

BIO-DIVERSITY PLAN FOR DERI WOODS AND THE GOAT FIELD

Deri Woods is owned by a Trust and Goat Field is the only Council-owned site listed as a habitat of principal importance for Wales (under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016). It is home to seven species of principal importance to Wales.

Deri Woods & Goat Field Ancient Woodland Restoration management plan

The 23-page report (plus 18 pages of photos) was prepared in October 2016 by Coed Cadw/the Woodland Trust.

Key messages

- Nearly 100 old and impressive large oaks
- At least 39 ancient woodland indicator plant species
- Bird, bat and insect species associated with old woodlands Issues
- Lack of oak regeneration, so no succession of new trees to replace older oaks as they decline and eventually die
- Some of the larger conifers are over topping and suppressing growth of the mature oak trees
- In many areas the ground is largely bare and the ancient woodland plants only occur as remnants
- The site has great potential for a significant increase in biodiversity In line with good forestry practice the plan divides the site into 13 compartments, within which the character is similar (see map). Condition
- 4 compartments* considered to be Critical (ie. needs urgent action to avoid irreversible loss or serious deterioration – Red on the map)
- 7 compartments* considered to be Threatened (ie. unlikely to be lost in the short term, given current condition, but long term survival is doubtful without intervention – Amber on the map)
- 2 compartments (including 8a, which is the whole of Goat Field) considered to be Secure (ie. likely to remain the same or improve given current conditions – Green on the map) N

Note * One Critical compartment (3a) was thinned in August 2016; the report states this compartment should now be considered Threatened. Commentary on threats and recommended actions In general terms, the report's recommended actions involve thinning of non-native trees (conifers and beech).

The reasons for this are that the non-natives will:

- crowd, over-top and eventually suppress the mature oak trees, which are key features of Deri Woods and of great biodiversity value;

- continue to cast dense shade on the woodland floor suppressing growth of the herb layer (which includes many less-common plants peculiar to ancient woodland and of biodiversity importance);
- through shading, prevent natural regeneration of light-loving oak and other native saplings, while non-native beech and conifers are able to propagate themselves.

Taken to its ultimate conclusion, without a concerted effort to thin the non-native trees, Deri Woods would go through a phase of severe decline and then premature death of the current oak trees; very few oak saplings would grow to replace them and the wood would gradually become a coniferous and beech woodland with little understorey or herb layer.

In such condition it would have a significantly lower biodiversity value than the current Deri Woods. On the other hand, following the recommendations of the restoration plan will ensure Deri Woods continues as a high-quality wildlife and public amenity for many decades to come.

It would gradually change to become a richer, semi-natural ancient woodland, dominated by oak trees, while still retaining several large and impressive non-native beech and conifers, which add diversity and interest to the site.

Its biodiversity value would increase significantly and it would continue to provide a home for ancient woodland plants and at least seven species of principal importance to Wales as listed in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Action already taken as stated above, Compartment 3a (Critical) was thinned in 2016 (while the report was being produced) removing 65 western red cedar trees (5m³ of timber).

Subsequently, in March 2017, 32 spruce trees (3.2m³) were thinned from Compartment 6a (Threatened) and, in February 2019, approximately 50 conifers were thinned across compartments 2b, 4a, 5a, 5b and 7a (Critical/Threatened).

The response to the initial 'halo thinning' of Compartments 3a and 6a has been monitored to see if there has been an undesirable growth of woody understorey such as bramble.

Such growth has not occurred, indicating that further light thinning could be undertaken in the two compartments and it provides a model for similar treatment elsewhere in the wood. Further action needed .

The restoration plan is quite specific about the thinning requirements but doesn't quantify the number of trees to be removed.

This is my interpretation of the guidance given. FODW would like to see this undertaken over the next 3 years. Approximate numbers of trees to be thinned
 Tree diameter (cm) >75
 38-75 10-38

