site when wind and weather permit.

OTHER UNDESIRABLE VEGETATION

All the Council's land will be inspected periodically by the Council Ranger for other noxious and undesirable vegetation, such as Japanese knotweed, and vegetation obscuring road signs.

Action will be as appropriate for the risk, and may include statutory reporting, reporting to the responsible local authority, or cut back by the Council Ranger.

POLICY STATUS

This Policy was originally approved by the Council on 7 September 2021 (Minute xxx/21) and it will be due for Review in September 2022.

DOCUMENT CONTROL:

Revised Policy Document Reviewed, Proposed and Approved by Property Management Committee on 28/09/2022

Revised Policy Document Reviewed and Presented to Full Council 11/10/2022

Policy Approved by Full Council 11/10/2022

Next Revision October 2023

