

**ALLT Y WERN
SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST**



YOUR SPECIAL SITE AND ITS FUTURE

‘Your Special Site and its Future’ is part of our commitment to improve the way we work with Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) owners and occupiers. In it, we explain what is special about the wildlife on your site, and what care is needed to look after its wildlife into the future.

All SSSIs are considered to be of national importance and we recognise the crucial role that owners and occupiers play in their management and protection. We need you to share your views and knowledge of this site with us, to help safeguard it.

We hope that you will find ‘Your Special Site and its Future’ interesting and helpful. Please contact us if there is anything about the site and its management that you would like to discuss.

What is ‘special’ about the wildlife at Allt y Wern SSSI?

This site has 1 special feature.

- Semi-natural broadleaved woodland

As well as the woodland, Allt y Wern has other habitats that contribute to the special wildlife interest. These include several small streams and wet ‘flush’ areas. This diversity of habitats is important for a wide range of species including red kite, thin-spiked wood-sedge, mosses and lichens and these too are a key component of the special interest of the site. Except where it is specified below, management of this site should aim to look after these habitats as well as the listed features of interest.

What do we want Allt y Wern to look like?

The following is a description of how we would like to see the features at this site.

The site will be maintained as semi-natural broadleaved woodland covering about five hectares. Locally native tree species such as oak and ash will be dominant in the canopy. The understorey will contain hazel, hawthorn, holly, spindle, honeysuckle and canopy species as saplings. The ground layer will contain a variety of woodland plants. These will include bluebell, dog’s mercury, primrose, sanicle, enchanter’s nightshade, canopy and understorey species as seedlings together with a variety of mosses and ferns.

In the long term, the woodland structure will include trees across a broad range of age classes, including old veteran trees. The canopy will not be completely closed and there will be adequate gaps to provide suitable areas for regeneration. An abundance of dead wood, standing and fallen, will provide habitat for invertebrates, fungi and birds.

Thin-spiked wood-sedge, a notable species recorded within this wood, should be present locally. Red kite will breed successfully here each spring.

What management is needed on Allt y Wern SSSI and why?

Although this site is an excellent place for wildlife it will only remain so if the necessary management continues. CCW’s priority is to work with you to ensure that this management is carried out.

What does this mean in practice?

There are a number of different factors that could damage the special features at this site if they are not properly managed. These are the ones we regard as most important:

Woodland Structure

Ideally management should ensure there are always many trees of different ages present. This was the case in the past, when the wood was managed as coppice-with-standards. The practice lapsed at this site about 1950, and there is now a marked absence of younger trees. Young trees need good light to help their growth and as the

canopy is closed in most parts of the wood a programme of selective thinning should be carried out, targeting sycamore and beech where possible. This would aid natural regeneration (which is presently very poor) and the establishment of any seedlings that could be grown from locally sourced seed and artificially planted. Some of the felled timber should be left on-site to decay.

Grazing

Excessive grazing is also acting against natural regeneration within this wood. Although most of the southern, older, part of the wood is adequately fenced to exclude sheep and cattle, there is no effective barrier around its northern end. This should be remedied. Apart from domestic animals, there are also significant numbers of deer living in the area to whom this woodland is attractive, and all fences should be high enough to also keep these animals out.

Non-native species

Sycamore and beech are both present in the wood but only in small numbers. The presence of these species is undesirable since these trees cast dense shade and create a persistent leaf litter. Dense shade is unfavourable to lichens and both shade and persistent leaf litter inhibit the growth of a diverse woodland ground flora. Saplings of these species should therefore be periodically sought out and removed, but mature or veteran examples may be retained as they support a variety of invertebrate species.

Grey squirrels are present in significant numbers and are unwelcome as they damage young trees. A programme to control their numbers is desirable.

Finally

Our knowledge and understanding of wildlife is continually improving. It is possible that new issues may arise in the future, whilst other issues may disappear. This statement is written with the best information we have now, but may have to change in the future as our understanding improves. Any information you can provide on the wildlife of your site, its management and its conservation would be much appreciated.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of your SSSI, or have any concerns about your SSSI, please contact your local CCW office.

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