

Views About Management



A statement of English Nature's views about the management of Raincliffe & Forge Valley Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

This statement represents English Nature's views about the management of the SSSI for nature conservation. This statement sets out, in principle, our views on how the site's special conservation interest can be conserved and enhanced. English Nature has a duty to notify the owners and occupiers of the SSSI of its views about the management of the land.

Not all of the management principles will be equally appropriate to all parts of the SSSI. Also, there may be other management activities, additional to our current views, which can be beneficial to the conservation and enhancement of the features of interest.

The management views set out below do not constitute consent for any operation. English Nature's written consent is still required before carrying out any operation likely to damage the features of special interest (see your SSSI notification papers for a list of these operations). English Nature welcomes consultation with owners, occupiers and users of the SSSI to ensure that the management of this site conserves and enhances the features of interest, and to ensure that all necessary prior consents are obtained.

Management Principles

Woodland made up of native tree and shrub species is a valuable component of the upland landscape. Past and present management, high rainfall and relatively clean air are all factors which have helped make upland woods home to a wide range of species and plant communities which are scarce or absent in lowland woodland. Upland woods may be home to a number of rare flowering plants and are often rich in mosses, liverworts and lichens. They can have a very distinctive bird fauna including species such as redstart and pied flycatcher and are also valuable habitats for invertebrates and mammals.

There may be several different ways in which the wood can be managed to best conserve its value for wildlife - by promoting an appropriate woodland structure, by ensuring regeneration and by looking after the things that make this wood special. The following notes give broad views on a range of regimes that may be appropriate on your site.

Some woods require active management to maintain or restore important natural features. Most upland woods were once managed as coppice, being cut on regular rotations for the oak bark and charcoal industries. However, most of this coppicing stopped in the nineteenth century. As a result the woods developed more importance

as shelter for domestic stock and much upland woodland is now grazed high forest. This, combined with increasing levels of grazing by deer, means that most upland woods are likely to benefit from some reduction in grazing pressure to allow the ground flora and shrub layer to recover. Grazing may need to be removed altogether from some woods, at least in the short term, to allow the natural regeneration of tree species. Temporary fencing, or the maintenance of walls around woods, may be suitable methods of stock control.

That said, it should be remembered that grazing has helped to develop the valued features of some upland woods. For example, some grazing appears to benefit characteristic woodland birds like pied flycatcher, and it also helps to maintain the light, open conditions that can benefit some moss and lichen communities. Careful thought needs to be given to the benefits of excluding stock, from which parts of the wood and for how long.

In some woods it may be appropriate to re-introduce coppicing, for example if a wood has very good butterfly populations that would benefit from an increase in more open, light conditions. However, re-introducing coppicing will certainly not be suitable for all woodlands. In most cases the retention of high forest, with its more complex structure and rich moss and lichen communities, will be the best form of management.

Further intervention may be required to combat the effects of invasive non-native plants. *Rhododendron*, in particular, is a major threat to many upland oakwoods, smothering the ground flora and inhibiting the natural regeneration of tree species. It should be removed wherever practical.

In other cases, all or part of a wood can be left to develop naturally without any active management. For example, wet woodland - which tends to be dominated by species such as alder, willow and birch - is a scarce habitat in the uplands and is likely to benefit from minimum intervention.

Dead wood, both fallen and standing, can be of considerable value to wildlife, particularly fungi and invertebrates and should be retained where present, providing that it is safe to do so. Dead wood tends to be a scarce habitat in the uplands because so many upland woods have been managed as coppice in the past.

Often, upland woodland will lie next to moorland habitats which may be managed by burning. Burning is entirely inappropriate for the management of woods and fires on adjacent land should not be allowed to run into them.

As a general rule, those woods that have been under-planted with conifers should be restored. Where appropriate, native woodland should be allowed to naturally expand, although it is important that this is not at the expense of other upland habitat which has its own nature conservation importance.