

Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan



Semi-Natural Broadleaved Woodland



This plan is currently under review. A new, up to date version will be available in 2009.

Semi-natural broadleaved woodland can be ancient or relatively recent in origin. There are many types of semi-natural broadleaved woodland in Shropshire, including upland oakwood (especially in the Clun Valley), wet woodland, and lowland mixed deciduous woodland.

All semi-natural broadleaved woodland in Shropshire is valuable for biodiversity. Of particular importance are ancient woodlands. Those that have remained relatively intact and unaltered are the most diverse. Ancient woodland sites that have been replanted often retain elements of the original rich plant and animal communities, particularly if native species of trees and shrubs have been used.

Semi-natural woodland that has regenerated naturally on abandoned agricultural or industrial land can also have significant wildlife interest. Biodiversity tends to increase over time as new species become established. Newly created woodlands such as small copses and shelterbelts planted on farmland and some urban landscaping schemes, can also significantly enhance the wildlife value of an area.

1. Objectives and Targets

1.1. Objectives

- A. Ensure no further loss or degradation of semi-natural broadleaved woodland.
- B. Increase the extent of semi-natural broadleaved woodland through restoration of degraded areas, natural regeneration or habitat creation.
- C. Maintain and enhance existing semi-natural broadleaved woodland through appropriate management.
- D. Improve knowledge of semi-natural broadleaved woodland through survey, research and monitoring.
- E. Increase awareness of the value of semi-natural broadleaved woodland.

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1.2. Targets

- Increase extent of Upland Oakwood by 60 ha on appropriate sites by 2015
- Restore 10 hectares of Upland Oak 'Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites' (PAWS) by 2015
- Achieve favourable condition of 20 hectares of currently grazed Upland Oakwoods by 2015
- Increase extent of Wet Woodland by 10 hectares by 2015
- Restore 10 hectares of drained former wet woodlands by 2015
- Achieve 'favourable condition' in 15 hectares of wet woodland, currently in unfavourable condition, by 2015
- Expand 450 hectares of Lowland Mixed Broad-leaved Woodland by 2015
- Restore 140 hectares of Lowland Mixed Broad-leaved Woodland by 2015
- Achieve 'favourable condition' in 400 hectares of Lowland Mixed Broad-leaved Woodland, currently in unfavourable condition, by 2015

2. Current Status

2.1. Importance

In the UK Biodiversity Programme the broad habitat 'broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland' contains several priority habitats, three of which are found in Shropshire: upland oakwood, lowland mixed broadleaved and wet woodland.

Broadleaved woods are structurally complex and support a wide variety of plants and animals. Most comprise a mixture of broadleaved tree species in the upper layer with many notable plants in the ground layer. For example, spring carpets of bluebells and important communities of bryophytes, lichens, ferns, fungi and invertebrates are particular features of British woodlands.

Woodland is one of the most widely distributed semi-natural habitat types in Shropshire and is a characteristic landscape feature in most areas of the county. It is perhaps one of the habitats most highly valued by people.

2.2. Trends

Losses of semi-natural broadleaved woodland in the UK have been estimated for some key woodland types. For example, both upland oak woods have declined by 30-40% during the latter half of the 20th century.

Figures from the Ancient Woodland Inventory for Shropshire show losses of 582 ha of ancient woodland between 1901 and 1925. Most losses were due to agriculture or plantation forestry, although some were due to development or mineral extraction.

Woodland coverage in Shropshire is increasing on average at a rate of 50 ha per year. There is also a trend towards replanting conifer plantations with broadleaf species, particularly on ancient woodland sites.

2.3. Area/Extent

Forestry Commission (FC) figures show that there are 24,857 ha of woodland in Shropshire (broadleaved, mixed and conifer) covering about 7% of the county. The semi-natural

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broadleaved woodland component comprises 12,110 ha of broadleaved woodland and 3,154 ha of mixed woodland. FC census figures also show that there are 803 ha of 'young trees' as a result of natural regeneration or new planting schemes.

The Ancient Woodland Inventory for Shropshire (covering sites greater than 2 ha) identified 9,286 ha of ancient woodland, of which approximately 43% remains undisturbed, and approximately 57% has been replanted.

No figures are currently available for the extent of the national priority habitats upland oakwood, upland mixed ashwood and wet woodland in Shropshire. However the Forestry Commission is currently undertaking a national census to ascertain the extent of many types of semi-natural broadleaved woodland.

2.4. Distribution

Semi-natural broadleaved woodland is widely distributed throughout the county and is a significant feature of the Wrekin and Ercall, the Severn Gorge from Ironbridge to the Wyre Forest on the Worcestershire border, the Limestone escarpment of Wenlock Edge, and parts of the Welsh Borderland.

3. Current Factors Affecting the Habitat

- Lack of appropriate management and cessation of traditional management practices, leading to a simplification of woodland structure and a general loss of biodiversity.
- Large-scale management practices such as heavy thinning, large compartment sizes and use of heavy machinery can damage sensitive woodland sites.
- Intensive management of surrounding land resulting in loss of woodland edge communities and woodland edge habitat.
- Inappropriate grazing in woodlands resulting in lack of natural regeneration and loss of woodland flora.
- Loss of hedgerows and other linear features leading to isolation of woodlands and a subsequent decline in biodiversity.
- Planting of, or invasion by, non-native species such as sycamore and rhododendron which suppresses native species.
- Visitor pressure that can lead to damage of sensitive woodland habitats.
- Rubbish dumping and garden waste tipping leading to habitat damage due to nutrient enrichment, loss of ground flora and the introduction of alien species.

4. Current Action

4.1 Policy and Protection

- 32 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) include areas of woodland. This statutory designation protects them from damaging operations.
- Approximately 200 sites with varying amounts of woodland cover have been designated as non-statutory county Wildlife Sites and are protected through the local planning system.

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- The Forestry Commission controls permissions for the clearance of native woodland for forestry or agriculture through the felling licence system. The Forestry Commission, through its Policy on Ancient Woodlands, Keepers of Time, ensures that loss has to demonstrate over-riding public benefit and Ancient Woodlands are further protected from development by PPS 9 (ODPM)
- Some woodlands and individual trees are protected through Tree Preservation Orders administered by local authorities.
- Local authorities seek FC advice when planning applications come within 500m of ancient woodland.
- Policy QE8 of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy relates to Forestry and Woodland. The policy seeks to “conserve and protect woodlands and encourages new tree and woodland planting in ways that reinforce the Spatial Strategy”.
- Consider the biodiversity value of the coniferous plantations that have been established in the County. While no UKHAP exists for these, they are increasingly becoming areas which various species on the SAP list have adapted to use.
- Encourage the re-introduction of traditional management practices such as coppice management where appropriate.

4.2 Management, Research and Survey

- A number of conservation organisations actively manage woodlands for their nature conservation value e.g. The National Trust, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, The Woodland Trust, Severn Gorge Countryside Trust.
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and FC provide guidance on woodland management.
- There are a number of Forestry Commission grant-aid opportunities for semi-natural woodlands within the English Woodland Grant Scheme.
- The Forestry Commission and English Nature (EN) undertake research into woodland management.
- EN provide specific guidance to local authorities and have produced a report 'Local Authorities and the Protection and Management of Ancient Woodland'.
- Several tree planting schemes encourage the use of native species e.g. DEFRA's Higher Level stewardship scheme and various schemes for planting in school grounds or local communities.
- The Ancient Woodland Inventory for Shropshire for sites 2 ha and larger was compiled by English Nature in 1988.

5. Benefits of Conserving Semi-Natural Broadleaved Woodland

- Conservation of a wide variety of plants and animals including many rare species.
- Provision of opportunities for informal recreation.
- Cultural benefits of conserving living historic features (ancient woodlands) that are closely linked to local communities.
- Retention of key features in the landscape.
- Provision of woodland products that require woodlands to be managed in a sustainable way through traditional skills and modern, low-impact machinery.

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6. Key Species

Mammals	Pipistrelle Bat, Dormouse
Birds	Upland Oakwood: Pied Flycatcher, Redstart and Tree Pipit Mixed Broadleaved Woodland: Tawny Owl, Great-spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch, Blackcap, and Wood warbler.
Beetles	longhorn beetles, click beetles
Butterflies	Speckled Wood, White Letter Hairstreak, Wood White, Silver-washed Fritillary, and Purple Hairstreak
Flies	Specialist Dingle Woodland species: the cranefly <i>Lipsothrix nobilis</i> (RDB 1), the hoverfly <i>Chalcosyrphus eunotus</i> (RDB 2) and the dolichopodid fly <i>Syntormon macula</i> (RDB 3)
Plants	Herb Paris, Wood Anemone, Bluebell

7. Complementary Plans

UK Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland Broad Habitat Statement
UK Lowland Wood Pasture and Parkland HAP
UK Upland Mixed Ashwoods HAP
UK Upland Oakwood HAP
UK Wet Woodland HAP
Shropshire Lowland Wood Pasture, Parkland & Veteran Trees HAP
Shropshire Dormouse SAP
Shropshire Lesser Horseshoe SAP
Shropshire Pipistrelle SAP
Shropshire Pearl-bordered Fritillary SAP

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8. Action Plan: Semi-natural Broadleaved Woodland

Habitat / Species	Action code	Action text	Location of action	Start date	End date	Lead	Assisting
Lowland Mixed Broadleaved Woodland	SHR WOD AP 01	Produce a woodland management plan for Ironbridge Gorge Power Station Site by 2015	Ironbridge Gorge Power Station	2008	2015	E.ON	
Upland Oak	SHR WOD HC 01	Create 45ha of Upland Oak woodland in West Shropshire by 2010	West Shropshire	2006	2010	FC	
Upland Oak	SHR WOD HC 02	Restore 10ha of Upland Oakwood in West Shropshire by 2010	West Shropshire	2006	2010	FC	SWT
Wet Woodland	SHR WOD HC 03	Create 5ha of wet woodland in river valleys by 2010.	River Valleys	2006	2010	FC	EA SC
Wet Woodland	SHR WOD HC 04	Restore 5ha of wet woodland to river valleys by 2010.	River Valleys	2006	2010	FC	EA SC
Lowland Mixed Broadleaved Woodland	SHR WOD HC 05	Create 300ha of lowland mixed broadleaved woodland across the county by 2010.	Shropshire	2006	2010	FC	SC-ORS SC
Lowland Mixed Broadleaved Woodland	SHR WOD HC 06	Restore 70ha of lowland mixed broadleaved woodland, county wide, by 2010.	Shropshire	2006	2010	FC	SC
Lowland Mixed Broadleaved Woodland	SHR WOD HC 07	Plant at least 2ha of native broadleaved trees as part of the landscape and restoration planting program at Devil's Dingle by 2015.	Ironbridge Gorge Power Station	2008	2015	E.ON	
Lowland Mixed Broadleaved Woodland	SHR WOD HS 01	Achieve condition of 2ha of ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland at Prices Dingle, Ifton Meadows through low intensity management by 2015.	Ifton Meadows	2008	2015	SC-ORS	

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Lowland Mixed Broadleaved Woodland	SHR WOD HS 02	Reduce the amount of woodland overall at Brown Moss and achieve condition of 21.5ha of semi-natural broadleaved woodland at Brown Moss by 2015	Brown Moss	2008	2015	SC-ORS	
Lowland Mixed Broadleaved Woodland	SHR WOD HS 03	Achieve condition of 1.3ha of wet woodland at Colemere by 2015.	Colemere	2008	2015	SC-ORS	
Lowland Mixed Broadleaved Woodland	SHR WOD HS 04	Achieve condition of 11.4ha of semi-natural broadleaved woodland at Colemere by 2015.	Colemere	2008	2015	SC-ORS	
Upland Oak	SHR WOD HS 06	Achieve favourable condition for 20ha of Upland Oakwood by 2010 in West Shropshire	West Shropshire	2006	2010	FC	SC
Wet Woodland	SHR WOD HS 07	Achieve favourable condition in 5ha of wet woodland in river valleys by 2010.	River Valleys	2006	2010	NE FC	EA
Lowland Mixed Broadleaved Woodland	SHR WOD HS 08	Achieve favourable condition in 350ha of lowland mixed broadleaved woodland, county wide, by 2010.	Shropshire	2006	2010	FC	SC-ORS SC

KEY TO ORGANISATIONS

EA	Environment Agency
FC	Forestry Commission
NE	Natural England
SWT	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
SC	Shropshire Council
SC-ORS	Shropshire Council Outdoor Recreation Service
E.ON	E.ON UK Plc

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