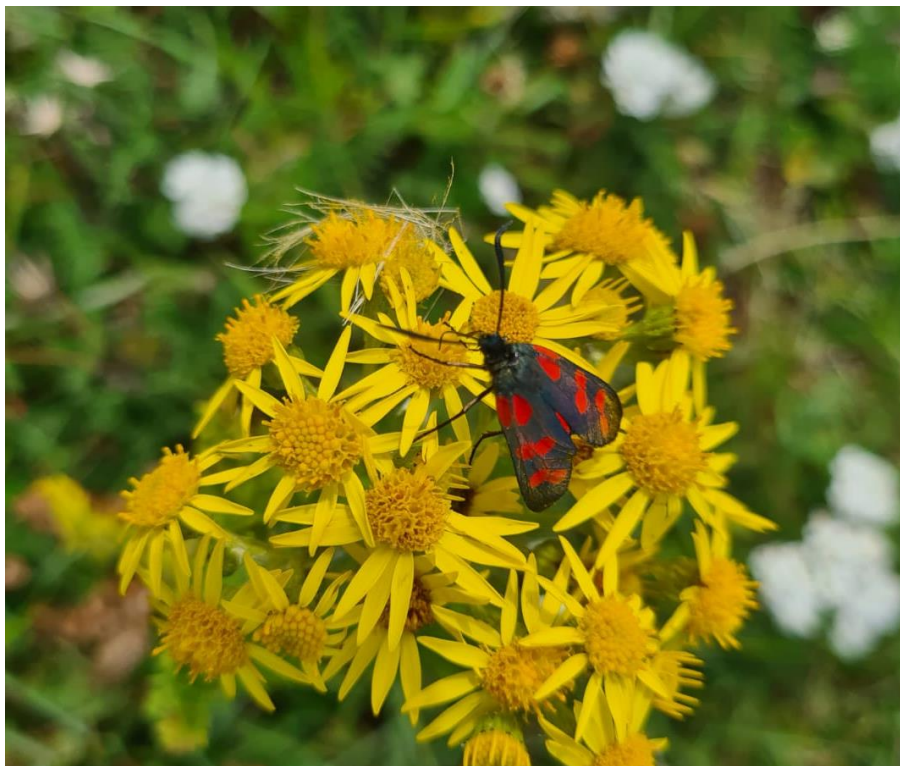




Appendix 2

Wildflower Project: Report to Scrutiny Committee for species listed on the Weeds Act, 1959



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Introduction

The control and reporting of injurious weeds is subject to the Weeds Act, 1959.

There are five weeds classified as injurious under the Weeds Act 1959. These are:

- Common ragwort (*Senecio jacobae*)
- Spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*)
- Creeping or field thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)
- Broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*)
- Curled dock (*Rumex crispus*)

It is not an offence to have injurious weeds growing on our land. The Weeds Act, 1959, states the following:

"(1) Where the minister of Agriculture fish and food (in this act referred to as ' the Minister') is satisfied that there are injurious weeds to which this act applies growing upon any land he may serve upon the occupier of the land a notice, to take such action as may be necessary to prevent the weeds from spreading."

Unless served with a notice, there is no requirement to control or remove any of the species listed above.

These are common and widespread species, found throughout Denbighshire. They all have significant biodiversity benefits, and support a wide range of species. The Code of Practice to Prevent and Control the Spread of Ragwort (November 2011) states

*"This guidance does not seek to eradicate ragwort because as a native plant it is very important for wildlife in the UK. It supports many species of wildlife, including Common broomrape (*Orobanche minor*), 14 species of fungi and many different invertebrates, such as moth caterpillars, thrips, plant bugs, flies, beetles and mites. With the decline in flowering plant diversity in the countryside, ragwort has assumed an increasing importance as a source of food for generalist nectar feeding insects in the late summer.*

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Ragwort is the food plant of at least 77 species of foliage eating insects, including five 'Red Data Book' and eight 'nationally scarce' species. The most well known is the cinnabar moth (Tyria jacobaeae). At least 30 species of insects are confined to ragwort and some species use the ragwort flowers as territory markers or vantage points to find passing prey or mates. Others are more closely associated with taking ragwort pollen, and more than 170 species have been recorded feeding on ragwort nectar. This important source of insects is exploited by many species of birds and mammals."

Additionally, the Ragwort Control Act 2003 has updated the guidance on control required for this plant. This updated guidance recommends ragwort control only when there is a risk to grazing horses and livestock, such as in grazing paddocks.

Ragwort requires bare ground for seeds to germinate, and the management of the Wildflower Project Sites does not generally provide the conditions for the species to proliferate. Caution is required, as many of the control measures which could be used (such as cutting and pulling) can increase the abundance of ragwort.

It is therefore imperative that we follow a scientific approach to the control of these species, on a case by case basis, and only act where they pose a risk.



Photo 1: Common Ragwort providing nectar for pollinating insects.

Injurious Weeds on Wildflower Project Sites 2022.

As stated above, the species listed on the Weeds Act, 1959 are common and widespread species, found throughout Denbighshire. It is, therefore, no surprise that they have been recorded on a number of sites included in Denbighshire County Council's Wildflower Project. There are over 100 sites included within the Wildflower Project and the total number of sites where each species has been recorded is included in the table below.

Injurious Weed Species	Number of Wildflower Project Sites Where Recorded
Common ragwort (<i>Senecio jacobae</i>)	56 (rare), 9 (occasional), 1 (frequent)
Spear thistle (<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>)	22 (rare), 2 (occasional), 1 (frequent)
Creeping or field thistle (<i>Cirsium arvense</i>)	12 (rare), 6 (occasional)
Broad-leaved dock (<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>)	18 (rare), 2 (occasional), 1 (frequent)
Curled dock (<i>Rumex crispus</i>)	41 (rare), 8 (occasional), 2 (frequent)

Table 1: Number of sites where Injurious Weeds Act species were recorded, and their abundance using the DAFOR scale.

As expected, these species are found in a number of Wildflower Project Sites. However, the abundance at the vast majority of sites is relatively low and in line with their natural occurrence in unimproved and semi-improved grassland systems.

It should be noted that many of the species are perennial or biennial, and were recorded in flower on sites during their first year in the project. This indicates that the species were already present, but likely suppressed by the frequent mowing schedules previously in place.

The Code of Practice to Prevent and Control the Spread of Ragwort states *“In many situations ragwort poses no threat to horses and other livestock. It is a natural component of many types of unimproved grasslands. It is necessary to prevent its spread where it presents a high risk of poisoning horses and livestock or spreading to fields used for the production of forage”*

The Code of practice provides the following risk categories as guidelines, for assessing the risk posed by common ragwort:

Medium Risk:

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

High Risk:

Ragwort is present and flowering/seeding within 50m of land used for grazing by horses and other animals or land used for feed/forage production.

The Code of Practice to Prevent and Control the Spread of Ragwort states *“The distances given above are guidelines only and when assessing risk, account should also be taken of particular local circumstances and other relevant factors such as prevailing winds, topography, shelter belts, natural barriers, and vegetation cover of receiving land. Whether or not the density of ragwort is high or low, the risk factor will be determined by the likelihood of it spreading to land used for grazing and/or feed/forage production.”*

Assessing the Risk Posed by Common Ragwort (and Other Species Listed on the Weeds Act, 1959).

As outlined above, our aim is not to eradicate common ragwort (or other species listed on the Weeds Act, 1959), but to ensure we assess the risk posed by these species on a site by site basis and act accordingly.

The majority of these sites are located in urban and peri-urban settings, well away from land used for livestock grazing and horse pasture. Furthermore, many of the sites are separated from nearby agricultural land by physical barriers such as hedging, fencing, buildings. The vegetation cover of the land on the wildflower sites, and the agricultural land near to these sites, also reduces the risk.

Regular surveys are undertaken at each site, and the presence and abundance of common ragwort, along with other species listed on the Weeds Act, 1959 is recorded. This provides accurate information on these species at Wildflower Project Sites.

Using the risk categories, and taking into account local conditions, we have been able to categorise the sites as low, medium and high risk. This is shown in the table below. This methodology has been extended to include all species listed on the Weeds Act 1959.

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Wildflower Project Site Risk Categories			
Site Name	Notes	local circumstances and other relevant factors	Assessed Risk
Green Lane 2	A small corner of the 50m buffer extends into a neighbouring field.	A footpath, road and a metal fence	High
Green Lane 1	Around a quarter of the 50m buffer extends into a neighbouring field. Barrier	A footpath, road and a metal fence	High
Green Lane / B5437	Most of the 50m buffer extends into neighbouring fields.	A footpath, road, a small hedge and a fence	High
B4401 Embankment	A small amount of the 50m buffer extends into a neighbouring field.	A safety swathe, footpath, road, short wall and trees	High
ATS Roundabout	A small amount of 100m buffer extends into neighbouring fields.	Site well separated from grazing land by a safety swathe, main road, grass verge, footpath, grass verge and a high hedge with stands of trees.	Low

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Ffordd Y Graig	An area of the 50m buffer extends into a neighbouring field use for growing crops.	No grazing land within 50m. Site is well separated from neighbouring farmland by an 8ft hedge	Low
Parc Alafowlia Fields	An area of the 50m buffer extends into a neighbouring crop field.	Site well separated from grazing land by a border cut around the site, 8ft+ hedge, a wide grassed verge, A525, large grassed embankment verge with +8ft hedgerow and trees	Low
Dalar Wen	Urban		Low
Y Maes Playing Area	Urban		Low
Y Maes Walkway	Urban		Low
Cysgodfa Walkway	Urban		Low
Ffordd Colomendy	Urban		Low
Llys Gwydyr Field	Urban		Low
Lon Cerys	Urban		Low
Cysgod y Graig 3	An area of the 100m buffer extends into a neighbouring field.	Site well separated from grazing land by residential properties, roads, footpaths and a large hedgerow	Low
Cysgod y Graig 2	A very small area of the 100m buffer extends into a neighbouring field.	Site well separated from grazing land by residential properties, roads, footpaths and a large hedgerow	Low
Cysgod y Graig 1	Urban		Low

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Accar-Y-Forwyn	Urban		Low
Stryd-Y-Dyffryn	Urban		Low
Denbigh High Active Travel	The 50m buffer extends into a neighbouring field.	A large hedge and some mature trees	High
Lon Tywysof Corridor	Urban		Low
A525 End of Bypass	An area of the 50m buffer extends into a neighbouring crop field.	Site well separated from grazing land. Border cut around site, footpath, A525, footpath, grassed verge and hedgerow	Low
Ruthin Road roundabout	An area of the 50m buffer extends into a neighbouring crop field.	Site well separated from grazing land. Border cut around site, footpath, A525, footpath, grassed verge and hedgerow	Low
Llys Catrin	An area of the 50m buffer extends into a neighbouring crop field.	Site well separated from grazing land. Border cut around site, footpath, A525, footpath, grassed verge and hedgerow	Low
Ruthin Road	An area of the 50m buffer extends into a neighbouring crop field.	Site well separated from grazing land. Border cut around site, footpath, A525, footpath, grassed verge and hedgerow	Low

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Weavers Lane	A small area of the 50m buffer extends into a nearby field.	Site well separated from grazing land. Inclined site with a footpath, road and a row of 2 story homes with large rear gardens above	Medium
A5151 Newmarket Road	The 50m buffer extends into a neighbouring field.	High steep embankment topped with large established hedgerow	Medium
Llindir Street	The 50m bufer extends into a neighbouring field.	A safety cut on site, a road, a pub carpark and a steep inclined embankment topped with a hedgerow	Medium
B5428 Triangle	The 50m bufer extends into a neighbouring field.	A safety cut on site, a road, a pub carpark and a steep inclined embankment topped with a hedgerow	Medium
Henllan Top Park	The 50m buffer extends into a neighbouring field.	An inclined slope with hedgerow	High
Parc-Y-Llan	A very small area of the 50m buffer extends into a nearby field.	Site well separated from grazing land by residential properties, a road and a large treeline/hedgerow	Medium
The Bridges	Urban		Low

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Druid Inn A494	A very small area of the 50m buffer extends into a nearby field.	Site well separated from grazing land by land gradient, with very large border cut around site, A494, footpath, mature treeline and narrow woodland	Medium
Cae'r Felin	A very small area of the 50m buffer extends into a nearby field.	Site well separated from grazing land by a large mature hedge approximately 15ft, a grassed verge, footpath, grassed verge, A525, footpath and a range of commercial businesses, car parks, a hedgerow with mature trees and approximately 8 residential properties	Low
Llanrhaeadr A525	The 50m buffer extends into neighbouring fields.	Site well separated from grazing land to rear by high hedgerow.	High
Meliden Embankment	The 50m buffer extends into nearby fields.	An inclined site with a border cut around site, footpaths, Meliden Road, high established hedgerows with mature trees and multiple large residential properties	Medium
Maes Lliwen	The 50m buffer extends into a nearby field.	A border cut around site, footpath, road, a small stream and a high hedgerow with mature trees - gaps in hedgerow	High
Beach Road West	Urban		Low
Bastion Road Crazy Golf Field	Urban		Low
Bastion Road Park	Urban		Low
Coed Mor drive	Urban		Low

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Plas Uchaf Avenue	Urban		Low
Ffordd Parc Bodnant Field	The 50m buffer extends into nearby fields.	Site well separated from grazing land by a large mature treeline, border cut around site, footpath, Prestatyn Road, Ffordd Parc Bodnant and hedgerows	Medium
Beach Road East	Urban		Low
Llys Aled	Urban		Low
North Wales Bowls Centre	Urban		Low
Ceg-Y-Ffordd	Urban		Low
Ffordd Penrhwydfa	Urban		Low
Cardiff Way	Urban		Low
Deva Evangelical church	Urban		Low
Heather Crescent	The 50m buffer extends into a nearby field.	A small stream bordered by mature treeline	Medium
Rhyd Y Byll Embankment	The 50m buffer extends into neighbouring fields.	A large wall topped with vegetation, mature hedgerow and farm hardstanding - small farm gate and entrance	Medium
Abergele Road	The 50m buffer extends into a nearby field.	A safety swathe cut around site, Ffordd Abergele, a small ditch and a mature hedgerow	Medium
Vicarage lane	Urban		Low

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Plas Lorna	A small area of the 50m buffer extends into a nearby field.	An inclined site, A547, grassed verges, footpath and cycle path, mature hedgerow and trees - low fence line	High
Ffordd Nant	Urban		Low
Glos Gladstone	Urban		Low
Pavilion and Splash Point Promenade	Urban		Low
Hilton Drive/Splashpoint	Urban		Low
Rugby Club Walkway	Urban		Low
Walnut Crescent 1	Urban		Low
Walnut Crescent 2	Urban		Low
Llys Brenig Park	Urban		Low
Maes-Y-Gog	Urban		Low
Violet Grove Park	Urban		Low
Cambrian Walk	The 100m buffer extends into a nearby crop field.	Site well separated from grazing land by mature woodland, footpaths, a large number of detached residential properties, mature high hedgerows and a stream	Low
Bryn Cwnin	The 50m buffer extends into a neighbouring field.	Site well separated from grazing land by a mature tree lined hedgerow which becomes a narrow woodland in places	Medium
Coronation Gardens	Urban		Low
Marine Lake	Urban		Low
County Hall	Urban		Low

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Station Road	Urban		Low
Pen Y Maes	Urban		Low
Bro Deg	A small area of the 50m buffer extends into a nearby crop field.	A site border, footpath, 13 detached residential properties, mature trees and a large mature hedgerow	Low
Erw Goch	Urban		Low
Stryd Y Brython Park	Urban		Low
Stryd y Brython	Urban		Low
Tesco roundabout	Urban		Low
Glasdir A525 Verge 2	The 50m buffer extends into a nearby field.	The site is roughly 1ft wide, Ruthin North Link Road, footpath and cycle path, a mature hedgerow and has a small woodland running along it between the site and one of the fields.	Low
Glasdir A525 Verge 1	Urban		Low
Glasdir roundabout	A very small area of the 50m buffer extends into a nearby field.	Safety swathe cut around the site, the Ruthin North Link Road, footpath, grassed verges and a woodland consisting of mature trees and shrubs	Low
Cae Ddol	The 50m buffer extends into neighbouring field.	A wire fence line. * Neighbouring field is currently showing an abundance of nearly all mentioned weed species and is most-likely sending seeds into Cae Ddol	Low
Roe Parc	Urban	N/A	Low

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Nant-Y-Patrick	A small area of the 50m buffer extends into nearby fields.	An inclined site, border cut around site, hedgerows, mature trees and a residential property - fence line and field entrances	High
Upper Denbigh Road	The 50m buffer extends into neighbouring fields.	High mature hedgerows, footpath, mature trees and Upper Denbigh Road	Medium

Table 2: Wildflower Project Risk Categories.

The five sites which had frequent abundances of species listed on the Weeds Act, 1959, were not recorded as high risk sites. These were:

- Y Maes Walkway, Denbigh
- Llindir Street, Henllan
- Rhyd Y Byll Embankment, Rhewl
- Splash Point, Rhyl; and
- Rugby Club Walkway, Rhyl.

This risk table will be updated on an annual basis, as new projects are added to the site local conditions (land use, natural barriers, etc) change.

The abundance of plants on sites is recorded using the DAFOR scale:

- D = Dominant (more than 75% of the plants are this species)
- A = Abundant (50-75%),
- F = Frequent (25-50%),
- O = Occasional (10-25%) and;
- R = Rare (less than 10% of the plants are this species).

Common ragwort and other injurious weeds will be accepted on all sites, at levels recorded as occasional and rare. Above this, control will be implemented at high risk locations, as outlined in Table 2.



Photo 2: Hoverfly feeding on Common Ragwort.

Controlling Common Ragwort (And Other Species Listed on the Weeds Act, 1959).

Using the approach outlined above, we are able to identify the risk posed by the presence of common ragwort and other injurious weeds, on a site by site basis.

When will action be taken?

Where a low risk is identified:

No immediate action is required.

Where a medium risk is identified:

Continue to monitor, and take action to control the spread of the species in question should the risk change from medium to high.

Where a high risk is identified:

Take action to control the spread of ragwort (or other species listed on the Weeds Act, 1959) using an appropriate control technique, when they appear at greater abundance than “occasional”.

What action will be taken?

As a biennial plant, common ragwort dies after it has set seed in its' second year. Allowing this process to take place is likely to be one of the most effective ways to control the abundance of the species on Wildflower Project sites. These sites have permanent grass cover, and lack the bare ground to allow the seeds to germinate. While it is accepted that some action may be required on some sites, it should be noted that control methods such as cutting/pulling have the potential to extend the life of the plant, or allow it to regenerate from root cuttings left in the soil. As all of these sites fall within Denbighshire County Council's “Bee Friendly” project, the use of herbicides is not acceptable.

Where a high risk has been identified, and abundance of ragwort (or other injurious weeds act species) is “frequent” or greater, plants will be levered or pulled by hand. This will take

place once or twice in the early summer, when the ground is moist, to ensure that the roots are removed intact. Ragwort will be double bagged, and disposed of at landfill.

Conclusion

Common ragwort (and the other species listed on the Weeds Act, 1959) are native species, and key components to unimproved grassland habitats. They support a wide range of important and declining wildlife, some of which rely solely on these species for their survival.

Whilst there are limited circumstances where these species may need to be controlled, our aim is not to eradicate these species from Wildflower Project Sites. This is in line with the guidance set out in the code of practice.

We have outlined the approach we will take to assess sites, how they will be monitored, and the measures which will be taken should action be required. This is an evidence based approach, which will ensure that wildlife and livestock are protected and the Wildflower Project