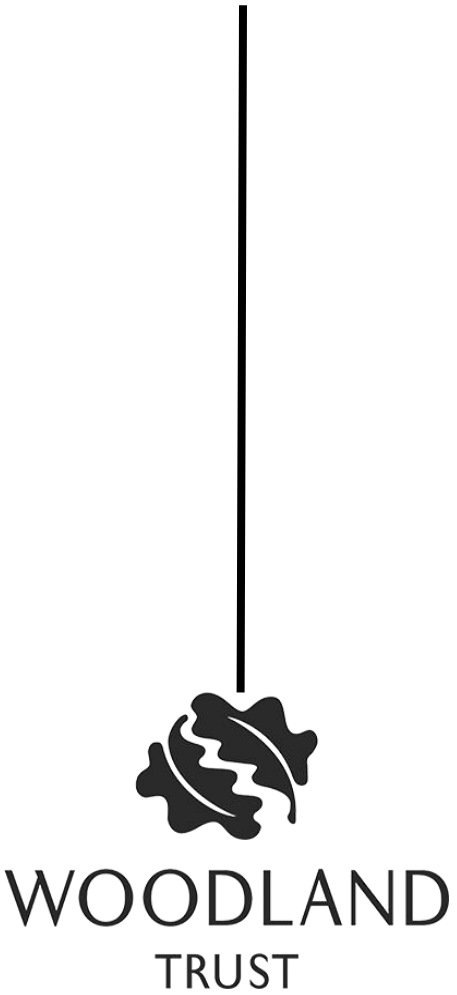
Coed Allt Soar & Coed Garth Byr

(Plan period – 2021 to 2026)



Management Plan Content Page

Introduction to the Woodland Trust Estate

The Woodland Trust owns and cares for well over 1,250 sites covering almost 30,000 hectares (ha) across the UK. This includes more than 4,000ha of ancient semi-natural woodland and almost 4,000ha of non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites and we have created over 5,000ha of new native woodland. We also manage other valuable habitats such as flower-rich grasslands, heaths, ponds/lakes and moorland.

Our Vision is:

"A UK rich in native woods and trees for people and wildlife."

To realise all the environmental, social and economic benefits woods and trees bring to society, we:

- **Create Woodland** – championing the need to hugely increase the UK's native woodland and trees.
- **Protect Woodland** – fighting to defend native woodland, especially irreplaceable ancient woodland and veteran trees; there should be no loss of ancient woodland
- **Restore Woodland** – ensuring the sensitive restoration of all damaged ancient woodland and the re-creation of native wooded landscapes.

Management of the Woodland Trust Estate

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.

The following principles provide an overarching framework to guide the management of all our sites but we recognise that all woods are different and that their management also needs to reflect their local landscape, history and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives.

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene in our woods when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity, safety and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.

2. We establish new native woodland for all the positive reasons set out in our Conservation Principles, preferably using natural regeneration but often by planting trees, 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. Where possible, we pro-actively engage with people to help them appreciate the value of woods and trees.

4. The long term vision for all our 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 natural and cultural heritage value of sites is taken into account in our management and in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.

7. Land and woods can generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We therefore consider the appropriateness of opportunities 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 encourage our woods to be used for 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. We maintain a network of sites for long-term monitoring and trials leading to reductions in plastics and pesticides.

10. Any activities we undertake are in line with our wider Conservation Principles, conform to sustainable forest management practices, are appropriate for the site and balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

The Public Management Plan

This public management plan describes the site and sets out the long term aims for our management and lists the Key Features which drive our management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site – their significance is outlined together with our long, 50 years and beyond, and our short, the next 5 years, term objectives for the management and enhancement of these features. The short term objectives are complemented by an outline Work Programme for the period of this management plan aimed at delivering our management aims.

Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and we continually monitor our sites to assess the success of our management, therefore this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme.

Please either consult The Woodland Trust website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

or contact the Woodland Trust

operations@woodlandtrust.org.uk

to confirm details of the current management programme.

A short glossary of technical terms can be found at the end of the plan.

Location and Access

Location maps and directions for how to find and access our woods, including this site, can be found by using the following link to the Woodland Trust web-site which contains information on accessible woodlands across the UK

https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/find-woods/

In Scotland access to our sites is in accordance with the Land Reform Act (of Scotland) 2003 and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

In England, Wales and NI, with the exception of designated Public Rights of Ways, all routes across our sites are permissive in nature and where we have specific access provision for horse riders and/or cyclists this will be noted in the management plan.

The Management Plan

1. SITE DETAILS

Coed Allt Soar & Coed Garth Byr

Location:	Talsarnau Grid reference: SH619356 OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 124
Area:	14.63 hectares (36.15 acres)
External Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, National Park, Special Area of Conservation
Internal Designations:	N/A

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

A largely uniform ancient semi-natural upland oak woodland located generally on very steep terrain. The wood faces south east, rising from a flatter road edge to high crags along the north west boundary, with the height of the canopy reducing with altitude, exposure and poor soils. The canopy consists almost entirely of sessile oak, the majority of which dates from approximately 1965 onward (probably rather later in the northern sector of Coed Garth Byr) when grazing was excluded, but with a handful of larger and older trees at the western end of Coed Allt Soar. A high proportion is of coppice origin, especially in the more accessible areas. A few glades are present with bracken/ bramble. Oak, birch, rowan and holly are regenerating well, each being locally abundant in the understorey. Ground flora is ericaceous; mosses predominate, with grasses, heather, bilberry and occasional ferns and sedges. The most notable woodland specialist vascular plant is common cow-wheat.

Very limited informal parking is available in the small disused quarry in Coed Garth Byr, from where a permissive path links to the public footpath. However there is no internal access provision in Coed Allt Soar because of the steep terrain. Visitor numbers are very low. The site is of high local landscape value along the quiet minor road adjoining, where the arching oak canopy is an integral part of the lane's ambience. The low roadside retaining wall suffers from tree root destabilisation.

The woodland is adjacent to Maes Meillion a Gefail-y-cwm SSSI and forms part of an extensive complex of upland oakwoods in the Llandecwyn & Talsarnau area.

The key features of the site are:

- ancient semi-natural woodland

- informal public access

3. LONG TERM POLICY

The woodland will be maintained as high forest and will remain dominated by sessile oak, with a lesser proportion of other site native broadleaves. There will be frequent natural regeneration and recruitment of new trees to the canopy. There will be a typical ericaceous ground flora composed primarily of Atlantic bryophytes, ferns, heather, bilberry and woodland specialist species. A more diverse age/ height structure with greater volumes of standing and fallen deadwood will develop over time. This should be achievable primarily through limited intervention, allowing natural processes to occur on the largely inaccessible slopes, however action may be periodically required to control invasive species such as rhododendron or conifer regeneration and browsing by wild, feral or errant herbivores. There is, however, scope for small scale silvicultural intervention to encourage natural regeneration of site native broadleaves and constrain the dominance of holly in the understorey, particularly if there is local demand for the products.

The present footpath network in Coed Garth Byr will be maintained but the steep terrain precludes provision of public access to the remainder of the woodland. The roadside retaining wall will be maintained as necessary and appropriate tree management undertaken along the roadside.

4. KEY FEATURES

4.1 f1 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Description

The 2011 inventory identified almost all the wood as ancient in origin: Coed Allt Soar & Garth Byr are typical upland oakwoods on a steep south-easterly facing slope, with developing understorey and ericaceous flora (NVC type W17).

The history of the wood appears to be that of an ancient woodland that was at some point all but grazed out, bar a handful of mature, probably open grown oaks (+ a single beech) which may be over 100 years old. Grazing exclusion in the 1960s appears to have allowed a new cohort of oak to establish a patchy canopy, with some birch. A second wave of regeneration appears to have occured following the purchase of the wood in 1983 by the Trust, infilling the canopy with young, even aged oak and birch. Young stands of oak in both woods were lightly thinned in 1995, although the impact of this is now not particularly apparent. All these age classes have coalesced to form a more or less even canopy but this hasn't prevented an understorey developing throughout, comprising both shrub species (mainly hazel and holly) and natural regen of site native tree species. The habitat appears to have recovered well from the exclusion of grazing and was in relatively good condition, with natural regeneration present and ground flora developing well. In the absence of formal grazing, holly is locally abundant but not throughout. Rhododendron and conifer regen has been subject to periodic control and is now very rare.

In summer 2018, a wildfire spread from adjacent land to the west and smouldered on the site for a couple of weeks. Around 11ha of the site (cpts 1a and 2a) was affected. Ground flora coverage reduced notably in the following seasons and a cohort of tree regeneration in the understorey was lost, although holly and to some extent oak was showing signs of recovery when assessed in spring 2021.

Significance

Upland oakwood is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and an European priority woodland habitat. The woodland habitat is also likely to be of value to a number of fauna groups/species including invertebrates, birds and bats. Ravens are known to inhabit the cliffs. The site forms part of the Meirionnydd Oakwoods and Bat Sites SAC. The woodland forms a connecting link within a network of woods and other semi-natural habitats in the locality.

Opportunities & Constraints

The stands tend to be even aged and without significant numbers of over-mature specimens but it appears productive and there is abundant natural regeneration in the understorey/ field layer.

The terrain is particularly steep, resulting in difficult management access, although there is the potential for some small scale and sustainable harvesting of oak and holly from the more accessible areas, providing wood products and helping to accelerate gap creation in the uniform canopy, subject to local demand.

Larger trees along the roadside tend to destabilise the retaining wall.

Factors Causing Change

Rhododendron/ conifer regen may re-invade.

The closed canopy limits recruitment on regeneration into the canopy in the short term: it is nonetheless likely that some of the young stands will be self-thinning and that wind action will start to create more natural disturbance within the structure over time as trees increase in size and reach senescence.

Browsing levels - from stray livestock, deer or feral goats - may vary over time.

The impacts of fire - a relatively rare event in western Atlantic oakwoods - are to be monitored. With stochastic climate events including droughts becoming more frequent, a future event cannot be ruled out.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Coed Allt Soar & Garth Byr will remain as semi-natural woodlands (high forest) dominated by oak with other site-native trees and shrubs. The canopy will be of mixed age structure including a high proportion of mature to over-mature individuals. The quantity of deadwood, particularly standing deadwood, build up over time. The woodland will largely be allowed to develop naturally, with interventions generally limited to those required by road safety, although some uneven thinning and holly control would be appropriate if the opportunity arose to utilise the products arising, as this could stimulate native tree regen and supplement natural gap creation. There will be a typical ground flora comprising a mix of woodland specialists, Atlantic bryophytes and ericaceous species such as heather and bilberry. The roadside retaining wall in Coed Garth Byr will be maintained. Rhododendron and conifer will be absent. Browsing will not inhibit the wood's ability to regenerate.

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

Rhododendron and conifer regeneration will be rare or absent, being subject to surveillance and manual control if required. The north west boundary will be maintained in a stockproof condition. The current levels of natural regeneration and ground flora cover will begin to recover in extent and species diversity following the 2018 fire, and windblow will start to create some small canopy gaps. This could, if there was local demand for oak timbers e.g. for splitting, be supplemented by artificial gap creation by thinning of even-aged oak and management of dense understorey holly (e.g. for tree hay).

4.2 f2 Informal Public Access

Description

A small car park in the northern end of Coed Garth Byr allows informal parking for 2 cars. Permissive paths from here lead to the public footpath which crosses the site. Usage is probably confined primarily to local walkers. The quiet lane adjoining the woods is also a popular walking route and the arching woodland oak canopy is an integral part of the road's attractive character.

Significance

The site is used to a small extent by local residents. High local landscape value along the road.
Opportunities & Constraints
Steep ground limits the potential for further footpath development. A balance needs to be struck between the effects of roadside trees on the retaining wall and maintaining the ambience of the road.
Factors Causing Change
Vegetation growth and fallen trees on narrow paths
Long term Objective (50 years+)
The current access provision will be maintained but not extended, providing access for mainly local walkers. The arching oak woodland canopy along the adjoining lane will remain a feature of the local landscape.
Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)
Existing footpaths and entrances will be maintained in good and safe condition. Roadside safety will be maintained.

5. WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
2021	SL - Tree Safety Works - Zone A	Work associated with planned tree safety works alongside areas such as car parks, roadsides and boundaries	March
2022	WMM - AWS silviculture	Works associated with silvicultural operations within ancient woodlands to meet our primary aims of conserving woodlands and encouraging public enjoyment– such as the removal of non-natives, thinning and promotion of native trees and shrubs, creating and managing view points and providing welcoming sites for visitors	December
2023	WMM - Invasive Plant Control	Works associated with the on-going management of invasive plants– such a repeat cutting and control treatments	September

APPENDIX 1 : COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
1a	3.57	Oak (sessile)	1970	High forest	Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, National Park, Special Area of Conservation
Coed Allt Soar. Moderately to steeply sloping, south east facing sub-compartment with a line of cliffs along the north western boundary. The canopy consists of almost pure sessile oak, with some ash, rowan and birch also present. Most of the oak is rather even-aged, probably as a result of grazing exclusion, although scattered older specimens are present. Abundant oak regeneration forms a dense understorey on the lower slopes but is not present in quantity at the higher altitudes. Elsewhere, frequent holly regeneration is found throughout the sub-compartment, as well as occasional rowan and more rarely birch and hazel. The upper boundary consists of a dry-stone wall and is stockproof. Ground flora is dominated by a thick moss carpet, with heather, bilberry, bracken, fern, grasses, cow wheat, ivy and honeysuckle. Heather is mostly found at the top of the slope. This compartment was impacted by a fire in summer 2018 which spread through around 11ha of the site and smouldered for a couple of weeks.						
2a	9.07	Oak (sessile)	1965	High forest	Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, National Park, Special Area of Conservation
Coed Garth Byr. Moderately to steeply sloping, south east facing sub-compartment with a line of cliffs along the north western boundary. The canopy consists of almost pure sessile oak, with some rowan and birch also present, with occasional ash and hazel. Most of the oak is rather even-aged, probably as a result of grazing exclusion although scattered older specimens are present. Abundant oak regeneration forms a dense understorey on the lower slopes but is not present in quantity at the higher altitudes. Elsewhere, frequent holly regeneration is found throughout the sub-compartment, as well as occasional rowan and more rarely birch and hazel. The upper boundary consists of a dry-stone wall and is stockproof. Ground flora is dominated by a thick moss carpet, with heather, bilberry, bracken, fern, cow wheat, grasses, ivy and honeysuckle. Heather is mostly found at the top of the slope. A public footpath forms the northern boundary of this sub-compartment. This compartment was impacted by a fire in summer 2018 which spread through around 11ha of the site and smouldered for a couple of weeks. The ground flora coverage and extent of understorey regeneration was significantly reduced by this event in the short term, long term impacts are currently unclear.						

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
2b	1.99	Birch (downy/silver)	1994	High forest	Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, National Park, Special Area of Conservation

Coed Garth Byr. Steeply sloping, south east facing sub-compartment at the northern end of the site. The canopy consists of birch and sessile oak of roughly equal area, although many more oak stems are present. Rowan is also present. While the birch is mostly even aged, there are approximately 3 age classes of oak, most commonly young saplings with older specimens found along the boundaries of the sub-compartment. The understorey consists entirely of canopy species regeneration and contains abundant sessile oak, occasional rowan and rare birch. Ground flora species include heather, bilberry, bracken, cow wheat, gorse, moss, grasses, bramble and fern. A permissive path runs through this sub-compartment connecting a very small informal car park with the public footpath that forms the southern sub-compartment boundary.

This compartment largely escaped the 2018 fire.

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.

Windblow/Windthrow
Trees or groups of trees blown over (usually uprooted) by strong winds and gales.