ADVICE IN RESPECT OF THE TRADITIONAL ORCHARD (SOUTH) OR NEGLECTED ORCHARD

14 MARCH 2018

1. Danny suggested that we continue with the management in part of the neglected orchard that was begun in 2015. The aim would be to provide a dappled shade habitat to encourage more diverse ground flora which in turn could encourage a wider range of insects, butterflies and dragonflies etc. It would provide a different habitat from others on the hillfort site.

2. To encourage this he recommended that the re-grown elder on the area be cut back now. This has been done by brush cutting. Ideally the newly cut elder should be removed to the burn site. Dead twigs that have fallen naturally should remain.

3. The branches on the cherry plum that is angled over should be reduced by 50%. This work can be done in the dormant period of 2018/2019 to reduce the stress on the tree. The cut material to be removed.

4. The remaining cherry plums in the central clump should have selected stems reduced by about half so that the canopy overall is reduced by 20%. This can also be done in the dormant period of 2018/19. The aim is to provide more light to the ground, creating dappled shade. The cherry plums can be left to re-generate for a couple of years when the work can be re-evaluated. If successful, after a few more years some of the cherry plum stems could be cut down to the base and allowed to regrow.

5. We should note what plants are growing on the area and possibly slash nettles at height to avoid removing them when managing nettles. Alternatively the nettles could be pulled by hand, leaving the other plants. Another alternative could be to clear nettles on one half of the area only and see if this produces different results on the two halves. All material we cut should be removed, but dead wood to be left in situ. Work to nettles can be done in this growing season.

6. We should monitor what insects are using this area at present. When the cherry plums have been thinned we can monitor whether there are any changes or increase in insect activity.