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WOODLAND
TRUST

Common Wood

Management Plan 2015-2020

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Common Wood
Location:	Llanrhidian
Grid reference:	SS507925, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 159
Area:	16.20 hectares (40.03 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Planted Ancient Woodland Site

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

An ancient woodland situated on the Gower peninsula, ash is the dominant species alongside oak, beech, birch and sycamore. Bluebells are present in spring. An area of the site is planted with Norway spruce.

2.2 Extended Description

Common Wood ("Coed y Comin") is mixed woodland in a very prominent position near the B4295, 1/2 a mile east of the village of Llanrhidian on the Gower peninsula. It has a slight northerly aspect and overlooks the estuary of the river Llŵchwr. The woodland area is designated as ancient woodland and this one of the key features of the site.

The broadleaved dominated areas of the woodland is typical of lowland mixed broadleaved woodland on the dryer areas and wet woodland on the damper areas to the south. Ash is the dominant species, along with beech, sessile oak, birch, and sycamore and hazel are found on the dryer areas. The wet woodland is dominated by alder and willow. A number of veteran trees are found within the site, some with a girth of 4 metres. A good show of bluebells can be seen in spring.

The remaining area is dominated by Norway spruce planted in the 1960's. The ancient woodland remnants here are surviving in areas where the Norway spruce has failed or the canopy has been opened up by wind blow. Planted ancient woodland is identified as a key feature of the woodland, and its remnant characteristics are threatened. Within the matrix of the conifer crop little flora remains. Dead wood in the form of large dead oak trees that were cut at the time of planting in the 1960's are also to be found.

Adjoining land use include farmland (pasture) to the south, west, east and north as well as another patch of ancient semi natural woodland to the east of the woodland, whilst housing is situated to the north west near the public road. All paths within the woodland are permissive and way marked with a section linking up to a neighbouring permissive footpath that leads up to a local landmark, Cilifor Top. Informal public access is a key feature of the site.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

General Location

Common Wood is found on the Gower peninsula, just north east of the village of Llanrhidian on the B4295.

From Penclawdd take the B4295 towards Llanrhydian. Just less than 2 miles after the start of Llanmorlais, there is an entrance to the Llanrhidian Holiday Park (camping/caravanning) on the left. A few hundred metres past this a road sign warns of a bend and yellow lines and Araf / Slow are painted on the road. Here is the first of several opportunities to pull off the road on to the verge.

From this road sign it is about 150m further towards Llanrhydian there is a turning off to the left (no opportunity to park) next to a red post box set in the stone wall. Vehicles should not use this track. Walking to the top of this drive there is a final house which has a grassy path running to the left hand side, 30m along this path is a 5-bar gate into Common Wood. Just inside is a CCW/Woodland Trust information board.

General Overview of Entrance and Paths

There is a 5-bar gate at the entrance to the wood. Circular waymarked tracks allow access throughout the wood. The paths are gently sloping, but steep, with steps and a bridge when passing over the stream which runs through the centre of the wood. The paths are uneven in places and some tree roots cross the paths. Parts of the site become muddy in wet weather.

Parking

Parking is not ideal, as it mostly consists of pulling on to the grass verge just before the village. Vehicles drive fast along this road.

Public Transport

Llanrhidian is served by the Gower Explorer buses 116 and 119.

The nearest stop is: Wern Halog Farm, Common.

From the bus stop:

- Walk in a south-westerly direction along B4295
- After 20 meters, follow B4295 to left
- After 300 meters arrive at track next to Woodside which leads up to Common Wood.

There is online information about the Gower Explorer network:

<http://www.pticymru.com/Gower%20Bus%20Services%20Map.pdf>

Public Toilets

The closest known are Beach Road, Penclawdd (just over 3 miles from the site), 1 mile beyond the Royal Oak Inn.

The nearest listed RADAR toilets are:

Gowerton Caravan Club Site (Caravan Club).

Rhossili (at the far end of the car park at the top of the hill) - about 8 miles away

Other Trail Networks

In The Steps of the Saints

Llanrhidian part of the above trail which visits the Gower churches dedicated to Celtic saints.

<http://www.churchinwales.org.uk/swanbrec/churches/trails/saints.html>

Walking by Bus leaflets have several Gower possibilities in the area.

<http://www.visitswanseabay.com/index.cfm?articleid=13491>

The Gower Way

A 35-mile linear trail in the area.

<http://www.walking.visitwales.com/server.php?show=nav.6643>

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Common Wood will be a predominantly broadleaved woodland, where natural process are allowed to occur, the principal species native trees being oak and ash. Norway spruce will remain as a part of the canopy and if natural regeneration of spruce occurs will not be allowed to threaten the ancient woodland components which are secure throughout the site. Reducing the proportion of spruce will have been undertaken where possible by gradual thinning and in a manner which seeks to minimise the negative impacts of windblow. Beech will be a component of the woodland. Local residents and visitors will be continue to enjoy the permissive path network.

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 Informal Public Access

Description

A series of permissive un-surfaced paths provide access to the whole of the woodland. Permissive paths allow access to neighbouring land including Cilifor Top. No bridleways exist within the site. Parking is difficult and limited to a few cars.

Significance

An important amenity site locally with a route through the woodland to an adjacent popular landmark - "Cilifor Top"

Opportunities & Constraints

For visitors/ walkers from afar, two major constraints (a) Parking is limited to two cars (b) the woodland is not well signposted from the public highway. The woodland is of main interest to local residents.

Factors Causing Change

Windblow blocking access routes.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The site has a free and open public access through a network of well maintained paths.

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

The current network of paths will be maintained in a safe waymarked condition. All entrances and furniture will be maintained in a welcoming and accessible condition.

5.2 Planted Ancient Woodland Site

Description

Ancient woodland site in a prominent position on the northern Gower peninsula. Approximately a third of the woodland area is Norway spruce (PY 1965). Ancient woodland remnants have survived in areas where the crop has failed or where windblow has occurred. Ancient woodland remnants are threatened within the stand. In the matrix of the Norway spruce little ancient woodland flora remains. A number of large felled oaks remain as dead wood - these were cut at the time of replanting in the mid 1960's.

Significance

Common Wood is located on the Gower peninsula, a part of Wales famous for its sandy beaches and where the percentage of woodland cover is below the national average. Most woodlands designated AWS or ASNW are small and fragmented and many are planted with Conifers or exotic broadleaves. The gradual restoration of Common Wood to a predominantly broadleaved woodland will improve biodiversity as well as visual (aesthetic) benefits internally and externally.

Opportunities & Constraints

There is high potential to restore the woodland to predominantly native species - natural regeneration is abundant and flora typical of semi-natural and ancient woodland remains at the site. The prominence of the site in the landscape, and existing management access leading to the site may be constraints to future management. The area is susceptible to windblow.

Factors Causing Change

Maturing conifer, windblow, chalara.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The woodland through repeated light thinning will become broadleaf in character with ancient woodland components being secure and improving in condition. Norway spruce will remain a component of the woodland, regeneration, if it occurs, will be tolerated at a level not to threaten ancient woodland flora. Once broadleaf in character, the woodland will be allowed to develop through natural processes.

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

Ancient woodland remnants and remaining broadleaved trees will be halo thinned. The matrix will be subjected to a light thin, with due consideration given to those areas vulnerable to further windblow.

5.3 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Description

This north west-facing lowland mixed broadleaved and wet woodland has been felled in parts in the 1960's and restocked with beech. The drier areas are dominated by ash, along with beech, sessile oak, birch, and sycamore. The understorey is extremely patchy and is dominated by hazel. The wetter areas are dominated by alder and willow. Both have a rich and diverse ground flora, with a good population of bluebells. In places along the northern boundary Rhododendron is established, but is not seeding into the site.

Significance

Lowland mixed woodland and wet woodland are covered by a habitat action plan
Ancient woodland is an irreplaceable biological resource.

Opportunities & Constraints

An opportunity exists to allow natural process to occur and for the woodland to develop into high forest. Due to the wet nature of parts of the site windblow may result and block permissive paths.

Factors Causing Change

Invasive rhododendron, windblow, chalara.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The woodland will have developed by natural processes to become a mature high forest where beech is a component but not dominating the woodland.

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

These areas will be managed through minimal intervention. The only works that will be carried out are tree safety, if and when required to protect the public, and work to control the regeneration of non-native species, if this becomes a problem. Boundary fences will be inspected and maintained to keep the woodland ungrazed.

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	5.19	Norway spruce	1965	PAWS restoration	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Informal Public Access	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Planted Ancient Woodland Site
<p>Area of pure Norway spruce, west of the small stream that bisects the wood, the January storms of 2014 have opened up the canopy in places with several areas of windblow which was cleared and stacked in autumn 2014 along with some timber previously felled to waste. Small isolated pockets of ash and oak remain. Significant amounts of conifer deadwood together with smaller volumes of broadleaf deadwood are found on the ground. The latter are oaks felled at the time planting if the conifers. Little standing dead wood. Some ancient woodland flora remains surrounding areas of broadleaves and where Norway spruce has failed. Ancient woodland flora is threatened.</p>							
1b	3.27	Beech	1965	Min-intervention	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
<p>Area of broadleaf encircling the conifer west of the stream that bisects the woodland. Mostly ash, beech (planted) and sycamore on the drier soils, with large specimens of oak along the boundary, and alder and willow on the wetter ground conditions and streamside. Hazel is dominant in the under storey along with guelder rose. Very rich floristic interest, with bluebells abundant. Invasive rhododendron established along north western boundary.</p>							
2a	2.74	Norway spruce	1965	PAWS restoration	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Planted Ancient Woodland Site

Area of pure Norway spruce, east of the small stream that bisects the wood, following the January storms of 2014 several areas of windblow have opened up the canopy which was cleared and stacked in autumn 2014 along with some timber previously felled to waste. Small isolated pockets of ash, oak and birch remain in places. Some conifer deadwood together with broadleaf deadwood are found on the ground. The latter are the remnants of large oaks felled during the stocking of the site with conifers. Little standing dead wood. Some ancient woodland flora remains surrounding areas of broadleaves and where Norway spruce has failed. Ancient woodland flora is threatened. Fewer ancient trees found on the boundary of this compartment.

2b	4.96	Beech	1965	Min-intervention	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Planted Ancient Woodland Site
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Area of Broadleaf encircling the conifer east of the stream, that bisects the woodland. Mostly Ash, Beech (planted) and Sycamore on the drier soils, with large specimens of Oak along the Boundary, and Alder and Willow on the wetter ground conditions and streamside. Hazel is dominant in the understorey along with Guelder rose. Very rich floristic interest in the Spring and Summer with Bluebells abundant.

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2015	1a	Thin	5.19	32	164
2015	2a	Thin	2.74	31	86
2019	1a	Thin	5.19	23	120
2019	2a	Thin	2.74	24	65

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.