

COED LLANDYFAN SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST



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YOUR SPECIAL SITE AND ITS FUTURE

‘Your Special Site and its Future’ is part of our commitment to improve the way we work with SSSI owners and occupiers. In it, we try to 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 will look to your views and knowledge to help safeguard this important site.

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 Coed Llandyfan SSSI?

Coed Llandyfan has one special feature.

Semi-natural broadleaved woodland Semi-natural broadleaved woodland is now found at far fewer localities in Wales than formerly. Many of these woods have existed for at least five hundred years and are often found, as here, along streams at parish boundaries. These ancient woods, usually dominated by oak or ash on drier ground and by willow and alder in wetter areas, now amount to only 3% or so of the area of Carmarthenshire. Because of their richness and longevity such woodlands have come to support a very rich and diverse mixture of species, both plant and animal. Ancient woodlands in this western part of the country are often characterised by a rich profusion of ferns, mosses, liverworts and lichens growing on the ground surface or on the trunks and branches of the trees.

As well as the woodland the stream, Afon Gwyddfán that bisects it, is a habitat that contributes to the special wildlife interest. Its pure waters support a diverse range of aquatic invertebrates.

What do we want Coed Llandyfan to look like?

The following is a description of how we would like to see the feature at Coed Llandyfan.

Coed Llandyfan lies on shales, sandstones and boulder clay on either side of the clear waters of the Afon Gwyddfán that rises at several places below the ridge of carboniferous limestone nearby.

Oak is the dominant canopy tree on the drier more freely draining slopes while ash, though found widely, is concentrated along the valley floor where it occurs in company with alder. Sycamore and other species also occur. Different species speak of different kinds of management in the past. Many of the oaks are mature “maidens” of two to three hundred years while the ashes have been coppiced albeit a long time ago. There is a prolific and varied shrub or understorey layer, suggesting a lack of grazing historically. Hazels are especially common, particularly under the oaks. Holly, willow, guelder rose, red currant and gooseberry are also frequently encountered.

The woodland has a more or less closed canopy, but one which allows enough light to fall on what is perhaps the most outstanding feature of the wood: the almost total ground cover of colourful spring-flowering plants with very little bare ground present. Bluebells, wood anemones and dog’s mercury carpet several areas on the drier ground while wetter patches in the valley floor and next to the stream are covered with opposite-leaved golden saxifrage, kingcups, hemlock water-dropwort, meadow-sweet and nettles. Other flowers include honey-suckle, pignut, wood-sorrel, sanicle, wild strawberry, wood avens, herb robert, yellow archangel, greater stitchwort, enchanter’s nightshade, yellow pimpernel, early purple orchid, and violets. Ferns such as hard-fern, hart’s-tongue, buckler fern and male fern are abundant. Apart from the dead branches still attached to the old trees, there are many others as well as whole trees lying where they fell on the ground.

The varied age structure and species composition of the trees provides good habitat for many birds including all three species of woodpecker and other hole-nesting species like the pied flycatcher. The old oaks covered with mosses, ferns and lichen, also contain many cavities that should be attractive to bats as should the abundant invertebrate life that occurs on them and on the other trees in the wood. The wood is home to the badger evidenced by the existence of a large sett at one end of the wood.

What management is needed on Coed Llandyfan SSSI and why?

Although Coed Llandyfan 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 feature at Coed Llandyfan if they are not properly managed. These are the ones we regard as most important:

Grazing by livestock could be a damaging factor if animals were to gain access from neighbouring fields. The present quality of the existing shrub and ground layers with their rich populations of flowering plants, ferns and mosses is mostly owing to the lack of grazing on site, hence every effort should be made to maintain fences around the wood in good condition. Fences could usefully contain gates as in the future it could be decided that some features would benefit from a certain amount of grazing or other disturbance.

Woodland management activities themselves could damage the special undisturbed character of the wood. The wood feels "natural" as very little tidying up has taken place. Dead wood has been left lying on the ground and this supports a profuse growth of lower plants and invertebrates. Dead trees have been allowed to fall over and the gaps so created in the canopy give opportunities for new trees to become established, leading to trees of widely different ages being present. While some coppicing was undertaken in the past, this was a long time ago, and a resumption of this practice could damage the delicate shrub and ground layers, especially if machinery is employed and if carried out in the wetter areas. Some limited coppicing could be resumed in future if the wood is shown to be losing its special interest, such as species of mosses, liverworts and lichens, but for the moment management could confine itself to the occasional felling of an unwanted tree, or the removal of alien species such as Japanese knotweed which could invade the site along the stream. Some small-scale planting of native tree species could be carried out if natural regenerative processes appear insufficient to maintain the character of the wood.

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 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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