

## 6.2 Scrub

**Definition:** scrub is an area dominated by at least 50% cover of shrubs, stunted trees or brambles. Scrub may be open, dense or impenetrable, and may contain hawthorn, blackthorn, gorse (whin), bramble, honeysuckle, dog rose, bushy willows (sally) or stunted hazel with few or no mature trees present. Examples of scrub include blackthorn thickets, hawthorn scrub on steep slopes, willow scrub on wet ground, hazel scrub on rocky slopes or on open limestone, mixed species scrub on exposed sites and whin scrub on marginal grassland. Scrub is usually grazed in association with the surrounding grassland/habitat.

**Aim:** to maintain and enhance the conservation value of scrub habitat and features within it through appropriate management.

**Biodiversity objectives:** scrub contributes to the NI Biodiversity Action Plan targets for Yellowhammer and Irish hare.

### Management requirements

- Scrub and features within it, such as open spaces and ponds, must be retained and managed with no burning or mechanised removal permitted.
- Within the scrub habitat, small areas (less than 0.1ha) must be cut by hand each year so that at least 50% of the field is capable of being grazed.
- Coppiced stumps must not be treated with herbicide, except where gorse or blackthorn is spreading on to adjoining land (see Appendix IV).
- Cut stems may be left on site to rot down but must not be burnt on site.
- No cultivation, reclamation, infilling, dumping, drainage or application of fertiliser, slurry, farmyard manure, lime, herbicide, pesticide or sheep dip or any other material is permitted.
- Supplementary feeding sites, temporary silage clamps and the storage of big bale silage or hay is not permitted.
- Scrub management must not be carried out between 1 March and 31 August.

### Further advice

The annual payment includes an element for routine positive management such as cutting back *small* areas of scrub in rotation to increase the diversity of scrub. Small quantities of cut gorse may be left on site to rot

down. If gorse is cut in large quantities it may only be burnt off site on unimproved or improved grassland. When cutting other scrub species such as blackthorn, hazel or hawthorn the cut stems can be left in habitat piles on site. Noxious weeds such as thistles and ragwort may be controlled with herbicides, applied using a weed wiper or spot sprayer.

Management plans are provided for participants in the **Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Countryside Management Schemes**

