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WOODLAND
TRUST

Goitre Coed Fach

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Goitre Coed Fach
Location:	Quakers Yard, Abercynon
Grid reference:	ST090965, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 170
Area:	4.03 hectares (9.96 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Ancient Woodland Site, Tree Preservation Order

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Goitre Coed Fach is a small part of the larger riverside woodland that runs along the valley of the River Taff, near Quakers Yard. Comprising ancient woodland and secondary woodland, it boasts impressive displays of bluebells in spring.

2.2 Extended Description

Goitre Coed Fach occupies a moderately steep section of the southern side of deeply incised valley of the River Taff near Quakers Yard. It is a small part of the extensive length of more-or-less continuous riverside woodland along this valley. Housing is adjacent to the upper southern boundary and an old tram road, now a cycleway, forms most of the northern lower boundary. At the western end the wood reaches the banks of the river but the tram road separates most of Goitre Coed Fach from a narrow strip of mature beech woodland along the banks of the river.

The Key Features of this wood are ancient woodland, and informal public access. Beech, Oak, ash and birch dominate the canopy, beech especially is regenerating vigorously, and is probably native on this site. The whole site is likely to have been considerably disturbed during the 18th and 19th centuries, with the construction of the railway viaduct to the east (a Scheduled Ancient Monument), and the installation through the length of the wood of one of the first brick lined main sewers in south Wales. Small mine workings and spoil tips are also present particularly at the western end of the site.

The woodland is heavily used by the public. The Tram Road to the north is part of the Taff Valley Trail a well used recreational route and there are several other paths within the wood. There are entrances from the Tram Road and from adjacent residential areas. Below the Tram Road is an attractive area of mature beech woodland bordering the river. This is managed by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council as an amenity area. There are good bluebell displays in the woodland adjacent to the Tram Road.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

General Location

This wood is located in the Taff Valley just over half a mile from the large roundabout on the A470 (where the A4059 and A472 intersect) by Abercynon.

From M4 Junction 32, take the A470 in the direction of Merthyr Tydfil. After about 10 miles (15km) you come to a roundabout. Turn right on to the A472 and shortly afterwards at a 2nd roundabout turn left (A4054) which says Quaker's Yard ½ mile.

Follow this road. Do not turn right as you come into the village and see the Glantaff Inn on your right. Instead, keep left on the road go over a single track bridge (where a tributary of the Taff runs into the river) and take the next left. Having crossed the bridge you pass the school on your left. Looking straight ahead you see a traditional row of cottages with a triangle of grass in front of them. Try and park somewhere around here. The Taff Trail with the Woodland Trust sector goes off to the right in the direction of Merthyr Tydfil.

General Overview of Entrance and Paths

From the Taff Trail: (096 965). People arriving by car or public transport are most likely to come via the Taff Trail. As it is flat, has a tarmac surface and devoid of obstacles it makes it ideal for wheelchairs. The Woodland Trust site is up above the trail. The most obvious entrance into the woods themselves is next to the bridge. This is a well-trodden path which begins by following the south bank of the river, but soon turns away up the steep slope. At the very beginning, the path follows a very narrow route over rocks (potentially slippery when wet) with a sheer drop into the river. In general, these paths are narrow with a lot of loose ground or are rocky. There are some

steep drops to the side. These factors mean that care should be taken on them even in dry weather. There are Woodland Trust signs at the entrance points into the wood from Westwood Drive and from Fir Tree Drive.

Parking

There are no car parks but there is space for parking in the residential streets.

Public Transport

This wood is close to both bus and rail transport.

From the nearest bus stop:

Quakers Yard seems well served by buses; the closest stop is by the Glantaff Inn (or Quakers Yard Inn) e.g. Stagecoach bus 78 Merthyr-Pontypridd. From the bus stop cross the footbridge which goes over the Taff. Avoid the small road bridge as this is 1 car width only. Having crossed the bridge you pass the school on your left. Looking straight ahead you see a traditional row of cottages with a triangle of grass in front of them. On this green is a sign for the Taff Trail. Turn right in the direction of Merthyr Tydfil. The trail is the northern boundary of the Woodland Trust site, as far as the bridge over the Taff.

From the train station, leave the platform through the gate and turn left on to an unmade path. This runs alongside the platform. After just over 50m turn left, go through the gate and carefully cross the railway line. Having gone through the gate on the far side of the track, follow the path as it bears left and heads south across a field. After about 60m you descend 40 steps down to your right (these steps can be avoided on the return). The path you meet at the bottom is the Taff Trail. Turn left, and after a few steps you will see the information board for the Pontygwaith Nature Reserve. Continue east (with the river to your right) through the Taff Trail control gate. A further 100m along you arrive at 2 houses on the right. If you look to your left you will see a track ascending, this is the short cut back to the train station (1 stile as opposed to 40 steps). At this point the trail has a tarmac surface. A little further on you pass under Brunel's Goitre Coed viaduct. Approximately 350m from the control gate you cross the river Taff. This path now runs along the northern boundary of Goitre Coed Fach.

Public Toilets

The nearest known are in Nelson bus station. There is a disabled facility here too. The toilets are open 8am - 7.30pm. Nelson is about 3 miles (5km) west along the A472 in the direction of Ystrad Mynach. To get there, return to the roundabout half a mile outside Quakers Yard and turn left (not visited). Information from Caerphilly County Borough Services website:

<http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/yourservices/environment/rubbish-waste-recycling/streetcareandcleansing/publicconveniences/index.htm>

Other Trail Networks

Part of the Taff Trail (Brecon to Cardiff: 109km/68 miles)

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/info/paths/taff.html>

and

<http://www.tafftrail.org.uk/>

Part of the Celtic Trail 377 miles (Cycle)

<http://www.cycle-n-sleep.co.uk/rinfo/map%20celtic.htm>

Cycle Route 47

<http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/leisure/cycling/celtictrail.htm>

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The site will be managed largely by minimal intervention in line with the Trust's management approach with any changes being made through tree safety management on site over time.

Permissive footpaths will be maintained annually ensuring the site contributes to the value of the wider area of recreational countryside surrounding it forming a stop off point for the local 'Taff trail'.

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

Steep to moderately sloping, north west facing mature canopy of native broadleaves comprising of Oak, Ash, Birch and Rowan with understory of Hazel and Holly to southern and eastern fringes of woodland. A series of veteran beech trees line the boundary with the northern boundary along the Taff trail, adjoining other mature Beech woodland along the river Taff embankments. There is a series of permissive footpaths running through the centre of the woods and along the river bank which forms the lower boundary for part of the site.

The boundaries of the site are marked by the housing estate and flats to the southern boundary and the tarmac Taff trail/dram road to the north which is interrupted by the former railway bridge which is listed as a scheduled ancient monument (SAM). To the west a concrete post and wire fence is in place to prevent access to the adjoining railway line and to the east, the woodland tapers out to a narrow strip along the Taff trail.

Ground flora is occasional due to high canopy of Beech and trampling from visitors using the site locally, being quite patchy at the edges and more abundant to the centre. Ground flora species include bluebell, moss, ivy, bramble, bracken and honeysuckle. The majority of the woodland was reclassified in 2012 to be ancient semi natural woodland (ASNW) on the Ancient Woodland Inventory. There are a number of rock outcrops and evidence of past mineral extraction as well as rocky outcrops which were formed during the last ice age and formation of the river Taff. Many Beech trees now anchor their aerial root systems into these features and help to stabilise what would be an unstable slope without woodland cover.

Significance

Attractive Ancient semi natural woodland in the gorge of the River Taff, bordered by housing and a well used recreational route. The main significance of the site is the ancient and veteran classification of the woodland and in particular the mature beech trees which mark the northern boundary which is festooned with rocky outcrops along the majority of its length, formed in part during the last ice age and creation of the river Taff.

Opportunities & Constraints

Due to the proximity of local housing and the high visitor pressure on the site, any woodland management has to be considered in context with people's perception of woodland management and tree safety.

The limiting factors of this site are down to the narrow land holding along certain parts of the site where intervention would create further issues in tree stability and increases in coarse vegetation due to increased light levels.

Access is also poor and removal of trees may result in instability of rocky outcrops and steep embankments.

Factors Causing Change

Diseases - part of the site has a canopy of Ash species which were recorded as infected with Ash dieback in 2017 and will increase tree safety measures in the short term period- thus increasing light levels to the woodland floor.

Other factors include the over-use of the permissive footpaths which transect the woodland and cause damage to sensitive woodland ground flora.

Garden waste and fly tipping - this has been an on-going issue with garden and household waste regularly found along the southern boundary of the site.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Abundant natural regeneration of beech will become established as the canopy is thin in many places and gaps are frequently caused by wind damage and safety felling operations.

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

No silvicultural intervention envisaged during this plan period other than that created by aspects of tree safety.

Carry out regular cleansing of the site to prevent rubbish build up and invasive species being introduced from nearby gardens.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

The woodland lies to the north of a housing estate. A number of paths lead from this estate and provide access to most parts of the woodland. To the north of the woodland the Taff Trail runs along an old Tramway. This is a heavily used recreational route and cycleway running from Cardiff to Merthyr Tydful. Local residents use the site for walking, dog walking and it is used extensively by children.

Significance

The woodland due to its proximity to local housing provides an important recreational facility in the local context.

Opportunities & Constraints

The site is steep with small cliffs in places.

Vandalism can be a problem on site with signs damaged and paths turned into mountain bike tracks.

Factors Causing Change

Increased use by horses is damaging the footpath network, damage caused by mountain bikes.

General wear and tear.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Maintain footpaths and entrances to site and ensure paths are in a safe condition, fit for purpose.

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

Maintain Existing footpaths, entrances and steps throughout site and ensure visitor safety signs are in place.

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	4.41	Oak (sessile)	1900	Min-intervention	Archaeological features, Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, Services & wayleaves, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Tree Preservation Order

This compartment was formed in 2018 as an amalgamation of cpt 1a, b and c sub-compartments due to identical management regimes for all compartments with no internal boundaries visible to form the previous sub-compartments.

Steep to moderately sloping, north west facing mature canopy of native broadleaves comprising of Oak, Ash, Birch and Rowan with understory of Hazel and Holly to southern and eastern fringes of woodland. A series of veteran beech trees line the boundary with the northern boundary along the Taff trail, adjoining other mature Beech woodland along the river Taff embankments. There is a series of permissive footpaths running through the centre of the woods and along the river bank which forms the lower boundary for part of the site.

The boundaries of the site are marked by the housing estate and flats to the southern boundary and the tarmac Taff trail/dram road to the north which is interrupted by the former railway bridge which is listed as a scheduled ancient monument (SAM). To the west a concrete post and wire fence is in place to prevent access to the adjoining railway line and to the east, the woodland peters out to a narrow strip along the Taff trail.

Ground flora is occasional due to high canopy of Beech and trampling from visitors using the site locally, being quite patchy at the edges and more abundant to the centre. Ground flora species include bluebell, moss, ivy, bramble, bracken and honeysuckle. The majority of the woodland was reclassified in 2012 to be ancient semi natural woodland (ASNW) on the Ancient Woodland Inventory. There are a number of rock outcrops and evidence of past mineral extraction as well as rocky outcrops which were formed during the last ice age and formation of the river Taff. Many Beech trees now anchor their aerial root systems into these features and help to stabilise what would be an unstable slope without woodland cover.

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.