INSTITUTE OF TERRESTRIAL ECOLOGY
(NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL)

NCC/NERC CONTRACT F3/03/80
ITE PROJECT 466
Final Report to Nature Conservancy Council

THE BIOLOGICAL SURVEY OF BRITISH RAIL PROPERTY

Appendix 4 Areas of biological interest on British Rail London Midland Region

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October 1982

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1 INTRODUCTION

This appendix to the final contract report to the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology (ITE) on the survey of British Rail (BR) land, iterates and condenses information about areas of biological interest supplied to the contractors (NCC). It is intended to be distributed within BR and to provide a basis for discussion between them and the NCC on preferred methods of vegetation management.

The appendix begins with a general statement about the conservation interest of railway land and suggests a strategy for verge and permanent way maintenance. This is followed by a list and brief description of sites of interest in the Region. The sites are located by line and mile post within BR areas and divisions, and are cross referenced to the more detailed information held by the NCC.

The list is by no means exhaustive. 18% of all randomly chosen sites visited during the survey proved to be of particular interest (either because habitats or species are locally or nationally scarce), the implication being that a considerable proportion of BR land is of importance to wildlife. An inspection of the regional map (following the list) will show that biological interest sites occur more frequently or are clustered along some lines. In discussion between BR and NCC it may be decided that an approach where particular attention is paid to a stretch of the line, rather than to individual sites would be more effective.

The appendix concludes with a list of NCC offices in the Region, who hold information about the sites in question.

2 MANAGEMENT FOR CONSERVATION AND SAFETY ALONG RAILWAY LINES

"The question of grass cutting is one that a majority of permanent way staff do not like." (Dobson, 1956).

Management at present is concerned largely with the track bed and cess, although the vegetation along verges reflects a century of hand maintenance. Cutting and scything led to a rich grassland with many flowering plants, including primroses, cowslips and orchids, and associated animals. Burning and ballast tipping, however, produced coarse grassland, bramble and tall herb communities. The spread of scrub and secondary woodland was carefully controlled.

The railways were built before the widespread introduction of agricultural chemicals, and serve as a refuge for many plants becoming increasingly rare elsewhere in the countryside. Close to the cess, where disturbance keeps the vegetation open, plants like the Oxford ragwort, narrow-leaved willow herb and small toadflax have been able to spread whilst some seaside plants, such as Danish scurvy-grass and the sand sedge have moved inland along railway lines. On the cinder cess and in yards casual plants, brought in with goods or attached to rolling stock, have appeared and sometimes become established. The most famous of these are the 'shoddy aliens' studied by John Dony (1955) on the Bedfordshire railways.

In recent years the substitution of chemical spraying along the track and a narrow strip of adjacent verge, for hand maintenance, has led to considerable change. Without scything or burning, the character of grassland is altered, with a few coarse species replacing the rich diversity. Scrub develops and secondary woodland spreads. Where yards and tracks are intensively sprayed, the numbers of interesting casual plants diminishes, and plant movement becomes inhibited.

The BR land survey has shown that much of the grassland of conservation interest occurs on previously managed cuttings. The excavated slopes tend to have a nutrient poor mineral soil which supports locally and regionally characteristic plants, and inhibits competition from false oat, even where previously burnt. Embankments, which were often topsoiled after construction, and flat verges, generally support a more disturbed vegetation with many commonly occurring competitive species. Spent ballast is tipped on these formations and chemical and organic wastes from trains drain onto flats and negative slopes. Embankment footings are less well drained than other areas of verge, and ballast may act as a mulching agent. beneath which a damp, organic soil forms. Such areas support nettle, cleavers and rosebay willow herb, whilst false oat grass and bramble colonise the more freely draining upper slopes. In the Scottish uplands, ragwort, bracken and raspberry are more commonly found. Where scrub is not cut, bramble, thorn and sallow may become dense and in many areas give way to secondary ash woodland. Oak and beech woodland are more usually restricted to cuttings.

In general, where manpower is available, priority should be given to the maintenance of cuttings. This coincides with the permanent way engineers' requirement that trees or scrub likely to drop litter or branches onto the line be controlled. Scything and occasional burning of grassland will prevent the development of scrub, whilst encouraging diversity. Burning, however, should only be carried out over limited areas of verge and not at all during the bird nesting season (as per discussion between BR and NCC). Application of chemical scrub control agents is effective, but leaves standing dead material and does little to encourage the less competitive grassland plants. The use of a flail adapted to be carried by train has been found effective for clearing bramble and low scrub in some areas. A swathe about 3 metres wide can be cleared on either side of the line and, once any mature trees close to the cess have been felled, can be readily maintained by annual or, more usually, biennial flailing.

On embankments the spread of scrub and secondary woodland on lower slopes may lend stability. It will provide cover and nesting habitat. Casualty recordings have shown that over 70% of bird fatalities occur in cuttings where flight from oncoming trains is inhibited. This suggests that it is preferable to leave cover on embankment rather than cutting slopes, although where woodland on the latter is well developed and offers no hazard to rail traffic, this should clearly not be cut. In highland areas of Scottish Region woodland is often at a premium and should not be cleared.

The requirement that annual spraying of main lines by BR and contractor's trains should leave the ballasted width 98%, and the cess 95%, weed free is stringent. Probably the most serious weed along the track bed is the common horsetail. This is a perennating plant which could be controlled by

biennial spraying of the track. The majority of plants which are spray-killed are small annual species and bryophytes which are adapted to survive the very dessicating conditions found during high summer. Many of these are still found on tipped ballast and cinder, although when the vegetation closes over, they are no longer able to compete successfully. It is suggested that, on less important lines, and perhaps initially for a trial period only, tracks on either side be sprayed during alternate years. This will enable some annual plants to maintain their populations. Further, it should substantially reduce maintenance costs without introducing hazard, since all perennating plants will be controlled.

REFERENCES

DOBSON, J. 1956. The work of a length ganger. J. Proc. Perm.-Way Instn, 74, 2.

DONY, J. 1955. Notes on the Bedfordshire railway flora. Beds. Nat., 9. 12-17.

(111) Skipton - Settlo - Carlisle

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246}-3/4	R229 & B173	B173	Cutting/Plat	Damp and dry limostone turf, low scrub and rock faces. Pool and streams	Scything of coarser grassland.
263-276}	1		Cutting/Embankmont	Calcicole and calcifugo grassiand, rock scrub and accondary woudland	Beything of coarsor grassland.
296	B178		Cutting	Pinc/birch woodland. Heather and calcifuge grassland. Rock faces, damp/dry.	Burning of old heather.
(14) Sw	Swincon Branch	æ			
0	8160		Cutting	Calcicolous grassland, scrub and cindor waste	Mowing/scything of grassland.
(v) Ca	Carnforth - Workington - Carlislo	orkington -	Carlislo		
4	3) 17.18	8171 (SD 47.75)	Cutting/Embankauat	Limestone rock faces, grassland and acrub. Clader flats, carsh etc.	Some scrub removal and acything.
8-8	B172 (\$	B172 (SD 43.79)	Cutting/Flat	Limostone quarry, grassland and scrub	Mowing of coarse grassland,
23) \$21Q	D175 (SD 240747)	Cutting	Lincatone rock faces, rich gressland and scrub. Walls and waste land.	Bramble removal, acything of cearse grassland.
1 3/4-2}	D177		Cutting/Flat	Constal vegotation on unstable cliffs and mine spoil	None.

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(1) Euston - Shilton (West Coast Main Line)

E.P.	Our Reference	Formation	Vegetation	Preferred Management
48-48 3/4	8114	Cutting	Calcicolous rough grassiand; scrub	Scrub removal and grazing/scrtbing.
60 3/4	B112	Cutting	Limestone rock cutting, deciduous scrub and calcicolous grassland	Zones of scrub removal.
(11) Weasde	Neasden - Ruislip - Bicester			
. 12 1	H128	Cutting/Embankment	Acid woodland and scrub, plus calcifuge turf. Desicolous scrub and gransland	Scrub removal in calcicolous grassland
2-23	B111	Cutting	Mixed deciduous scrub and calcicolous conres grassland	Grazing and scytbing of grassland areas.
(111) Roade	(111) Roade - Northampton - Rugby	.gby.		
£119	B136	Cutting	Calcifuge and calcicole grassland,	Burning
C8 3/4-69 3/4 B113	1 B113	Enbankcout	scrub and landslip Scrub, streams, shelter belt, coarse grass	Scrub thinning and bramble control.
(1v) Marton	(1v) Harton Junction Branch			
9 3/4	8125	Cutting	Calcicolous grassland, some scrub and old track bed.	Scrub removal, mowing and relaxation of spraying.
B NOTTINGHAM DIVISION	KOISIAIG			
(1) (Bodfor	(Bodford) - Sharnbrook - Loicestor	Loicestor		
891-3/4	B115	Cutting	Variod calcicolous grassland and)	
56-62		mainly Cutting	Calcicolous grassland and scrub)	Prevention of scrub encroachment on grassland
(11) (Poterb	(11) (Poterborough) - Metton - Leicostor	Leicostor	· .	
103	B148	Cutting	Calcicole and calcifuge grassland	Mowing, control of scrub.

B SOTTINGHAM DIVISION

	Professed Management	Renewed disturbance.		Renewed disturbance.		Mowing of coarse grassland.			Scything of course grassland and removal of young acrub.	Scrub cloarance on better grassland.	Renowed disturbance.		Solective thining of carr and mowing of coarse grassland		Mowing to present acrub aprend.		·	Cutting of bramble and rosobay.
	Vogetation	Cinder waste ground, coarse grassiand and marsh		Limestone rock face, calcicolous grace cinder flats and rubble waste	·	Cinder and ballast grassland; sollow carr			Calcicolous grassland - damp and dry. Scrub and old track bed	Woodland, calcicolous grassland	Gresland & wate ground on sea- sand. Some scrub		Willow carr, danp grassland		Damp and cry calcicolous grassland. Aspon/sallow scrub and thora			Recolonised sand excevations with variety of herbaceous calcifuge veg.
-Treat	Formation	Plat		Cutting/Eabankaent	ropton (- Stoke-on-Trent)	Flat/Cutting		mingham New St.	Cutting	Cutting & Plat	Esbankmont & Flat	Tyroloy	Cutting/Flat	iow 9t	Cutting		owo - Wineford	Flat & Cutting
(111) Leicester - Burton-upon-Tront	Our Reference	8118	Pyo Bridge - Shirebrook	B150	(v) Willington Junction - Scropton (- Stob	R185	C BIRNINGHAM DIVISION	(Orford) - Aynho - Birmingham New St	0119	B120	8121	Stratford-upon-Avon - Tyseley	R219	(111) Nuncaton - Birmingham Now	B123	CREWE DIVISION	(Eustob) - Shilton - Crawe - Wineford	R211
(111) L		104	(3.0)	138	(v) #1	26 3/4	C BIRN	3	94-94	100-100	107	313	÷8	(111) N	₹ 0	D CREW	Ġ	156

LONDON MIDLAND REGION

D CREWE DIVISION

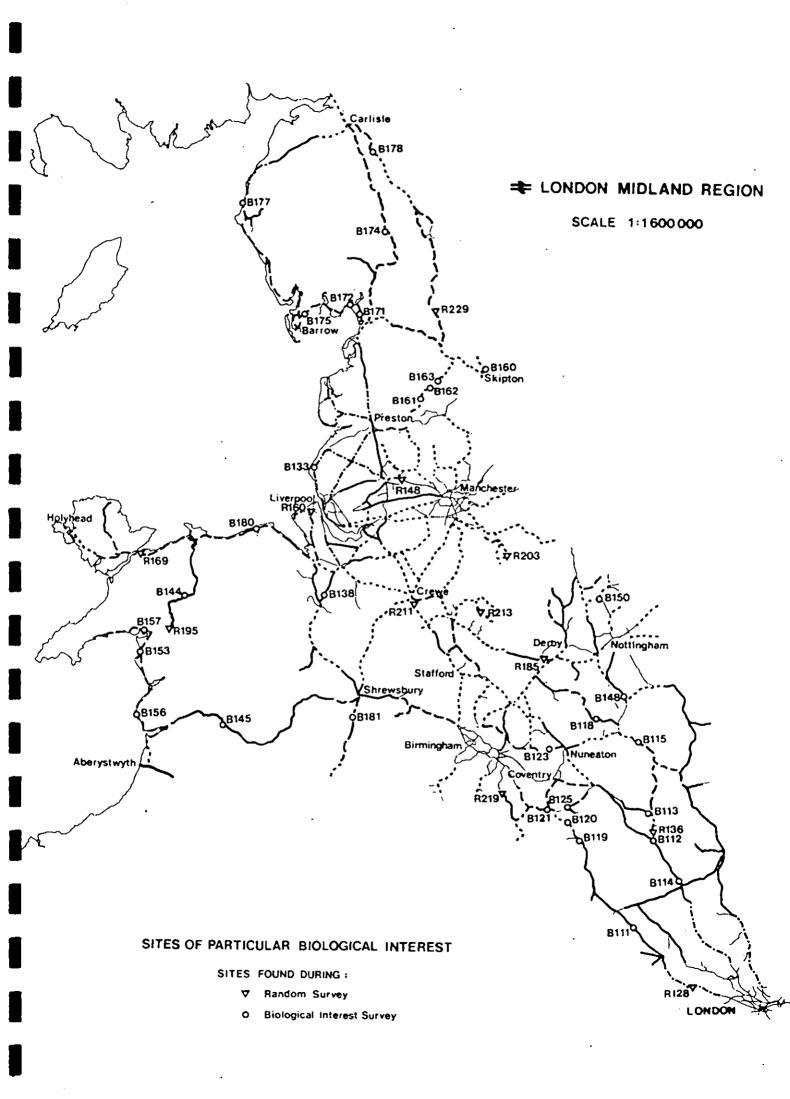
Harbore Marganesia (114) Shreenbury - Crown Arms (115) Shreenbury - Crown Arms (116) Shreenbury - Crown Arms (117) Shreenbury - Crown Arms (118) Shreenbury - Crown Arms (119) Shreenbury - Crown Arms (110) Shreenbury - Crown Arms (110) Shreenbury - Crown Arms (111) Shreenbury - Crown Arms (111) Alloch Brains (111) Alloch Brains (111) Alloch Brains (111) Alloch Brains (112) Alloch Brains (113) Shreenbury - Crown Arms (113) Shreenbury - Crown Arms (114) Alloch Brains (115) Alloch Brains (117) Alloch Brains (118) Shreenbury - Aborystay in (119) Shreenbury - Aborystay in (110) Shreenbury - Aborystay in (111) Alloch Brains (111) Alloch Brains (112) Brains (113) Shreenbury - Aborystay in (114) Shreenbury - Aborystay in (115) Brains (117) Alloch Brains (118) Brains (119) Shreenbury - Aborystay in ((11) Onka::	Oakamoor Branch			
Shreebury - Crave Arms 241 Rieb 4 Bid Cutting/Embankmont according Frass and rudoral veg. Creve - holyhond 241 Rieb 4 Bid Cutting/Embankmont according Frass and rudoral veg. Creve - holyhond 241 Rieb 4 Bid Cutting/Embankmont according Frass and rudoral veg. Liandudno - Lianrat - Treefyngd Bid Cutting/Embankmont according Frassland and scrub; cinder of line colonised. Liandudno - Lianrat - Treefyngd Bid Cutting/Embankmont according Frassland and scrub; cinder flats and brackon Active Bids Cutting/Embankmont according Frassland, out acrub and rock faces. Shreebury - Aboryateyth Active Bids Cutting Embankmont according Frassland, out acrub and rock faces. Shreebury - Aboryateyth Active Bids Cutting Embankmont according Frassland and stream Dovey Junction - Pallingl Bids Cutting Brassland Active Bids Bids Brassland Active Bids Bids Bras	K.P.	Our Reference	Formation	Vegetation	Professed Management
Shrewbury - Craven Arms Shrewbury - Craven Arms Shrewbury - Craven Arms Shrewbury - Chostor 205 B138 Cutting/Embankaont varied acrub and woodland with aone rough grassland; some bramble crave - Holyhoad 241 R160 & B141 Cutting/Flat D180 Cutting/Embankaont Scrub and tall horb veg. Cinder flate Dysorth Branch Limentone rock and grassland. Limentone rock and grassland. Scrub and tall horb veg. Cinder flate Scrub and tall horb veg. Cinder flate Rock faces, serve, oak woodland R195 Cutting/Embankaont Rock faces, serve, oak woodland R195 Cutting/Flat/Embankaont Calcifug grossland, out scrub and rock faces. Shrewbury - Aborystayth Calcifug grossland, out scrub and brackon Shrewbury - Aborystayth D150 Cutting B150 Cutting D150 Liber Fath sandy turf D150 Liber Fath carth Understribe	0} (14)	R213	Plat/Embankwont	allast was	Scything of rough grassland etc.
Streebury - Craven Arms Streebury - Chester Streebury - Chester Streebury - Chester Cutting/Enbankaont Limeaton rock and grassland. Limeaton rock and grassland. Limeaton rock and grassland. Limeaton rock and grassland. Creve - Holyhoad Limeaton rock and grassland. Limeaton rock and grassland. Limeaton rock and grassland. Creve - Holyhoad Creve - Holyhoad Creve - Holyhoad Limeaton rock and grassland. Couting/Embankaont Rock fuces, serve, oak woodland Rock fuces, serve, oak woodland Rock fuces, serve, oak woodland Rock fuces, serve, vorled grassland. Catting/Embankaont Catting/Embankaont Catting/Embankaont Catting, serve, vorled grassland Rock cutting, serve, vorled grassl					•
Shrewbury - Choster Shrewbury - Choster Cutting/Embankment Maries and rodoral veg. Crews - Holyhood Aslach Branch Ulamdudno - Llanrant - Trawsfynydd Bl44 Cutting/Embankment Cutting/Embankment Rock fuces, scree, oak voodland Ruds Cutting/Flat/Embankment Shrewbury - Aborystryth Shrewbury - Aborystryth Shrewbury - Aborystryth Shrewbury - Aborystryth Bl45 Cutting Shrewbury - Aborystryth Shrewbury - Aborystryth Bovey junction - Pallhall Dovey junction - Pallhall Bl55 Cutting Bl56 Cutting Bl57 Shrewbury Bl58 Shrewbu		#6bury - Craven Art B181		Rich dry grassland; some bramble atc.	Mowing of grassland.
B138 Cutting/Embankmont Varied scrub and woodland with some rough grass and ruderal veg.	(1v) Shren	rebury - Chostor			
R169 & B141 Cutting/Flat Scrub and tall horb vug. Cinder flate sorth Branch B180 Cutting/Eabankment Limestone rock, grasmland and scrub; cinder of line coloniated. B144 Cutting/Flat/Embnikment Rock fuces, scree, oak woodland R195 Cutting/Flat/Embnikment acrub. Cinder flate and bracken acrub. Cinder flate and bracken flates bracken flates and bracken flates and bracken flates bracken flates and bracken flate	204}-205	8138	Cutting/Embankmont	Varied scrub and woodland with some rough grass and rudoral veg.	None for sometime.
Rigo & Bidi Cutting/Flat Scrub and tall horb vug. Cinder flats sorth Dranch Diso Cutting/Embankment Limestone rock, grassland and scrub; cinder of line colonised. Bidd Cutting/Embankment Rock fuces, scree, oak woodland Rock fuces, scree, oak woodland acrub; cinder of line colonised. Bidd Cutting/Flat/Embankment Rock fuces, scree, oak woodland acrub. Cutting/Embankment Calcifuge grassland, sallow acrub. Cinder flats and bracken fock faces. Bhrewsbury - Aborystayth Bids Cutting/Embankment Rock cutting, scree, verled grassland hoath, scrub and streams hoath. Bids Cutting Rock cutting Rock cutting, acree, verled grassland hoath, scrub and streams hoath. Bids Embankment Rock cutting acree, verled grassland hoath, scrub and streams hoath of grass and undershives	Creve -	- Nolyhond			
D180 Cutting/Embankment Limestone rock, grassland and scrub; cinder of line colonised. landudno - Llanrwat - Trawsfynydd B144 Cutting/Embankment Rock fuces, seree, oak woodland R195 Cutting/Flat/Embankment Varied calcifuge grassland, sallow scrub. Cinder flats and bracken - Cutting/Embankment Calcifugu grassland, cut scrub and bracken - Cutting/Embankment Rock cutting, scree, varied grassland foots, scrib and streams B145 Cutting B145 Rock cutting, scree, varied grassland hosth, acrub and streams B153 Cutting B153 Low heath of grass and undershrubs	2401-241	R169 & B141	Cutting/Flat	and grassic	Scrub removal from better grassland.
Limeatono rock, grassland and scrub; cinder of line colonised. Lanreat - Trawsfynydd Bl44 Cutting/Elat/Embankmont Rock fuces, serce, oak woodland Rlu5 Cutting/Elat/Embankmont variod calcifuge grassland, sallow scrub. Cinder flats and brackon Cutting/Enbankmont Calcifuge grassland, cut scrub and rock faces. Shrewsbury - Aborystwyth Bl45 Cutting Bl45 Cutting Embankmont Rock cutting, scree, variod grassland hoath, scrub and streams Dovey Junction - Pwilholi Bl50 Cutting Douldor clay cliff, with carth alips. Low hoath of grass and undorshrubs	(vi) Dysori	th Dranch	·		
landudno - Llanrwat - Trawsfynydd B144 Cutting/Embankmont Rock fucos, scree, oak woodland R1U5 Cutting/Flat/Embnikmont Variod calcifuge grassland, sallow scrub. Cinder flats and brackon Calcifugo grassland, cut acrub and rock facos. Shrewabury - Aborystwyth B145 Cutting Rock cutting, scree, variod grassland hoath, acrub and streams B145 Cutting B153 Cutting B153 Cutting B11ps. Low hoath of grass and undoyshrubs	ر. 2 د	B180	Cutiing/Enbankment	Limestone rock, grassland and scrub; cinder of line colonised.	Serub thinning.
B144 Cutting/Embankmont Rock fuces, scree, oak woodland R195 Cutting/Flat/Embankmont Variod calcifuge grassland, sallow scrub. Cinder flats and brackon Calcifugu grassland, cut scrub and rock faces. Shrewsbury - Aborysteyth B145 Cutting Rock cutting, scree, variod grassland hoath, scrub and streams hoath, scrub and streams Dovey Junction - Pwilheli B156 Embankmont Porb-rich sandy turf B153 Cutting B155. Low hoath of grass and undorshrubs	1) Llane	dudno - Llanrest -	Trawafynydd		
RIUS Cutting/Plat/Embankmont Varied calcifuge grassland, sallow acrub. Cinder flats and brackon cutiling/Embankment Calcifuge grassland, cut acrub and rock faces. Shrewabury - Aborystayth Bl45 Cutting Rock cutting, scree, veried grassland heath, acrub and streams heath, acrub and streams Dovey Junction - Pullhall Bl55 Cutting Bl53 Cutting alips. Low heath of grass and undershrubs		B144	Cutting/Embankmont .	Rock fuces, serve, oak woodland	Моле
Calcifugo grassland, cut acrub and rock faces. Shrewabury - Aboryatayth Bi45 Cutting Rock cutting, acres, varied grassland heath, acrub and streams Dovey Junction - Pallheli Bi56 Embankment Porb-rich sendy turf Bi57 Cutting Douldor clay cliff, with earth alips. Low heath of grass and undorwhrubs	204	R195	Cutting/flat/Embankment	Variod calcifuge grassland, sallow acrub. Cinder flats and brackon	Grazing.
Calcifugo grassland, cut acrub and rock faces. Shrewsbury - Aborystayth Bl45 Cutting Rock cutting, scree, voried grassland heath, acrub and streams Bovey Junction - Pullieli Bl53 Cutting Boulder clay cliff, with earth alips. Low heath of grass and undershrubs	.11) AE]:	vch Branch			
Shrewabury - Aboryatayth Bl45 Cutting Rock cutting, scree, variod grassland hoath, scrub and streams Bovey Junction - Pallhali Bl56 Embankment Porb-rich sandy turf Bl53 Cutting Blbs. Low hoath of grass and undorwhrubs	49-7	. •	Cutting/Embankment	Calcifugu grassland, cut acrub and rock faces	None.
B145 Cutting Rock cutting, scree, varied grassland heath, scrub and streams Dovey Junction - Pwilheli B153 Cutting Boulder clay cliff, with earth alips. Lev heath of grass and undershrubs	(1x) Shre	ewabury - Aboryatm	yth		
Dovey Junction - Pwilheli Di56 Embankment Porb-rich sendy turf Doubler clay cliff, with earth Bi53 Cutting alips. Low heath of grass and undershrubs	61\$-3/4	B145		Rock cutting, scree, varied grassland heath, scrub and streams	Nowing of coarse grassland.
D156 Exbankmont Forb-rich sandy turf B153 Cutting alips. Low hosth of grass and undorshrubs	(x) Bove	ey Junction - Pwill	hall		
B153 Cutting Bouldor clay cliff, with earth alips. Low hoath of grade and undorshrubs	₹0 8	1156	Embankaon t	Porb-tich sandy turf	Mowing of coarse grass
	1-110	8153	Cutting		None.

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(x) Dovey Junction - Pwilheli (continued)

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u.p.	Cur Reforence	Formation	Vegotation	Preferred Management .
. 118 3/4	B157	Embankaon t	Scrub and carr, mereh and rough grass	Soloctive scything of herbaccous vegetation.
E KANCHESTER DIVISION	DIVISTON			
(1) Chiale	Chinley - Peak Dale - Buxton	uo		
162}-0\$	R203 & B165	Cut ting/Esbankson t	Rock faces, calcicolous grassland, scrub and woodland. Old track bod and station	Scything of grassland and some scrub removal.
(11) Manche	(11) Manchestor Victoria - Hindley (- Wigan)	ley (- Wigan)		
12 3/4	R148	Cutting.	Damp and dry calcifugo grassland, some disturbed	Mone in near future.
F LIVERPOOL DIVISION	DIVISION			
(1) Haward	Hawarden - Bidston			
₹	R160	Flat	Sallow carr, mixed coarse grassland, marsh reedswarp and open pools	Grazing and some cutting of scrub.
(11) Kirkda	(11) Kirkdalo - Southport			
13‡-14	B133	Flat	Stabilised duno grassiand	No broadscale apraying and occasional acrub removal.
G PRESTON DIVISION	IVISION			
(1) Loylan	(1) Loyland - Greing (West Coast Main Line)	st Main Line)		
36 3/4-37§	8174	Cutting	Heather moor, sallow scrub, acid grassland, rock faces, basicolous grassland	A little acrub clearance from better grassland.
(11) Blackb	Blackburn - Hellifield	•		
203	pigi	Cutting	Damp calcicolous grassland, somo	Some scrub removel and scything.
23 3/4	8162	Cutting	Rock faces, calcicolous grassland, scrub	Scything of grassland, sprsy control.
261-271	B163	Cutting	Calcicolous grassland, rock faces mixed scrub, woodland. Walls and ditches	Scything of better grassland and control of apraying.



NCC Regional Offices, London Midland Region

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Plas Gogerddan Aberystwyth Dyfed SY23 3EB Tel: 0970 (Aberystwyth) 828551

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