

WOODLAND HABITATS GROUPED ACTION PLAN

Introduction and Vision Statement

The grouped habitat action plan includes upland oak woodland, upland mixed ash woodland, lowland mixed deciduous woodland, wet woodland and wood pasture and parkland (including veteran trees).



Upland mixed ashwoods have ash as the major canopy species, although oak, birch, elm, small-leaved lime and yew may be locally abundant. The ground flora often includes bluebells, dog's mercury, primrose and wild garlic. The understorey usually contains hazel and various other shrubs. Upland mixed ashwoods can support a rich invertebrate fauna and lichen flora. The best examples of this habitat tend to occur on limestone, but fragments of these woodlands can develop on more acidic poorly drained soils where there is localised flushing of nutrients.

Despite the name, upland mixed ashwoods can occur at lower altitudes. The term upland merely reflects the prevalence of this woodland type on base-rich soils in upland Britain.

It is estimated that the Carmarthenshire contains roughly 10% of upland mixed ashwood in Wales. Although dispersed throughout Carmarthenshire, the most important concentrations lie on the narrow strip of carboniferous limestone in the south of the county, on the fringes of the South Wales Coalfield. Particularly good examples are located in the Crwbin, Drefach, Llandybie and Carmel areas. At Carmel the National Nature Reserve rare plants such as herb paris and truly wild lily-of-the-valley occur. Small caves in the limestone are used by bats, including the rare greater horseshoe bat, with the mix of old pastures and woodlands at Carmel providing ideal insect-rich feeding habitat.

Upland oakwoods occur mainly in the north of the county. They are not strictly confined to upland settings, the name reflecting the abundance of this woodland type in the more upland parts of the country. It is the most common woodland type in Wales.

Upland oakwoods are usually dominated by oak, usually sessile oak but sometimes pedunculate oak, or a hybrid of the two, with downy birch and varying amounts of ash and sycamore. Where an understorey exists this is usually a mix of hazel, holly and rowan. The ground flora varies with the underlying soils and amount of grazing, from bluebell, bramble and ferns on richer soils, to grassy swards where grazing is more intense. Heather, bilberry and mosses dominate on more acidic soils.

The most oceanic of these woodlands (and these include some of the Carmarthenshire upland oak woods) are particularly rich in mosses, liverworts and lichens. They also have a distinctive range of breeding birds with redstarts, pied fly catchers and wood warblers.

Carmarthenshire has 15–18% of this habitat in Wales. Most sites tend to be on the higher land in the north of the county. Particularly good examples can be found to the north of Rhandirmwyn where woods here provided the last nesting habitat for the red kite when its numbers dropped perilously.

The demand for smelting charcoal and tan bark meant that many of these woods were intensively managed until the late 1800s. Many were felled in the two World Wars. Today, the trees in many oakwoods are nearly the same age throughout the wood – dating from the time when the wood was ‘clear felled’, then allowed to regrow without management.

Wet woodland occurs on poorly drained or seasonally wet soils, usually with alder, birch and willows as the predominant tree species, but sometimes including ash, oak and beech on the drier riparian areas. Wet woodland occurs in a variety of settings: as a successional habitat on fens and bogs and around waterbodies; along streams and hillside flushes; and in floodplains. Floodplain woodland in particular is now highly fragmented through past clearance for agriculture. A long history of coppice management appears to have maintained some alder-dominated woods. Other wet woodlands have developed through natural succession on open wetlands where active management such as grazing has been abandoned.

The high humidity of some wet woodlands and the presence of saturated ground with quantities of dead wood often favours the development of rich bryophyte (moss) and invertebrate communities. Wet woodland can also provide cover and breeding sites for otters.

Scattered areas of wet woodland are found in the county, typically dominated by alder and various willows. Previous surveys suggest that much of this occurs as small linear stands along stream sides, often within larger blocks of drier woodland. Extensive areas of wet woodland are rare and floodplain woodland is very fragmented. It is likely that much of the wet woodland in Carmarthenshire is relatively recent.

On riverbanks wet woodlands are a retreat for otters and feeding flocks of redpolls and siskins. Rotten trees are used by the scarce lesser spotted woodpecker and their nest holes are subsequently used by other birds and bats. More extensive areas are found on hillside flushes or on ungrazed wet dunelands; indeed, the young wet woodlands on the dune system between Pendine and Laugharne may be of national significance, as wooded sand dunes are rare in western Europe.

Wood-pastures and parklands are the products of historic land management systems, and represent a vegetation structure rather than a particular plant community. Typically they consist of large, open-grown trees – many of which are of veteran age – over a grassland habitat often grazed by cattle, deer or, sometimes, sheep. Veteran trees are therefore included within in this plan. These are trees that are of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of their age, size or condition. They are normally over 250 years old with a girth at breast height of over 3 metres. However, other factors must be considered such as the location and past management of the tree. Veteran trees are often of high ecological importance.

The range of invertebrates associated with decaying timber can be very diverse and often of exceptional value for conservation. The long-term continuity of 'dead wood' niches in lowland wood-pastures and parklands has resulted in significant numbers of localised or rare invertebrates being dependent upon such habitats. The lichen assemblage can also be of importance, particularly where sites are free from atmospheric pollution. Furthermore, wood-pastures and parklands are often highly valued for their historic, cultural and landscape interests.

The county has limited areas of wood pasture and parkland. Dinefwr Park with its veteran oaks in the Tywi Valley is the most significant and well known, but there are others at Gelli Aur, the Middleton Estate and Dan y Parc near Cynghordy. These havens for veteran trees are crucial for the rare invertebrates and lichens that only live on these aged trees. At Dinefwr, some particularly rare beetles and the pollution-intolerant lichen, lungwort, are found. Old timber, whether standing or fallen is of vital importance for wildlife.

Single and small aggregations of veteran trees are also considered to be of local significance.

Lowland mixed deciduous woodland is usually dominated by pedunculate oak or ash. In these woods you may come across trees not often found in the uplands – wild cherry, sweet chestnut, small-leaved lime and field maple. The more acid soils often have a less varied flora – bluebell, wood anemone, honeysuckle, bramble and bracken are the commonest species. Dog's mercury is a characteristic plant on lime-rich soils, along with enchanter's nightshade, wood avens and arum lily.

Following centuries of management for timber, coppice products, and firewood many of these woods are now neglected. They have the potential to supply high value timber – from oak, ash and cherry which are native to these woods – and from introduced sycamore, sweet chestnut and beech which now regenerate naturally. The area of this priority type on ancient woodland sites has declined in area by clearance, overgrazing and replanting with non-native species over the last 50 years. Where an understorey, such as hazel exists in these woods it is an important element that contributes to the habitat's structure as well as its diversity.

Carmarthenshire has a good proportion of this habitat in Wales. An excellent example is Castle Woods in Llandeilo. Here you can find a good range of breeding birds including great spotted, lesser spotted and green woodpecker, treecreeper, nuthatch, redstart, pied and spotted flycatcher. Resident birds of prey include sparrowhawk, buzzard and tawny owl.

The overall vision for this plan is to maintain, restore and extend these habitats in the county and the BAP species associated with them. This is especially important within the context of habitat connectivity within the Carmarthenshire landscape.

Associated species:

Tree pipit

European nightjar

Lesser redpoll

Hawfinch

Lesser spotted

woodpecker

Common grasshopper

warbler

Spotted flycatcher

Hedge accentor

Willow tit	Common toad	Lesser Smooth cap
Marsh tit		<i>Stricta canariensis</i>
Common bullfinch	Bird's Nest	(lichen)
Common starling	Bastard balm	
Song thrush		
Wood warbler	Lesser squirrel-tail	
Pied Flycatcher	moss	Flounced Chestnut (moth)
Polecat	Scarce turf-moss	The Sprawler (moth)
Brown hare	<i>Buellia hyperbolica</i>	Centre-barred Sallow
Red Squirrel	(lichen)	(moth)
Pine Marten	<i>Caloplaca herbidella</i>	Minor Shoulder-knot
Bat spp. (incl.	(lichen)	(moth)
Common pip)	<i>Lecanora sublivescens</i>	September Thorn (moth)
Dormouse	(lichen)	Brindled Beauty moth
	<i>Usnea florida</i> (lichen)	The Sallow (moth)
	Fragile Amanita	Pretty Chalk Carpet
	(fungus)	
White Letter Hairstreak	<i>Phellodon tomentosus</i>	
Brown Hairstreak	(fungus)	
Butterfly	<i>Phylloporus pelletieri</i>	
	(fungus)	

Action Plan Objectives

- WD1ME** To maintain extent of these woodland habitats in Carmarthenshire
- WD2AC** To improve condition of these woodland habitats through appropriate management
- WD3RS** To restore currently degraded woodland habitats in Carmarthenshire
- WD4EX** To expand these woodland habitats in Carmarthenshire
- WD5EX** To increase the number of potential veteran trees in parkland settings in the country
- WD5SP** To maintain and expand the range and/or population of species associated with these habitat types

CODE	TEXT	START / END DATE	Lead partner	Action goals	Key partners	Funding	Priority L,M,H	Jan-Dec 2010 Reporting		
WD1ME1	Through TAYO project protect veteran trees by stock fencing	2009–2011	TAYO	At least 280 m of stock fencing	Landowners	✓	H	Four Trees on Coleg Sir Gar's Gelli Aur Estate (SN59301205) have been protected by stock fencing (280 m)		
WD1ME2	Continued management of veteran trees on the Dinefwr estate, including parkland trees and positive management for dead wood (SN616224)	2010–2014	NT	Management of parkland site - ? Ha				No report from National Trust.		
WD1ME3	Maintain extent of parkland trees at Gelli Aur CP (SN596199)	2010–2014	CCC	? Ha maintained	Gelli Aur CP			No report.		
WD1ME4	Maintain extent of lowland mixed deciduous woodland at NBGW, including thinning out of non-native species (beech, sycamore) (SN521183)	2010–2014	NBGW	26 Ha maintained				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work ongoing by chain saw courses run by Coleg Sir Gar. • Dangerous trees to be felled or pruned by Dyfed tree care over February 		
WD1ME5	Maintain extent of wood parkland and pasture (including veteran trees) at Gelli Aur CP (SN596199)	2010–2014	CCC	50 Ha maintained	Gelli Aur CP			Bracken and soft rush topped		
WD2AC1	Annually, make advisory visits to woodland owners and produce management plans to promote conservation of BAP woodland habitats	2010–2014	Coed Cymru	Make a minimum of 38 advisory visits to woodland owners and produce at least implement 19 management plans	Landowners FCW CCW CCC	✓	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 89 advisory visits made • 15 BWW schemes produced • 24 other management plans produced • 250 ha woodland brought into management 		
WD2AC2	Through TAYO project protect and improve the condition of identified woodland habitats through stock fencing	2009–2011	TAYO	? Ha woodland protected	Landowners	✓	H	2525 m of woodland fencing has been erected to protect woodland areas at seven sites in the TAYO project within the Tywi valley. Details available.		
WD2AC3	Management of wet woodland at Llyn Llech Owain CP through coppice with standards rotation (SN566150)	2010–2014	CCC	? Ha managed	Llyn Llech Owain CP			One coppice plot established. Currently behind schedule on		

								creating further plots.		
WD2AC4	Manage woodland habitat by control of Himalayan Balsam (SN596199)	2010–2014	CCC	? Ha managed	Gelli Aur CP			Extensive areas cut and picked – approx. 10.4 Ha		
WD2AC5	Improve condition and structure of wet woodland in NBGW, including introducing age structure by coppicing (SN521183)	2010–2014	NBGW	26 Ha managed				Only minor works completed in wet woodland yet.		
WD2AC6	Carmel Woods – re-introduce traditional woodland management; re-establish historic woodland glades and edges (SN592162)	2010–2014	Grassland Trust	18 Ha managed	CCW	✓		1 ha woodland coppiced 1 ha glades restored		
WD3RS1	Identify sites where existing parkland sites could be restored	2010–2014	CCC	One GIS layer	WWBIC Dyfed Archaeology	✓		Not started – RC action in 2011?		
WD3RS2	Develop a ‘priority site’ partner project to restore degraded woodland sites (including using WBP Woodland Ecosystem Group guidance)	2010–2014	CCC	Partner project devised	FCW WTSWW CCW Coed Cymru	✓		Not started		
WD4EX1	Through TAYO project increase woodland BAP habitats by planting new woodland areas or copses within riparian corridors	2009–2011	TAYO	At least 448 trees planted	Landowners	✓	H	570 trees were planted at five sites and Coleg Sir Gar, Gelli Aur Farm planted 238 trees within the Cilsan Bridge (SN590213) Riparian Zone as part of the TAYO project within the Tywi valley. Site details available.		
WD4EX2	Through planning and regeneration develop schemes that include significant areas of woodland planting	2010-ongoing	CCC	x schemes completed	CCW CC	✓		Not started		
WD5EX1	Through the TAYO project plant parkland trees in appropriate locations	2009–2011	TAYO	At least 286 trees planted	Landowners	✓	H	195 parkland trees planted at 26 sites as part of the TAYO project within the Tywi valley. Site details available.		
WD5EX2	Dinefwr Park. Increase the number of potential future veteran trees by appropriate planting and protection of young trees	2010–2014	NT	? trees planted			H	No report from National Trust.		
WD5SP1	Raise awareness about the records of pine marten in the county, encourage records and participation in VWT survey/monitoring projects	2010–2014	CCC	One press release Newsletter article	FCW VWT		M	Two articles in Biodiversity newsletter in 2010.		
WD5SP2	Monitor 50 nest boxes erected for pied flycatchers in Pont Felin Gat woodland at NBGW (SN521183)	2010–2014	NBGW	Annual monitoring undertaken				Requires a new volunteer for this – action needed.		
WD5SP3	Ensure that owners and occupiers of sites with extant populations are aware of the importance and requirements of the lichen	2010-2014	Plantlife	Contact with all owners made	CCW					

	<i>Caloplaca herbidella</i>									
WD5SP4	Identify sites for erection of bird boxes for woodland spp. (e.g. pied flycatcher)	2010-2014	CCW	Site list drawn up	CC WTSWW FCW CCC	✓				Not started
WD5SP5	<i>Habrodon perpusillus</i> – contact Laugharne TC and PROW re only site for this sp. in the county (SN29085 09474)	2010-2011	CCC	1 letter	CCW					Action for 2011
RA4WD1	Add descriptions of woodland habitats to the Carmarthenshire Biodiversity website with photos and maps	2010	CCC	Website entry			M			Completed
RA4WD2	Promote participation in the Tree Council's Seed Gathering Sunday each year – try to get at least one event in county each year	2010–2014	CCC	At least one event/year	Country parks NT		M			No events in 2010
RA4WD3	Promote participation National Tree Week is UK's largest tree celebration annually launching the start of the winter tree planting season – encourage participation through county-based events	2010–2014	CCC	At least one event/year	Country parks NT		M			No events in 2010
RA4WD4	Hold a guided walk/event looking at these habitats	2010–2014	CCC	At least one event every 2 year	LBAP Partners		M			Walk held at Burry Port Woodlands – 5/10/2010.
RA4WD5	Promote best practice techniques in managing woods for biodiversity	2010–2014	CC	At least one event every 2 year	WT NBGW WTSWW CCW		M			
DCM2WD1	Promote the identification and recording veterans trees within the county using established recording methods – provide these on website	2010–2014	CCC	Website form available PR One training event	WTSWW, NT, CCW, CC		M			Not started
DCM2WD2	Identify woodland habitats within council ownership	2010–2014	CCC	One GIS layer produced			H			Not started
DCM2WD3	Undertake veteran tree survey at Gelli Aur CP (SN596199)	2010–2014	CCC	Survey report produced	Gelli Aur CP	✓	H			Ongoing
DCM2WD4	Identify list of priority woodland sites for further survey or management potential	2010–2014	CCW	List produced	CC WTSWW CCC					2011 action
POL2WD1	Identify a list of candidate woodland SINC's within the county – prioritising sites within settlement limits	2010–2014	CCC	One GIS layer produced	WWBIC	✓	H			Not started
POL2WD2	Ensure woodland habitats are protected through the development control process and any woodland loss fully compensated for	2010 - ongoing	CCC	100% of relevant applications	CCW					Planning ecologist commented on 7 applications in 2010 requesting survey/mitigation/compensation for woodland

								habitats. No mechanism at moment to assess area or whether this was carried out.		
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