



Site Assessment

A key initial stage when planning the management of a *Rhododendron ponticum* infested site is a pre-works site assessment, its primary purposes being to (i) identify potential factors and / or constraints which might influence work on the site, and (ii) steer the subsequent work programme for the infested area, including determining the most effective method(s) of control. Depending on the complexity of a site, assessments can vary significantly in their scope, but as a minimum it is advised that all site assessments include the following:

- **Ownership:** details regarding land ownership should firstly be sought, and landowner permission must be gained to access the land. In some instances, access to the site may be via third party land, therefore, one should be aware of this before planning any visits or works at the site. Issues relating to access can be formalised by some form of written agreement with the relevant landowner(s) if required.
- **Desktop survey:** a desktop survey should always be undertaken before planning any work at a site, in order to identify any features or constraints present which may need to be taken into consideration when planning a programme of works. These may include:
 - Features of archaeological interest, for example, Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs). If any are identified, it is highly recommended you contact the relevant organisation regarding the proposed works and gain formal consent if necessary. In Wales, this would be CADW.
 - Ecological constraints and statutory designations, for example, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) (see Section 4 which covers this in detail).
 - Infrastructure belonging to utility companies and/or private dwellings, for example, power lines, communications lines, gas pipes, and private water abstraction. If any are identified, a discussion regarding the proposed works should be had with the relevant persons.
 - Hazards such as steep cliff edges or abandoned mine shafts. If identified, a risk assessment should be undertaken and mitigation measures should be implemented to reduce risk as much as is possible. The safety of people should always take precedence over the management of *R. ponticum*, and work should not commence/proceed if it is not safe to do so.
 - Water bodies such as rivers and lakes. The relevant regulatory body should be notified where herbicide use near watercourses cannot be avoided. Only herbicides approved for use in or near water should be used, and stem-treatment should be used as opposed to foliar spraying where possible to minimise the potential for herbicide drift. All individuals carrying out the work must hold the appropriate qualification (see Section 6 for more details).



- **Ground conditions and topography:** an assessment of how steep a site is, whether roped access will be required, and whether the site is accessible for vehicles (see Figure X).
- ***R. ponticum* survey:** a detailed survey of *R. ponticum* invasion at the site, recording both the size of the bushes and their density (see Table 3.1). This step is key, given that it informs us on how much the work may cost.

Table 3.1. Photographs showing the extent of *R. ponticum* invasion in the different density classes used for surveying sites.

	Density	<i>R. ponticum</i> extent
A	Over 75% cover	



	Density	<i>R. ponticum</i> extent
B	50% - 75% cover	
C	25% - 50% cover	



	Density	<i>R. ponticum</i> extent
D	10% - 25% cover	
E	2% - 10% cover	



	Density	<i>R. ponticum</i> extent
F	Scattered (typically less than 20 plants / ha)	 These may vary in size, but are generally small bushes scattered across a large area





	Density	<i>R. ponticum</i> extent
G	Isolated bushes	



	Density	<i>R. ponticum</i> extent
Abs	Recorded absent	No <i>R. ponticum</i> recorded on the site following a survey

