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WOODLAND
TRUST

Coed Cymerau Isaf

Management Plan
2018-2023

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THE WOODLAND TRUST

INTRODUCTION

The Trust's corporate aims and management approach guide the management of all the Trust's properties, and are described on Page 4. These determine basic management policies and methods, which apply to all sites unless specifically stated otherwise. Such policies include free public access; keeping local people informed of major proposed work; the retention of old trees and dead wood; and a desire for management to be as unobtrusive as possible. The Trust also has available Policy Statements covering a variety of woodland management issues.

The Trust's management plans are based on the identification of Key Features for the site and setting objectives for their management. A monitoring programme (not included in this plan) ensures that these objectives are met and any necessary management works are carried out.

Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATING

The information presented in this Management plan is held in a database which is continuously being amended and updated on our website. Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations. Please either consult The Woodland Trust website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk or contact the Woodland Trust (wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk) to confirm details of the current management programme.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and a summary of monitoring results can be obtained on request.

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The management of our woods is based on our charitable purposes, and is therefore focused on improving woodland biodiversity and increasing peoples' understanding and enjoyment of woodland. Our strategic aims are to:

- Protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future
- Work with others to create more native woodlands and places rich in trees
- Inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees

All our sites have a management plan which is freely accessible via our website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk. Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) under licence FSC-C009406 and through independent audit.

In addition to the guidelines below we have specific guidance and policies on issues of woodland management which we review and update from time to time.

We recognise that all woods are different and that the management of our sites should also reflect their local landscape and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives. Guidelines like these provide a necessary overarching framework to guide the management of our sites but such management also requires decisions based on local circumstances and our Site Manager's intimate knowledge of each site.

The following guidelines help to direct our woodland management:

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.
2. We establish new native woodland using both natural regeneration and tree planting, but largely the latter, particularly when there are opportunities for involving people.
3. We provide free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe.
4. The long term vision for our non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites is to restore them to predominantly native species composition and semi-natural structure, a vision that equally applies to our secondary woods.
5. Existing semi-natural open-ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained and new open ground habitats created where appropriate.
6. The heritage and cultural value of sites is taken into account in our management and, in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.
7. Woods can offer the potential to generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We will therefore consider the potential to generate income from our estate to help support our aims.
8. We work with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders in developing the management of our woods. We recognise the benefits of local community woodland ownership and management. Where appropriate we allow our woods to be used to support local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.
9. We use and offer the estate where appropriate, for the purpose of demonstration, evidence gathering and research associated with the conservation, recreational and sustainable management of woodlands. In particular we will develop and maintain a network of long-term monitoring sites across the estate.
- 10 Any activities we undertake will conform to sustainable forest management principles, be appropriate for the site and will be balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

SUMMARY

This public management plan briefly describes the site, specifically mentions information on public access, sets out the long term policy and lists the Key Features which drive management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site - their significance is outlined together with their long (50 year+) and short (5 year) term objectives. The short term objectives are complemented by a detailed Work Programme for the period of this management plan. Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. A short glossary of technical terms is at the end. The Key Features and general woodland condition of this site are subject to a formal monitoring programme which is maintained in a central database. A summary of monitoring results is available on request.

1.0 SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Coed Cymerau Isaf
Location:	Rhyd y Sarn, Blaenau Ffestiniog
Grid reference:	SH691427, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 124
Area:	31.69 hectares (78.31 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, National Park, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Area of Conservation

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

This beautiful wood lies next to the Coed Cymerau National Nature Reserve near Blaenau Ffestiniog. Visitors will enjoy a relatively level circular walk through woodland and meadow with spring displays of woodland flowers including bluebell and wood anemone.

2.2 Extended Description

Coed Cymerau Isaf is a substantial upland oak woodland within Snowdonia National Park and forms part of an extensive area of oak woodland in the vale of Ffestiniog, linking Coedydd Maentwrog SSSI to the south-west and Coed Cymerau NNR/SSSI adjacent to the western boundary. The site forms part of the Meirionydd Oakwoods and Bat Sites Special Area of Conservation.

The tree canopy is dominated by sessile oak with downy birch, on very acidic, shallow soils. Hazel is present where deeper and richer soils permit. Rowan, holly, ash, and the occasional beech and sycamore are also present. There is abundant regeneration of oak. Bilberry is abundant with some heather, a mixture of grasses including wavy hair and a distinct and typical community of mosses, liverworts and ferns. Bluebells are a feature in May. Bracken and bramble are locally abundant. The eastern and southern boundary slopes are characterised by developing woodland (the south-eastern section was partially planted by the Trust in 1985) with scattered mature trees, mainly birch.

The internal landscape of the site is complex with rocky knolls, moderate slopes and valleys and open areas of semi-improved grassland and mire. Most of the fields and two of the mires are fenced and grazed by cattle in late summer/ early autumn. Part of the woodland to the west has also been fenced with the intention of grazing it lightly with sheep. The old Cymerau Isaf farmhouse (now a privately leased residence) lies at the centre of the property. Numerous old wall boundaries, barns and stock pens are scattered through the woodland: one barn provides an important summer roost for lesser horseshoe bats.

There is an easy circular way-marked trail through the woods. Other routes include a section of the old Blaenau Ffestiniog to Maentwrog road (now a footpath only) and a link path to an attractive waterfall viewpoint just outside the site to the north. The woodland is a popular local amenity, offering an accessible route for families and older walkers close to suitable parking.

Key features at the site are:

- the ancient semi-natural woodland mainly dominated by sessile oak - predominantly representing upland oakwood habitats;
- non-woodland habitats (semi-improved acidic grassland and mires) representing several NVC communities, and of particular value in association with the adjoining woodland;
- an old stone barn, used by lesser horseshoe bats as a summer roost;
- Connecting People with Woods and Trees - the site is of particular amenity value due to its proximity to Blaenau Ffestiniog.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

By bus:

The nearest bus stop is 1.5km (1 mile) up the road from Coed Cymerau Isaf, next to the Post Office in the village of Tanygrisiau. It is part of Route 37 - the Ffestiniog Circular.

By train:

The nearest railway station is around 3km (2 miles) away from the wood, in Blaenau Ffestiniog. This station is serviced by Arriva Trains Wales (Conwy Valley timetable).

There is also the Ffestiniog Narrow Gauge Railway which has a stop at Tanygrisiau.

For further information on public transport, contact Traveline on 0871 200 2233 or visit traveline.org.uk

By car:

The wood is about 1.5km (1 mile) south of Tanygrisiau, next to the A496, not far from Blaenau Ffestiniog. The main entrance to the site is opposite the large lay-by across the road from the Manod turn-off, which provides parking for about half a dozen cars.

There is also lay-by parking in Rhyd-y-sarn.

3.2 Access / Walks

This site is popular with walkers and the local community, particularly during the bluebell season, and its way-marked circular walk is easily accessible from the main entrance on the A496. There is an information board providing details about the wood that may be of interest to visitors, and seats are positioned at regular intervals along the path, providing lovely spots in which to sit and enjoy the tranquillity and peace of the wood. An oak leaf sculpture made by sculptor Howard Bowcott is also on this route:

Cylch Cymerau. 1.5km/ 1 mile, allow 1/2 hr. Grade; Easy.

A charming circuit through meadows and tranquil oak woodland. Drink in the revitalising, vivid greens of spring and meet traditional breed cattle grazing fields of wildflowers in summer and early autumn.

The route is largely gently sloping with a total of c20m of ascent, although short sections of moderate gradient will be encountered, and a couple of small steps. The surface varies between gravel, earthy and grassy and is generally solid but with a few muddy areas and the odd exposed root in places. NB kissing gates are not wheelchair accessible.

The main entrance is not the only place to access the wood, as there is also a footpath from Rhyd-y-sarn through Coed Cymerau NNR in the south. The public footpath that exits the wood to the north leads to an attractive waterfall viewpoint at Pont Cymerau. As well as dog walkers and hikers, the site is ideal for young families and would lend itself well to school visits.

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The woodland will remain a predominantly sessile oak woodland supporting an abundance of lower plant life, both typical Atlantic oakwood species and the more uncommon species particular to the site. Over time, the age structure will become more diverse and the quantities of standing and fallen dead wood will increase up to at least 30m³/ha. Mature trees will be retained to senescence wherever possible. Planted trees will establish themselves and their shade will naturally control expanses of dense bracken, as canopy closure is achieved. Any grazing/ browsing, whether formal or informal, will be light or sporadic, allowing some recruitment of natural regeneration in canopy gaps sufficient to maintain canopy cover but maintaining relatively open conditions under an oak canopy. Invasive species will be absent.

The open ground areas of the site will be maintained by traditional low input agricultural methods. Lowland meadow areas will increase in species diversity and wet habitats such as mire and bog will not be lost to natural succession, preserving their characteristic bog and mire species. *Molinia* will not dominate bog and mire areas. Woodland edge habitats will provide foraging opportunities for the resident bat population.

The barn will be retained and maintained in a safe condition as a feature of historical interest and will continue to provide a suitable roost site for lesser horseshoe bats. Ideally, the colony will thrive, numbering at least several dozen bats with evidence of breeding (accepting that external factors affecting the meta-population may be outside the Trust's control).

The wood will continue to be valued as a local amenity. Visitors will primarily be drawn from local towns and villages, being largely mature walkers, young families and educational groups, although families and mature couples visiting the National Park will also be attracted by the accessible and well-waymarked easy circular route. Seasonal information will be refreshed and visitors will feel welcome and safe to explore. There will be sufficient seating befitting a site well visited by elderly or less mobile visitors. Features of cultural interest such as drystone walls will be retained. Visitors will be inspired to discover more about woods and trees, especially through the Trust's educational or family membership offers.

5.0 KEY FEATURES

The Key Features of the site are identified and described below. They encapsulate what is important about the site. The short and long-term objectives are stated and any management necessary to maintain and improve the Key Feature.

5.1 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Description

Coed Cymerau Isaf lies on the northern edge of a well-wooded landscape in the Vale of Ffestiniog and is part of the Meirionnydd Oakwoods and Bat Sites Special Area of Conservation. Its woodland habitats are designated as a SSSI and support a number of characteristic and uncommon Atlantic bryophytes.

Cymerau is predominantly a sessile oak woodland with birch. Groups of hazel occur on the more fertile soils (woodland type W11a). Rowan, ash, holly, hawthorn, blackthorn, the occasional crab apple, some beech and sycamore are also present. A small area of ash is of W9a type. Birch is a scattered co-dominant and locally dominant. On the rocky outcrops the oaks are characteristically small and gnarled with a shrub layer of bilberry and heather. The taller and larger trees are generally on the south-eastern slopes and in the woodland dells. A field layer is characterised by ericoid shrubs, bracken and grasses with typical mosses, ferns and liverworts. Herb species include common cow-wheat, heath bed-straw, wood anemone, lesser celandine, wood sorrel, tormentil, greater stitchwort, golden rod, pignut, wood rush, wood sage, golden-rod and, in W11 areas, abundant bluebell. Natural regeneration is occurring. There are small areas of planted trees in compartment 1b, over a layer of dense bracken. Rowan is reviving with abundant regeneration subsequent to the cull of a resident feral goat population c.1990 (damage to mature rowan can still be seen). Formal grazing has not occurred for some years, although Natural Resources Wales recently enclosed much of the western area of the Trust wood under a Section 15 agreement, within a larger grazing compartment around the Coed Cymerau National Nature Reserve adjacent, with the intention of grazing the site with sheep.

Significance

Ancient woodland site of a type identified in Annex 1 of EC Habitats Directive; the site forms part of a Special Area of Conservation of which old sessile oak woodland is a key feature. Supports uncommon mosses such as *Ptilium crista-castrensis* and provides foraging opportunities for species such as bats.

Opportunities & Constraints

Windblow or collapsing dead or decayed trees, particularly birch, will create canopy gaps for natural regeneration. The ability to control grazing and browsing by sheep and goats will depend on the ability to maintain a stockproof boundary; formal grazing, where desired, may be difficult to achieve given the terrain and access issues. Grazing may depend on NRW's ability to incentivise grazing through S15 or other funding.

Factors Causing Change

Grazing levels will influence the frequency of regen and the density of the understorey and nature of ground flora communities: a denser understorey may not favour some of the more uncommon Atlantic bryophytes, although uncontrolled grazing could in the long term damage the woodland's ability to regenerate. Invasive non-native species such as rhododendron may increase in frequency: their presence in the local landscape presents a reinvasion threat.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The woodland will remain a predominantly sessile oak woodland supporting an abundance of lower plant life, both typical Atlantic oakwood species and the more uncommon species particular to the site. Over time, the age structure will become more diverse and the quantities of standing and fallen dead wood will increase up to at least 30m³/ha. Mature trees will be retained to senescence wherever possible. Planted trees will establish themselves and their shade will naturally control expanses of dense bracken, as canopy closure is achieved. Any grazing/ browsing, whether formal or informal, will be light or sporadic, allowing some recruitment of natural regeneration in canopy gaps sufficient to maintain canopy cover but maintaining relatively open conditions under an oak canopy. Invasive species will be absent.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

There will be abundant natural regeneration in canopy gaps created by natural events; particularly site native species such as rowan, birch and oak, with occasional holly. Planted trees and natural regeneration will start to close canopy over large areas of dense bracken in 1b. Any invasives such as rhododendron will be eradicated prior to flowering and non-native conifer species will not become established. Mature trees will be retained to senescence wherever safe to do so. Subject to the ability of Natural Resources Wales to identify a grazier for the NNR, the western compartment of the wood will be lightly and sporadically sheep grazed (for at least two autumn/ winter seasons during the current plan period): the understorey cover here will be relatively sparse (occasional to frequent) and species such as *Ptilia crista-castrensis* will continue to occur. If required, an alternative access point to assist with livestock movement will be installed to facilitate this. Tree guards will all be removed prior to the end of this plan period.

5.2 Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat

Description

Within Coed Cymerau Isaf lie several blocks of open ground, which mainly lie outside the SSSI, comprising compartments 2a to f. Mesotrophic grassland areas occur in compartments 2c and d, and are of the NVC type MG5, characterised by sweet vernal grass, red fescue, common bent grass with field woodrush and herbs including birds-foot trefoil, ribwort plantain, common sorrel, black knapweed, pignut, yellow rattle and the moss *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*. Calcifugous grassland pockets occur in compartments 2b and e and are generally of type U4a, including the species common bent grass, sweet vernal grass, Yorkshire fog, heath bedstraw, field woodrush and pignut. Orchids are present in wet pasture in 2a. Bracken and scrub is encroaching round the field edges in places. The bulk of the open ground area is let for grazing/ hay cutting under an annual grazing management plan, although cutting is not undertaken annually. This includes a number of mire areas, the largest of which are in compartment 2b, known historically as Gors y Ffynnon and Gors Ddu. A number of NVC types are present here (M18a, M25a, M6b/c/d and M23). Of particular note is the raised or blanket mire M18a and bog pools (habitats which are in decline nationally), of interest for the true sphagnum communities, white-beaked sedge, two species of cotton grass with bog asphodel, cranberry and sundew. Rush mires M6/M23 (compartment 2a) are very wet at the southern end due to blocked drainage ditches and are subject to woodland encroachment. Smaller mire components are located within the woodland complex.

Significance

This diverse mix of habitats adds significantly to the biodiversity value of the site and the open ground adds to the appeal of the site to visitors. Woodland edge habitats provide potentially good foraging opportunities for lesser horseshoe bats which summer in the old barn. Lowland meadows such as those at Cymerau are a Wales Biodiversity Action Plan habitat. Raised and blanket bogs are also priority habitats.

Opportunities & Constraints

Water supplies for stock are limited and grazing schemes must be managed in the context of public access, which may generate conflict. Lesser horseshoe bats are present in the barn and this should therefore not be disturbed. Grazing opportunities in compartment 2e are restricted by presence of a water supply to Cymerau Isaf. Machinery access is limited in parts of the site.

Agricultural subsidy or agri-environment scheme income may, however, be available to the Trust or any longer term tenant against the grazed or open areas of the site. At present, grazing is supervised by a very local contact, reducing the staff resource required to manage the detail of the implementation of the grazing licence.

Factors Causing Change

The availability of suitable graziers and the ability to maintain hay cutting may impact on species diversity; natural regeneration of woody species will mean that the open ground reverts to woodland/ wet woodland in the long term if not managed. Changes in drainage as ditches and streams become blocked may impact upon the mire vegetation. Poorly maintained boundaries or difficulties in access to certain areas of the site may deter short term graziers. Agricultural funding regimes may change post-Brexit.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The open ground areas of the site will be maintained by traditional low input agricultural methods. Lowland meadow areas will increase in species diversity and wet habitats such as mire and bog will not be lost to natural succession, preserving their characteristic bog and mire species. *Molinia* will not dominate bog and mire areas. Woodland edge habitats will provide foraging opportunities for the resident bat population.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

There will be no increase in the cover of bracken and scrub within compartments 2a-d and 2f during the current plan period; raised mire areas will be free of scrub and bracken encroachment. The meadow areas will continue to support a variety of species typical of mesotrophic and calcifugous grassland, including orchids in the wetter areas, while plant communities associated with raised mire will remain present in 2b. A traditional low intensity grazing regime will be maintained for the duration of the plan period in pursuit of these objectives. Fencing and walls will be maintained in good condition to contain livestock.

5.3 Species or community

Description

Lesser horseshoe bats are known to use a traditional stone built barn (construction date unknown but more recent than the house) as a summer roost. The timbers and roof were replaced after a fire circa 1960's and further work was undertaken in recent years to shore up the structure and ensure continued access by bats. There are two locked entrance doors, on the north-west and south-east sides. In the north-east gable end wall is a low window. In the south-west gable (adjacent to the footpath) is a high window opening. Internally half of the barn is boarded to create an upper floor storage area. The bats hang in the apex of the roof at the north-east end of the building within the upper floor storage area (the darkest part of the barn) and exit from the upper window into the woodland on the south-west side. A barn owl has used the barn in the past and a barn owl box was also placed there 1991, but has never been used.

Significance

The roost is a mating or nursery roost and numbers have increased in recent years to around 140, making it a sizeable colony. The Lesser horseshoe bat population is a feature of the adjacent SAC and the species is protected and listed in the Wales BAP.

Opportunities & Constraints

The barn is within the field let under grazing licence. NRW must be consulted prior to any building work, as bats are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) and Habitats Regs (2010): work on the building, if needed, may require a licence, as will any monitoring activity (current undertaken informally by a local bat ecologist).

Factors Causing Change

Natural deterioration of barn may render it unsafe or unsuitable for bats.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The barn will be retained and maintained in a safe condition as a feature of historical interest and will continue to provide a suitable roost site for lesser horseshoe bats. Ideally, the colony will thrive, numbering at least several dozen bats with evidence of breeding (accepting that external factors affecting the meta-population may be outside the Trust's control).

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

The building will continue to be used on a regular basis by a significant number of bats; Gwynedd Bat Group members will supply periodic monitoring data. Any issues which may impact on the suitability of the building as a roost site will be reported and addressed.

5.4 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

The site is a popular spot for local walkers from Ffestiniog (population in 2011: 4875) on the edge of Snowdonia National Park. The wood benefits from relatively good (off-site) parking and represents probably the closest accessible woodland to the post-industrial and urban landscape of Blaenau Ffestiniog and Tanygrisiau (a strongly Welsh speaking population). The site is among the most northerly component of the Meirionnydd oakwoods, which include other nearby Trust sites such as Coed Hafod y Llyn and Coed Felinrhyd & Llennyrch. Its varied internal landscape, comprising attractive woodland and grazed meadows with mountain views, adds to its appeal.

The main entrance (marked by a wooden vehicle and kissing gate, with a ladderboard and orientation panel) opens onto a large council layby with space for perhaps a dozen cars. (The gate posts, kissing gate and ladderboard here are reaching the end of their life. Multiple prohibitive disc signs look untidy and unwelcoming and need rationalising/ replacing with more subtle signage. The orientation panel is set back from the road and is reasonable condition but may need refreshing in the coming 5 years.) The signage is not very visible to vehicle drivers on approach to the layby.

A further, smaller layby in Rhyd-y-sarn is close to the public footpath access to the lower wood. The Trust entrance lies within the woodland and is accessed via the adjacent National Nature Reserve, with moderate usage. NRW signage is currently (2018) more prominent than WT signage. A rustic oak kissing gate gate is in ok condition but closure mechanism is rather unsightly. WT welcome sign is old and could be replaced with a ladderboard. Info signage looks somewhat cluttered.

There are a further two public entrances allowing access via the public rights of way network. To the east, a poorly used stile is starting to rot and could be replaced with a kissing gate to improve accessibility. The welcome sign is old and needs replacement. Steep drop warning signage is no longer felt to be an essential risk assessment requirement. To the north of the site, access is by kissing gate (moderate condition although the spring needs replacement): WT welcome signage is missing and exit signage in the wrong location (Jan 2018).

A fairly level waymarked circular walk ('Cylch Cymerau'), including an information board and benches (installed 2011) at regular intervals, is accessed from the main entrance. The total distance of the waymarked loop is 1.4km (almost 1 mile). The route is largely gently sloping with a total of c20m of ascent, although short sections of moderate gradient will be encountered, and a couple of small steps. Allow approximately 1/2 hr. Grade: Easy. The surface varies between gravel, earthy and grassy and is generally solid but with a few muddy areas and the odd exposed root in places. These conditions rule out All Ability access, however, with minor repairs, the loop would be suitable for sturdy off-road buggies. An oak leaf seat, made by sculptor Howard Bowcott in 1990, is now deteriorating although still of sculptural interest. The waymarking (12 posts as at Jan 2018) is now very tired and there are a couple of muddy sections where scraping and slate chip could improve the surface and reduce erosion (the section following the eastern boundary of the wood). There are two old kissing gates by the field to the left of the entrance which are now redundant and could be removed. This route is well used by local dog walkers, families and mature or elderly visitors.

The public footpath shown on the OS maps exiting the site to the south west does not follow the line on the definitive map: an alternative permissive route which follows the old Blaenau to Maentwrog road (bounded by the tall stone wall of some historical interest) is provided, heading down, relatively

steeply, to the NNR on the riverside. A public footpath also exits the wood via the north boundary, providing access to a bridge crossing and attractive viewpoint at Rhaeadr Cymerau (not WT).

There has been no recent engagement activity, although third parties have occasionally used the woods for activities such as mammal surveys and education sessions. Volunteer activity has been very occasional: one recent volunteer day was organised between WT and the Snowdonia Society to collect rowan seed for the Millennium Seed Bank project. Y Dref Werdd are a community environmental group active in various projects to improve the area, although they have not been directly involved with the wood to date.

The wood lies close to four primary schools (Ysgol Tanygrisiau, Ysgol Manod, Ysgol Maenofferen and Ysgol Bro Cynfal) and one secondary school (11-16: Ysgol y Moelwyn in Blaenau), and would be suitable for educational visits, although no toilet facilities are available on site. Plas Dol y Moch outdoor centre is close by, welcoming groups of school children, largely from the Midlands.

Significance

The wood is a well used local amenity and relatively accessible within what is a rather mountainous local landscape. It offers seasonal interest (e.g. bluebells) and is suitable for both young families and mature couples seeking easy and scenic walks. It is the closest accessible woodland to a small urban centre, although its appeal could extend to visitors as well as residents.

The wood is located in Southern Snowdonia, an area where the Trust is focusing its efforts at a landscape scale. The vision is to 'promote the distinctive identity of the Meirionnydd Tree-scape, with the Trust at its heart, increasing visitor appreciation of woods and trees and encouraging everyone to explore beyond the key tourist areas.'

Opportunities & Constraints

There are opportunities to improve the promotion of walking opportunities at the wood by working with local partners. For instance, Blaenau Chamber of Trade and Commerce promote walks on their website: <http://www.blaenauffestiniog.org/walks.html>. The National Park also feature walking opportunities: <http://www.snowdonia.gov.wales/visiting/walking>. Printed materials could be held at local information points and online Trust materials linked to walking pages on external websites. The accessible nature of the waymarked circuit would appeal to older walkers and families with young children. There is also an opportunity, particularly when refreshing the old waymarking, to engage with local schools to develop a trail which could encourage more self-led visits linked to the curriculum and promote participation in the Trust's Green Tree Schools award (once bilingual materials are available). The wood itself would be suitable for the hosting of occasional events aimed at young families: this could appeal both to local families and summer visitors to the National Park (NB Welsh language elements would be important to a local audience). However, the Trust does not own the parking, and it is limited, so events would need to be relatively small scale: it may be better to develop resources which encourage self-led educational and recreational visits (e.g. changeable VR trails using existing waymarker posts). Relatively modest investment would be required to bring the visitor welcome up to Trust welcome site standards.

The stone walls bordering the old road to Rhyd-y-sarn should be maintained where possible/appropriate as an archaeological feature. Terrain is not conducive to disabled access. A popular dog walking spot, it may be necessary to address conflicts between livestock and visitors during the summer grazing period. Cattle may be present in the fields in late summer. A residential property is located in the middle of the site: activities should not cause inconvenience to our neighbours.

National Park planning regulations may constrain the installation of more visible approach signage.

Factors Causing Change

Waterlogging in some path sections/ extensive path use will require periodic maintenance to retain the 'easy' quality of the waymarked loop.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The wood will continue to be valued as a local amenity. Visitors will primarily be drawn from local towns and villages, being largely mature walkers, young families and educational groups, although families and mature couples visiting the National Park will also be attracted by the accessible and well-waymarked easy circular route. Seasonal information will be refreshed and visitors will feel welcome and safe to explore. There will be sufficient seating befitting a site well visited by elderly or less mobile visitors. Features of cultural interest such as drystone walls will be retained. Visitors will be inspired to discover more about woods and trees, especially through the Trust's educational or family membership offers.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

Entrance signage and waymarking will be repaired or replaced by end 2019 to meet WT 'welcome site' standards. The 12 waymarkers will be replaced with substantial (6"x6" oak) posts bearing the oak leaf logo with an angled lectern-style top: this will allow changing trail information to be designed and affixed to create on-going interest for visiting schools and families. E.g. this could allow for the installation of seasonal Nature Detectives virtual reality trails such as the spring bluebell trail. At other times of year, brass rubbing plaques or pictorial symbols could be designed and installed in consultation with local schools, for instance, to provide curriculum linked trail info. Local schools will be invited to participate in developing trail markers by means of taster day/s for staff and/ or pupils and will be made aware of our Green Tree Schools Award. Participating children will also receive further information about our (Welsh language) Nature Detectives resources and family membership offers.

The circular walk path 'Cylch Cymerau' will be repaired by end 2019 to ensure that it remains suitable for sturdy off-road buggies and matches the 'easy' grading. By end 2020, the orientation panel will be replaced and updated at the end of its life to reflect updates to the trail network and other info available.

Information on grazing will be included in order to manage any conflicts between recreational and agricultural usage. Wooden signage indicating the presence of cattle will be managed by the grazing manager. The council are aware of local concerns regarding dog waste and signage encouraging good practice will be maintained.

As part of a cluster of Trust 'welcome sites' within Meirionnydd, by end 2019, walking opportunities at the site wood be promoted via a cluster booklet and a feature sculpture installed as a focal point. Gpx files and further information will be made available on the Trust website and guided walk leader volunteers will run a programme of scheduled and on-demand walks for local and tourist audiences. This information will be distributed locally and opportunities to link to external websites explored. At least one family event will be held during the coming plan period, highlighting the Trust's family membership and nature Detectives offer.

6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By
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APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	18.70	Sessile oak	1850	High forest	Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, National Park, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Area of Conservation
<p>The majority of the compartment is ancient semi-natural woodland dominated by sessile oak. The oaks generally appear fairly even aged, young trees are predominantly birch. Oaks throughout the compartment (with the exception of an old remnant pollard oak close to the NNR boundary) have evidently been planted or re-established since 1900. Tree vegetation is not recorded on the OS 25" map surveyed in 1899, prior to which date the woodland was presumably largely cleared for timber or agriculture. The habitat is characterised by a central dome of rock outcrop with oak and birch and a field layer of bilberry with abundant bryophytes, a typical W17b sub-community. Between ridges on the south-east and south-western flanks of the dome canopy gaps are dominated by bracken and some bramble. On the less rocky slopes with deeper soils surrounding the central rock outcrop vegetation has been assigned to the W11a sub-community. Hazel is present as a canopy and understorey species with bramble and honeysuckle and the herb layer includes abundant bluebells with cow wheat, wood-sorrel, wood anemone, golden rod and wood rush with grass species such as sweet vernal grass. On the western side of the main track leading to Cymerau Isaf a damp rocky area of W9 is dominated by ash with hazel, abundant bluebell, wood anemone, lesser celandine and yellow pimpernel. A marshy area south of the footpath to the falls also includes some willow and the ground is dominated by moss species with marsh violet. A sheltered open area to the south of Cymerau Isaf is ascribed W17a sub-community due to the extensive colony of the moss <i>Ptilium crista-castrensis</i>. Small grassy areas of W17c sub-communities are also present and these more open canopy areas have become dominated by bramble. A stream flows northwards along the central boundary (and under the main track) from the central mire (in sub-compartments 2b) to the western mire (in sub-compartments 2a).</p>							
1b	7.50	Downy birch	1985	High forest	Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, National Park, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Area of Conservation

Part ancient semi-natural woodland, a large area must have been felled prior to 1900 as no trees are indicated in these area on the on the OS map 1901. Presently the northern and southern section comprises scattered mature birch and abundant bracken, comprising a W25a bracken-bramble underscrub sub community grading to W11a woodland further south where the canopy becomes complete. Bluebells are evident before the bracken canopy closes. The large open areas were partly planted in 1985 with scattered 700 oak, 200 wild cherry and 100 rowan, the success rate is good, although the size of the young trees is variable and a small amount still have rabbit guards. There is a significant amount of natural regeneration of oak, rowan and birch (some of the young oaks are difficult to distinguish from the planted trees). An old dried up mire was allowed to colonise completely after consultation with CCW. Heather and gorse overhang the ledges of a steep rock cliff down to the road, with squat mature oaks. Large mature oaks border the stone wall boundary to the footpath (the old road), the northern boundary to the compartment. The ground slopes east towards the site boundary with steep cliffs down to the main road (A496) further south. These steeper slopes are dominated by oak. The central section is an ancient semi-natural woodland, predominantly of W17b type and similar in character to compartments 1a with numerous rocky outcrops. Mature oak coppice and birch are the dominant trees along with a field layer of bilberry, heather, grass and mosses species. Again natural regeneration, predominantly rowan with some oak, is confined to the understorey at the margins. A partially collapsed stone wall alongside the old road and public footpath forms the western boundary to the compartment.

2a	1.00	NULL		Non-wood habitat	Management factors (eg grazing etc), Mostly wet ground/exposed site		National Park
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Bisected by a stream into two distinct areas the northern section comprises a rush mire of M6 type through to M23 Juncus rush pasture. Woodland edge trees along the eastern boundary wall are predominantly oak with ash in the north-east corner. The southern section slopes up from the stream to a field boundary wall and fence and comprises birch regeneration with some hazel and a field layer of grass species, bracken and bramble. The stream between the two sections floods from the woodland boundary wall and a former drainage ditch along the eastern side of the north field, which is fed by a stream near the north-east corner, has silted up, creating a very wet pasture. Goat/grey willow and birch border the stream area. Marsh orchids occur within the Juncus pasture. Bracken is encroaching the drier acid grassland to the north and west. The western boundary is adjacent to large mature oaks in the NNR. The field boundary walls were repaired to make them stockproof in 1990 and it is included in a grazing licence.

2b	2.20	NULL		Non-wood habitat	Management factors (eg grazing etc), Mostly wet ground/exposed site		National Park, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Area of Conservation
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The compartment is sub-divided into two separate units by a ditch line and the remnants of a boundary wall. In the western section calcifugous grassland U4a on the west facing slope is dominated by bracken. In the north corner birch regeneration has become dominant. The southern most section south of the footpath is bordered by oak woodland and steep rocky outcrops. East of the ditch line is the most extensive mire at Coed Cymerau Isaf. The sub-community M18a occupies the central area of the basin and is rich in Sphagnum spp. with frequent great sundew, bog asphodel, two species of cotton grass, cranberry and cross-leaved heath. Distinctive bog pools on the north side of the mire have become clogged and have disappeared (since 1997 survey). The M18 basin is flanked on three sides by M6d sub-communities, with abundant Molinia, velvet bent grass and moss species, with Juncus spp. cross-leaved heath and common sedge. Birch is colonising the drier edges of the mire and at the eastern end a high cover of Polytrichum commune indicates an area of former birch clearance. Along the ditch line to the west of the mire is a more species rich community M6b. The grassland and mire are fenced off from the woodland and are included within the grazing licence.

2c	1.50	NULL		Non-wood habitat	Management factors (eg grazing etc), Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site		National Park
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Mesotrophic grassland with affinities to MG5 type. Species include sweet vernal grass, red fescue, common bent grass, field woodrush, black knapweed, common sorrel, pignut and yellow rattle. Moss species are present and the occasional woodland species - bluebell and wood anemone. Bracken is encroaching from the woodland edge. Sporadic Juncus occurs in the south field. Divided into two separate units by the track to Cymerau Isaf and a stone boundary wall, which is bordered by oak and sycamore. The northern field is sloping with a north aspect. Adjacent to the footpath in the south field is a stone agricultural barn. Dock and nettles occur on disturbed ground close to the barn. South of the footpath the field boundary is bordered by oak woodland. The central section of the field slopes gently north-west from the barn and oaks, a sycamore and a rowan border the remnants of a central field boundary wall. The footpath through the south field has been upgraded and widened (2000). The fields were fenced off from the woodland in 1990 and leased under a grazing licence.

2d	0.30	NULL		Non-wood habitat	Management factors (eg grazing etc)		National Park
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Mesotrophic grassland similar in character but more species rich than compartment 2c. Classified as MG5. Birch regeneration is encroaching along the south and western boundaries. Bracken encroaches from the north corner. The field is gated from the main track and the footpath, which is accessed through kissing gates and crosses the north corner of the field. The field is included within the grazing licence.

2e	1.80	NULL		Non-wood habitat	Services & wayleaves		National Park, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Area of Conservation
<p>South of Cymerau Isaf farm is a field of calcifugous grassland U4a sub-community, with mire communities around the southern edge of the field and surrounded by oak woodland on three sides - to the north, west and south. Immediately to the south is a small stand of the mire community M6c <i>Juncus acutiflorus</i> sub-community. The other areas of mire are <i>Molinia</i> dominated M25a sub-communities with cross-leaved heath. Birch is colonising around the perimeter. The water supply to Cymerau Isaf is from the mire in the south-west corner and a stream exits into the woodland below the oak clad cliffs to the north. The rock outcrops and cliffs form the northern boundary to the compartment with a stone boundary wall to the south. The woodland to the south of the compartment is predominantly oak of the W17c sub-community with birch regeneration around the perimeter. The woodland has a north aspect, the ground slopes down towards the field, with a shrub layer of bilberry on the upper slope and heather and <i>Molinia</i> on the lower slopes towards the mire.</p>							
2f	0.10	NULL		Non-wood habitat			National Park
<p>Cymerau Isaf farm and vegetable garden.</p>							

GLOSSARY

Ancient Woodland

Ancient woods are defined as those where there has been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD. In Scotland ancient woods are defined strictly as sites shown as semi-natural woodland on the 'Roy' maps (a military survey carried out in 1750 AD, which is the best source of historical map evidence) and as woodland all subsequent maps. However, they have been combined with long-established woods of semi-natural origin (originating from between 1750 and 1860) into a single category of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland to take account of uncertainties in their identification. Ancient woods include Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (see below). May support many species that are only found in ancient woodland.

Ancient Semi - Natural Woodland

Stands in ancient woods defined as those consisting predominantly of native trees and shrubs that have not obviously been planted, which have arisen from natural regeneration or coppice regrowth.

Ancient Woodland Site

Stands in ancient woods that have been converted to plantations, of coniferous, broadleaved or mixed species, usually for timber production, including plantations of native species planted so closely together that any semi-natural elements of the understorey have been suppressed.

Beating Up

Replacing any newly planted trees that have died in the first few years after planting.

Broadleaf

A tree having broad leaves (such as oak) rather than needles found on conifers (such as Scots pine).

Canopy

The uppermost layer of vegetation in a woodland, or the upper foliage and branches of an individual tree.

Clearfell

Felling of all trees within a defined area.

Compartment

Permanent management division of a woodland, usually defined on site by permanent features such as roads. See Sub-compartments.

Conifer

A tree having needles, rather than broadleaves, and typically bearing cones.

Continuous Cover forestry

A term used for managing woods to ensure that there are groups or individual trees of different ages scattered over the whole wood and that some mature tree cover is always maintained. Management is by repeated thinning and no large areas are ever completely felled all at once.

Coppice

Trees which are cut back to ground levels at regular intervals (3-25 years).

Exotic (non-native) Species

Species originating from other countries (or other parts of the UK) that have been introduced by humans, deliberately or accidentally.

Field Layer

Layer of small, non-woody herbaceous plants such as bluebells.

Group Fell

The felling of a small group of trees, often to promote natural regeneration or allow planting.

Long Term Retention

Discrete groups of trees (or in some cases single trees) that are retained significantly past their economic felling age. Operations may still be carried out within them and thinning is often necessary to maintain stability.

Minimum Intervention

Areas where no operations (such as thinning) will take place other than to protect public safety or possibly to control invasive exotic species.

Mixed Woodland

Woodland made up of broadleaved and coniferous trees.

National vegetation classification (NVC)

A classification scheme that allows an area of vegetation to be assigned to the standardised type that best matches the combination of plant species that it contains. All woodlands in the UK can be described as being one of 18 main woodland types (W1 - W18), which principally reflect soil and climatic conditions. For example, Upland Oakwoods are type W11, and normally occur on well drained infertile soils in the cooler and wetter north and west of Britain. Each main type can be subdivided into numerous subtypes. Most real woods contain more than one type or sub-type and inevitably some woods are intermediate in character and can't be properly described by any sub type.

Native Species

Species that arrived in Britain without human assistance.

Natural Regeneration

Naturally grown trees from seeds falling from mature trees. Also regeneration from coppicing and suckering.

Origin & Provenance

The provenance of a tree or seed is the place where seed was collected to grow the tree or plant. The origin is the geographical location within the natural range of a species from where seeds/tree originally derives. Thus an acorn collected from a Turkey oak in Edinburgh would have an Edinburgh provenance and a southern European origin.

Re-Stocking

Re-planting an area of woodland, after it has been felled.

Shrub Layer

Formed by woody plants 1-10m tall.

Silviculture

The growing and care of trees in woodlands.

Stand

Trees of one type or species, grouped together within a woodland.

Sub-Compartment

Temporary management division of a compartment, which may change between management plan periods.

Thinning

The felling of a proportion of individual trees within a given area. The remaining trees grow to fill in the space created.

Tubex or Grow or Tuley Tubes

Tubes placed over newly planted trees or natural regeneration that promote growth and provide protection from animals such as rabbits and deer.

Weeding

The control of vegetation immediately around newly planted trees or natural regeneration to promote tree growth until they become established. Either by hand cutting or with carefully selected weed killers such as glyphosate.

Windblow/Windthrow

Trees or groups of trees blown over (usually uprooted) by strong winds and gales.