

Reconciling objectives

Rules of thumb

When weighing up management options try these two tests:

1. Trading up – Ideally new management actions or changes of crop should improve conditions for ancient woodland features, and should never make them worse.

For example:

- A stand of larch might be gradually converted into a mixed age-class larch-broadleaf stand as a trade-up. But not a stand of Norway spruce, as this would be more densely shading and thus a trade-down
- Reducing inputs on improved pasture next to an old hedge containing woodland flora would be a trade-up. Conversion to a conventional arable crop rotation would be a trade-down due to the increased chemical applications drifting into the wood

2. Using history as a benchmark – Management options can be judged reasonably safe where their impact is not greater than that of the prevailing management over recent centuries. For example:

- Rutting from forwarding down an old cart track may not be introducing a new level of disturbance (given past usage and rutting of the track). But deep ruts from mechanical extraction through a wet forest stand may destroy previously undisturbed soil profiles.
- Clearfelling a broadleaf canopy over a robust woodland ground flora may be equivalent to past coppicing. But restocking with conifers or using herbicides to control weeds would introduce a new and unacceptable level of impact and risk.