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WOODLAND
TRUST

The Brynna

Management Plan
2019-2024

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	The Brynna
Location:	Cwmfelin
Grid reference:	SS854894, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 170
Area:	7.13 hectares (17.62 acres)
Designations:	Great Landscape Value

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

This wood is a combination of wetland, grassland and broadleaf woodland. There is good path access to and through the wood. The wetter sections are protected by boardwalks. Parking facilities are quite limited but there is a bus stop at the end of Llan Road a few hundred metres away. Maesteg, accessible by train, is nearby and Garth station (on the same line) is even closer.

The site was originally purchased in 1999 with areas of wet woodland extended through new planting along with areas of open space enhanced and maintained due to biodiversity value of the open areas being important for species such as Marsh Fritillary.

2.2 Extended Description

The Brynna comprises an area of stream valley woodlands together with open bracken and neutral grassland communities on west-facing slopes which have recently been planted with native broadleaves. The site supports a range of habitats that are of high biodiversity interest. Key Features of the site are: wet woodland, open ground habitat, and informal public access.

Although the Brynna only extends over 7 hectares, it forms part of a larger area of semi-natural habitat which incorporates wooded valleys to the north-west and two streams, the Nant Sychbant and Nant Lluest-wen (which forms the north-western boundary). The land bordering the western boundary of the site is a predominantly wet with areas of open marshy grassland and wet woodland. The land to the east of the Brynna is largely improved grassland.

Much of the woodland at the Brynna is dominated by grey willow, alder and occasional ash on the valley floor and is wet woodland. Oak and birch with a shrub layer of hazel, holly, blackthorn and hawthorn are quite widespread on the drier ground that rises to the east of the stream. Scrub communities containing hazel, birch, western gorse, rowan and sessile oak are well developed in the southern half of the site. Where the drier soils are more acid, sheep's fescue, heather and bilberry occur in the field layer. There is a small area of species-rich neutral grassland in an open area at the northern end of the site. Part of this area has been planted with native broadleaves and the grassland has been retained as an open glade.

There is a large area of pasture in the southern extremity of the site which is almost entirely dominated by purple moor grass with occasional devil's-bit scabious and a number of other typical wet grassland species such as marsh bedstraw, wild angelica, meadow thistle, marsh thistle, marsh willowherb and ragged robin. Part of the pasture was fenced in 2000 to allow reintroduction of grazing management. Himalayan balsam is extensive on the wetter pasture to the south. Control of these invasive species has caused reduction, but sustainable on-going control is challenging and without neighbour co-operation this would be ineffective.

The marsh fritillary, a species with local records but which is declining nationally, requires the presence of its food-plant devil's-bit scabious in the sward. Management of the open ground seeks to control the invasive species (Himalayan balsam) but also diversify the sward and maximise the devil's-bit scabious found on site.

Two public rights of way pass through the site. Boardwalks provide safe access across the wetter parts. There is an access track along the southern boundary of the site from the Llan road, off which field gates provide management access to the fenced wet grassland. Parking is currently limited to roadside.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

This wood is located about 7 miles (11km) north-west of Junction 36 of the M4. South-east of the town of Maesteg, the wood is on the Llan Road between the villages of Cwmfelin and Llangynwyd. Coming from the M4, take the A4063, following signs to Maesteg. You pass a large brown tourist sign: Historic Llynfi Valley. After approximately 6 miles, you arrive at Llangynwyd will see signs to the left for Heritage Village Llangynwyd. Alternatively keep on the main road until you reach Cwmfelin.

Look out for the Cross Inn on the left hand side - just as the road bends around to the right - and turn left immediately. Keep to the left, the road climbs quite steeply and narrows to a single track road with passing places. The houses on the left give way to fields as you climb. You pass a house on the right called The Lamb and Flag (grid ref: SS 855 896) and just beyond it can see a footpath going downhill to the right. Keep going up the hill and soon you will see the pull-in for The Brynna on the right which has a vehicle barrier just beyond

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Native woodland planted in 1999 on bracken-dominated slopes will be well established and combine with existing wet woodlands found on site at acquisition.

The wet woodlands that occur along the valley floor and the dry oak and birch dominated woodland on the upper slopes will be maintained largely through natural processes, other than periodic control of non-native invasive species in the field layer. The scrub which borders the wet pasture in the southern half of the site will provide an additional habitat feature, but may change in extent and location as woodland succession occurs.

The wet purple-moor grass pasture is of high ecological value within the context of the site and will be maintained as open pasture by late summer-early autumn grazing if practicable. This habitat, currently in decline nationally, is likely to support interesting invertebrate populations. Pedestrian access will be maintained along the designated public rights of way.

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 Wet Woodland

Description

Semi natural broadleaved woodland and scrub found across the site which was extended in 1999 at acquisition with new planting on site with the two key features (wet woodland and new native woodland) combined in 2018.

The stream valley wet woodland is dominated by grey willow and alder coppice. The field layer is diverse with soft shield fern, harts tongue fern, remote sedge, yellow pimpernel, marsh bedstraw, wild angelica and locally notable wood horsetail. Sessile oak, downy birch and occasional ash and sycamore with a shrub layer of hazel, holly, blackthorn and hawthorn occurs on the drier ground that rises to the east of the stream. The field layer contains greater stitchwort, creeping soft-grass, bluebell, wood sorrel, wood sedge, wood anemone, germander speedwell and barren strawberry. Scrub communities containing hazel, birch, western gorse, rowan and sessile oak are well developed in the southern half of the site. These are progressing to secondary woodland.

Significance

The site lies within two contiguous, non-statutory SINC's, Aber Cerdin Wood to the north and Brynnau Wood to the south (Bridgend County Borough Council). An important tract of semi-natural habitat on the edge of a built-up area forming part of a green corridor on the western flank of the Llynfi Valley. The scrub habitat may provide shelter for insects, which spend part of their lifecycles in open wet grassland.

Opportunities & Constraints

The stream valley woodland is wet throughout the year. It would be desirable to maintain an area of scrub (0.2ha) bordering the wet pasture to the south to maintain the mature woodland-scrub-open pasture transition.

Factors Causing Change

Invasive Sycamore, Phytophthora disease in alder leading to thinning of canopy, Invasive Himalayan balsam in field layer, Development of scrub to secondary woodland

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The mature stream valley woodland is designated as a long term retention/minimum intervention area (other than removal of trees for tree safety purposes and removal of non-native species). Canopy cover across the site should be at least 70%, dominated by alder-willow along the streamside and oak-birch on the upper drier slopes, with a well developed field layer in which Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam is absent or kept to a minimum on site where practical to do so.

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

No intervention is planned within the plan period in regards to active woodland management other than tree safety work.

Control of invasive non-native species, where practical, will be carried out and in conjunction with neighbouring landowners.

5.2 Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat

Description

Purple moor grass pasture. The wet grassland (mainly NVC M25) is concentrated in the southern half of the site. It is dominated by a closed, tussocky sward of purple moor grass with occasional devil's-bit scabious (food-plant for the marsh fritillary), meadow thistle, marsh violet, tormentil, hard rush, soft rush, jointed rush, marsh bedstraw, heath spotted orchid and ragged robin. Small tracts of wet heath contain bog asphodel, cross-leaved heath, Sphagnum and hare's-tail cotton-sedge. The main stand has received limited management in recent years but was fenced in 2000 to allow livestock grazing.

Significance

The purple moor grass pasture is a biodiversity habitat, a habitat type which has experienced significant decline nationally as a result of agricultural neglect and encroachment of scrub, overgrazing by sheep and drainage. It supports nationally important populations of the marsh fritillary in South Wales. Although marsh fritillaries have not been recorded at the Brynna in recent years (last recorded in the wet pastures in October 1993 - O. Lewis, CCW), suitable management to encourage the food plant devil's-bit scabious may attract this species.

Opportunities & Constraints

The structure and botanical interest of the wet grassland would be improved by an annual late summer-early autumn grazing regime using cattle or ponies. Wet ground during the winter and spring prohibits grazing during this period. The largest part of the area has been adequately fenced with good access to the public road. Stock would require access to water. Sheep grazing is not appropriate as this would eliminate devil's-bit scabious, the food-plant for the marsh fritillary, from the sward. Without grazing this habitat will be degraded.

Factors Causing Change

Uncontrolled Grazing - overgrazing and increase in *Molinia*, Agricultural abandonment - natural succession to willow and birch scrub, Drainage altering vegetation communities

Invasive non-native species such as Himalayan Balsam.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Maintenance of Purple moor grass pasture. The wet pasture in cpt 1c ideally will be actively managed by summer-autumn cattle grazing to enhance species composition and maintain a diverse vegetation structure. Scrub should be no more than scattered (<10%) in the grazed area.

Invasive species will be controlled where possible and in conjunction with neighbouring land owners.

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

Maintenance of purple moor grass pasture: a more favourable vegetation structure with shorter open areas between large bulky tussocks is developed by annual late summer-early autumn grazing with either ponies or cattle. Keep scrub encroachment / bramble down through the grazing.

Control of invasive non-native species in accordance with woodland trust policies and guidelines, in conjunction with neighbouring properties and partially through the medium of grazing on site.

5.3 Informal Public Access

Description

Two public rights of way pass through the site. The south and north eastern boundaries are marked by old lanes used by walkers. There are two entrance points from the Llan road and lane along the eastern boundary. A Trust sign is provided at the southern most entry point. Good views of the site are gained from the edge of the public road. Car parking provision is limited although there is space for 2/3 vehicles at the southern entrance point.

Significance

The site lies on the edge of a built-up area, providing a "green" area of natural interest linked to a public right of way.

Opportunities & Constraints

Access to the wet pasture is limited by wet and difficult terrain during the winter and grazing during the summer and is therefore not encouraged. The existing rights of way and old lanes along the edge of the site provide good public access to the woodland and scrub areas. Boardwalks are provided across the wettest parts above the stream. There is currently limited parking provision.

Management of the access is on foot only due to the wet ground conditions.

Factors Causing Change

Increased footfall to waterlogged ground conditions will increase surface damage and poaching issues.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Maintain public rights of way which traverse the site. Provide signage at entry points.

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

Maintain sections of boardwalk, cross drains and bridges. Maintain signs at site entry points.

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	1.80	Alder species	1980	Min-intervention	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Informal Public Access	Great Landscape Value
<p>This compartment has been merged with compartment 1b in plan period 2013 to 2018 to consolidate management approach now canopy closure on part of the new woodland has been achieved.</p> <p>On acquisition this compartment was made up of four open areas including two west facing bracken/neutral grassland dominated slopes along the eastern boundary, a heath with scattered western gorse in the centre of the site and an area of ruderal vegetation along the southern boundary which were subsequently planted with native broadleaves in 1999. The compartment now includes the pre-acquisition moderately sloping, south west facing mature and semi-mature broadleaves, previously sub-divided into Cpt 1b with an approximate age class of around 1980.</p> <p>Alder coppice is the most common species with grey willow in the wet woodland along the steam valley floor. Downy birch, Sessile/Pendunculate oak and occasional ash and sycamore are also present on the drier slopes with an understory of hazel, hawthorn, holly and blackthorn. Birch is most abundant at the southern end and ash at the north. Ground flora is well developed and quite diverse. Many small streams divide this sub compartment and much of the ground is waterlogged. Tree density is generally greatest on these wet areas. Birch and oak scrub communities are extensive in the southern half of the site, mainly bordering the wet pasture.</p> <p>A small area of neutral grassland containing species such as common bent-grass, field wood-rush, tormentil, slender St John's wort, goldenrod, devil's-bit scabious and common knapweed occurs on the upslope edge of the most boundary but is often frequented with Himalayan Balsam which is dominant within the area.</p>							
1b	1.60	NULL		Non-wood habitat	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Informal Public Access	Great Landscape Value

A large area of purple moor grass wet pasture in the southern half of the site. The most extensive zone located between two planting areas has been fenced to allow grazing management. The pasture extends along the south east stretch of the stream corridor and is being encroached by willow and birch scrub.

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.