

1.3 Status in Gwynedd⁹

Gwynedd / Snowdonia National Park are noted in the UK BAP as holding some of the greatest concentrations of upland oakwoods in the UK. According to Countryside Council for Wales North Wales Woodland Survey 1985 database there are 11 upland oakwoods (>6 ha), although there are almost certainly many small areas of fragmented oakwoods which are also of importance. The estimated total area of Upland oakwoods in Gwynedd is 1100 ha².

It is not known whether the resource is declining in Gwynedd, although it is likely that in recent years any decline has been halted as a result of implementation of management to conserve and expand this habitat. Some woods, which were ruined by dense rhododendron, have been effectively cleared of this noxious weed and should now recover, provided vigilance in identifying and clearing new infestations is maintained.

2. FACTORS AFFECTING THIS HABITAT IN GWYNEDD

- Past clear-felling which has often resulted in even aged stands of relatively young growth.
- Past felling of oakwood and replanting with conifers, also under-planting (ceased 1980s) with exotic conifers, notably western hemlock *Tsuga heterophylla* and douglas fir *Pseudotsuga menziesii*, affecting light levels and soil quality, thus affecting flora and fauna.
- Past loss of habitat to land developments (roads, housing etc) or to agriculture.
- Cessation of historical management such as coppicing leading to a decline in structural diversity of the habitat and the loss of a woodland product (Although coppicing was less significant in north Wales, the woodland produce had an economic value which favoured its retention as woodland over conversion to agriculture).
- Inappropriate grazing levels. Over-grazing, especially by sheep, prevents or limits regeneration. Feral goats may also damage branches and strip bark. Complete absence of grazing is also detrimental to structural diversity and may result in shading out of lower plants by the field layer.
- Invasion by exotic species, notably *Rhododendron ponticum*, hinders or eliminates natural regeneration and development of native understorey and ground flora and associated fauna. Also sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and beech *Fagus sylvatica*, and exotic conifers naturally regenerating from seed sourced from neighbouring plantations.
- Atmospheric pollution, especially nitrogen inputs and acidification may be affecting soils and soil waters with consequential impacts on flora and fauna.
- Damage by grey squirrels may be a problem in some upland oakwoods.

3. ASSOCIATED GWYNEDD SAPS / HAPS

Wet woodland, Upland mixed ashwoods, Scrub woodlands, Veteran trees, lowland wood-pasture and parkland

Pine marten, Bats, Green woodpecker, Bluebell

⁹ Within this document the term "Gwynedd" refers to areas outside the Snowdonia National Park area, except where specified otherwise

4. CURRENT ACTION IN GWYNEDD

4.1 Site and habitat protection

- Many upland oakwoods are protected through their SSSI or NNR designations or under TPOs within Gwynedd. Of the eleven surveyed upland oakwoods in Gwynedd eight are SSSIs and one (Coed Tremadoc, SH569 406) is an NNR. However most of the upland oakwoods in Gwynedd are small (c2ha) and are probably most at risk because they are not designated and are often inappropriately managed.
- Forestry Commission felling licences are required for the felling of more than 5 cubic metres of timber in any one calendar quarter, with the exception of those trees which are exempt from licensing.

4.2 Management and programmes of action

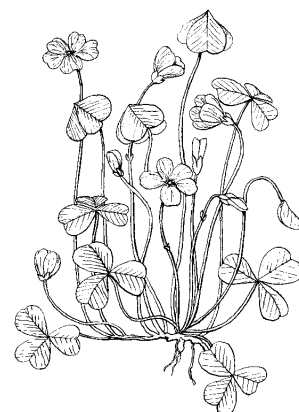
- Forestry Commission provides grants for management of upland oakwoods and the planting of new native woodlands (currently Woodland Grant Scheme, Forestry Commission Challenge funds) and for the preparation of Native Woodland Management Plans. Within the Better Woodlands for Wales scheme due to be introduced in 2005 the grant system will be revised and grants will be based on long term management plans.
- Currently Native Woodland Management Plans are required for all Tir Gofal farms with areas of woodland greater than 3 ha. These may be funded on a voluntary basis for other areas of woodland, or on Tir Gofal farms with less woodland.
- Agreements under Tir Gofal and other agri-environmental schemes may include stock exclusion from woodlands.
- All woodlands are expected to be managed according to the UK Forestry Standard 1998, a national standard for sustainable forest management, which can also be enhanced by an industry agreed sustainability mark, the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme.
- All the National Assembly's own woodlands (the Forestry Commission woodlands in Wales) have been independently certified to UK Forestry Standard 1998.
- The Welsh Assembly Government's Woodland Strategy for Wales sets out a vision for future sustainable management of Welsh woodlands, which is promoted locally by Coed Cymru.
- The Coed Cymru woodland initiative has been prominent in enabling appropriate management of Upland oakwoods at a local level, with support and grant aid from Forestry Commission, local authorities and others.
- A template has been developed for a management plan format for non-SSSI upland oakwoods.
- A local cluster group of the Forest Education Initiative ("Hadau") was launched in 2001, based in Bangor (University of Wales Bangor).
- Gwynedd Council runs a nursery at Glynllifon the aim of which is to grow and promote the use of local provenance stock.
- An Objective 1 bid has recently been submitted for habitat management of some of Meirionnydd's Upland oakwoods.

4.3 Survey, research and monitoring

- Countryside Council for Wales is currently measuring the extent of existing areas of woodland through a programme of survey and inventory.
- Ecological surveys are required as part of the Native Woodland Management Plan process.

5. ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES

1. To increase our knowledge of the distribution and condition of upland oak woodlands in Gwynedd.
2. To maintain the existing area of upland oak woodland and secure its appropriate long-term management.
3. To restore important upland oakwoods which have been damaged or destroyed in recent times, particularly those on ancient woodland sites, in order to increase the total area of upland oakwood by about 10%^h.



6. PROPOSED ACTIONS

Code	Action	Partner(s) ⁱ
Policy and legislation		
1	Consider developing a joint working group with SNPA to ensure effective implementation of Snowdonia and Gwynedd woodland action plans TARGET/TIMESCALE: BY 2005	GC , CC, CCW, FC, SNPA
2	Use planning conditions to ensure developments in sensitive locations are compatible with conservation of upland oakwoods TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	GC , relevant partners
3	Ensure that all examples of upland oakwood which meet the relevant criteria are designated as Wildlife Sites TARGET/TIMESCALE: Start process of designation by 2005	GC , CC, CCW, FC, NWWT
4	Ensure that any grant schemes administered by partner organisations, e.g. FC grants, Tir Gofal, require any trees planted to be of local provenance and sustainably produced and take full account of the management requirements of upland oakwoods TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	GC , CC, CCW, DEPC, FC, WDA
Species / habitat management and protection		
5	Promote and support grant schemes including FC grants and / or use management agreements where appropriate to secure favourable management and / or restoration of upland oakwoods, taking into account the needs of associated LBAP species and habitats TARGET/TIMESCALE: Favourable management of 75%, Restoration of 100ha by 2009	CC , CCW, CLA, DEPC, FC, FUW, FWAG Cymru, GC , NFU Cymru
6	Seek funding for land management by developing a biodiversity grant scheme, which would include grants for appropriate management and / or restoration of upland oakwoods, taking into account the needs of associated LBAP species and habitats TARGET/TIMESCALE: By 2005	GC , relevant partners
7	Ensure consistent management plan format for non-SSSI upland oakwoods TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	FC , CC, CCW, GC , NT
Advisory		
8	Provide integrated advice (including financial tools, silvicultural methods, product marketing and conservation enhancement) for management of existing woodlands and woodland expansion TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	CC , CCW, FC, FTA, NWWT
9	Continue to provide advice on the use of natural methods of woodland establishment and the use of local provenance planting material TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	CC , CCW, FC, GC , NWWT

^h Ensuring that this is not to the detriment of any other Gwynedd BAP habitat and / or species

ⁱ Lead partner for this action is indicated by bold typeface, see section 7.2 for explanation of abbreviations

Survey, research and monitoring		
10	Identify all upland oakwood sites through a programme inventory of available data (Phase One, Wildlife Site and other surveys) and appropriate ecological surveys, and target key sites for management and restoration (information to be stored electronically) TARGET/TIMESCALE: By 2006	GC, CC, CCW, CEH, FC, NWWT, UWB
11	Identify upland oakwoods providing potentially suitable seed sources for the continued operation and expansion of Glynllifon and potentially other nurseries growing stock of local provenance (information to be stored electronically) TARGET/TIMESCALE: By 2006	GC, CC, CCW, CEH, FC, UWB
Communications and publicity		
12	Continue to support and develop further the NW cluster group of FEI (Hadau) TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	FEI, Relevant partners
13	Continue to run a Native Tree Nursery at Glynllifon, and through this initiative promote the use of native provenance stock, and the growing of native trees from seed on a local basis TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	GC
14	Raise public awareness of upland oakwoods and their conservation through open days, walks, interpretation and events, e.g. Seed Gathering Sunday. TARGET/TIMESCALE: Commencing 2004	FC, CC, FEI, GC, NWWT, SWA

7. PARTNERS & OPPORTUNITIES

7.1 Overall lead partner for HAP

Forestry Commission (FC)

7.2 Key partners

Coed Cymru (CC)

Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)

Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH)

Country Land and Business Association (CLA)

Department for Environment, Planning and Countryside (Welsh Assembly Government) (DEPC)

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group Cymru (FWAG Cymru)

Farmers Union of Wales (FUW)

Forestry and Timber Association (FTA)

Forest Education Initiative (FEI)

Gwynedd Council (GC)

National Farmers Union Cymru (NFU Cymru)

National Trust (NT)

North Wales Wildlife Trust (NWWT)

Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA)

Small Woods Association (SWA)

University of Wales Bangor (UWB)

Welsh Development Agency (WDA)

7.3 Opportunities

Timber growers, woodland owners, tree and woodland contractors, schools, colleges, community centres and groups

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Line drawings: English Nature

9. ABBREVIATIONS

BAP: Biodiversity Action Plan, HAP: Habitat Action Plan, JNCC: Joint Nature Conservation Committee, LBAP: Local Biodiversity Action Plan, NNR: National Nature Reserve, SAP: Species Action Plan, SSSI: Site of Special Scientific Interest, TPO: Tree Preservation Order.

Version 1, 2004

¹ UK Biodiversity Group classification - Jackson, D.L. 2000. Guidance on the interpretation of the Biodiversity Broad Habitat Classification (terrestrial and freshwater types): Definitions and the relationship with other habitat classifications. JNCC Report No. 307.

² Jones, P.S. et al, 2003. Priority habitats of Wales: a technical guide. CCW.