

## **PLANTED CONIFEROUS WOODLAND**

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### **CURRENT STATUS**

This type of woodland includes all coniferous stands that are composed wholly or mainly of planted non-native conifer species and where native (broadleaved) trees make up less than 20% of the total cover, with the exception of yew and Scots pine.

The management of coniferous woodland in the UK is regulated by the government through the Forestry Commission. The Commission also encourages forestry expansion through the payment of grants where creation of new woodland is in accordance with forestry and conservation policies. Policies are informed by both national and international priorities and these are defined in a series of publications that provide the framework for environmental regulations and incentives. The DEFRA document "A strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests" (2007) defines and applies government commitments to sustainability and biodiversity and this is augmented by a series of environmental guidelines on subjects including conservation, landscape and water.

Nottinghamshire has approximately 15½ thousand hectares of woodland covering just over 7% of the county's land area, and is concentrated in the area known as Sherwood Forest, between Nottingham in the south and Worksop in the north. There are 5643 hectares of coniferous woodland representing 2.6% of the area of Nottinghamshire. This almost exactly compares with the percentage cover of coniferous woodland for England as a whole, although the Midlands Region has only 2.0% cover. The Forestry Commission manages approximately 60% of this woodland in the county. The remaining area is mainly concentrated into a relatively small number of large private estates. Overall, these woodlands are dominated by Corsican and Scots Pine, representing 55% and 37% of the total area respectively. European Larch is the next most common species at only 3% of the area.

The existing and potential importance of large UK plantations is often underestimated and should not be overlooked. This recognition has prompted many second rotation forests to be restructured to take account of nature conservation needs, by creating internal forest diversity in terms of both tree species and stand age. Woodland rides and glades are important for vascular plants and invertebrates. Stands containing mature, dead and dying trees, understorey vegetation and open canopies are important for a variety of species.

Many planted forests have displaced other habitats that had significant biodiversity value, such as heathland or native woodland. There is potential for restoration of these habitats in some cases, as part of a management plan. Remnants of lowland heathland often persist under canopy and in rides. These remnants provide

considerable biodiversity benefit even if it is not financially viable to restore the site. There is also increasing evidence of the adaptation of important species to planted forest habitats, one example is the use of forest-edge nest sites by Barn owl and Goshawk. Conifer forest also provides some unique habitats for important and threatened species such as Nightjar, Hobby, a range of woodland birds, amphibians and reptiles (herpetofauna), a range of invertebrates, bats, lichens, mosses, ferns and fungi. Furthermore, many coniferous woodlands are heavily used as a recreational resource. They have potential to attract large numbers of people thus reducing the pressure that would otherwise face more ecologically sensitive sites.

## **THREATS**

There is no particular threat to the conifer resource as a whole although some factors could either reduce the existing wildlife interest of plantations or mean that potential improvements are not realised. These include:

Insect damage from imported pests can devastate forests.

Prospect of shorter rotations or deferred thinning as timber processing becomes more efficient and timber markets change.

Changes in culture e.g. The Forestry Commission moving from timber production to recreation due to market forces.

Recreational pressures.

Rides becoming overgrown and shaded. Herpetofauna and many invertebrates, particularly Diptera (flies) and Hymenoptera (wasps, bees and ants) need open sunny areas in which to bask.

## **CURRENT INITIATIVES – EXAMPLES**

The UK Forestry Standard (1998) on sustainable management defines and applies government commitments to sustainability and biodiversity and this is augmented by a series of environmental guidelines on subjects including conservation, landscape and water.

The England Forestry Strategy (England's Trees, Woods and Forests) and the Regional Forestry Framework (Space4trees) sets broad policy that influences woodland management and grants

The Greenwood Strategic Plan and other local initiatives such as the Sherwood and Heathland Recreation plan impact on this resource. All of them will tend to limit the further planting of conifers and encourage structural and species diversity.

Agri-environment schemes have the capacity to buffer existing woodland and to restore and create adjacent habitats.

## **TARGETS**

This is a UK Broad Habitat type. Coniferous Woodland, meaning all coniferous stands that are composed wholly or mainly of planted non-native conifer species and where native (broadleaved) trees make up less than 20% cover with the exception of

yew and Scots pine woodlands. Also included are areas of recently felled coniferous woodland, along with other integral features of woodland such as glades and rides.

Target Type	Target Text	Units	2005 Baseline	2010 Target	2015 Target
Maintain Extent	Maintain the extent of all existing planted coniferous woodland.	Ha	5,643	5,643	5,643
Achieve Condition	Maintain and improve by management existing planted coniferous woodland.	Ha	No data	No data	No data
Restoration	Improve the condition of relict habitat so that it qualifies as planted coniferous woodland.	Ha		No data	No data
Expansion	Encourage the re-establishment and increase the area of planted coniferous woodland.	Ha		No data	No data

## PROPOSED ACTION

### Policy and legislation

1. Ensure the incorporation of relevant (inter-)national law, policies and guidance into all plans and policies relating to the protection, enhancement and management of ditch habitat.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

2. Through planning control or other land use consultation processes, allow no further loss of areas of ditch habitat and seek opportunities to enhance existing areas and create new areas through approved development.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

3. Ensure agri-environment, forestry and other funding schemes include appropriate management options and design measures to suit local nature conservation needs.

ACTION: Government Agencies.

### Site safeguard and management

4. Review the extent of SSSI coverage of woodland habitat and consider notifying further sites as necessary.

ACTION: Government Agencies.

5. Designate SINC's and declare Local Nature Reserves on appropriate areas of habitat or instigate other appropriate measures for their protection.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

6. Promote the uptake of positive management with owners of SSSIs, LNRs, SINC's and any other areas of ditch habitat.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

7. Carry out appropriate habitat management on sites controlled by BAP partners.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

8. Ensure sites containing ditch habitat have appropriate management plans that are working towards improving site management and condition

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

9. Acquire land to ensure good habitat management or to create habitat.

ACTION: NGO's.

Advisory

10. Provide formal or informal training in management techniques for ditch habitat to land managers, site wardens, volunteers, etc.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

11. Establish demonstration sites or projects to demonstrate/publicise good habitat management techniques.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

Future research and monitoring

12. Establish and maintain a monitoring programme (a site register) to determine progress towards county HAP targets.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

13. Ensure that areas of ditch habitat are periodically resurveyed to establish extent and condition. Update resulting habitat inventory every 5 years and revise targets and HAPs if necessary.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

Communications and publicity

14. Improve public awareness and appreciation of ditch habitat by providing appropriate interpretation, education and access (where appropriate).

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

15. Improve awareness of the value of, and appropriate management techniques for ditch habitat among site owners and occupiers.

ACTION: Government Agencies, Local Authorities, NGO's.

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

Join organisations such as the National Trust, Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and Woodland Trust to support the management of key BAP habitats.

## **SPECIES LIST**

The following are examples of species of conservation concern (appendix A) which are likely to benefit from this action plan:

- Leisler's Bat
- Noctule Bat
- Brown Long-eared Bat
- Adder
- Common Lizard
- Sand Digger Wasp
- Glow worm
- Pine Hawk Moth
- Nightjar
- Woodlark
- Long-eared owl
- Redpoll
- Siskin
- Crossbill