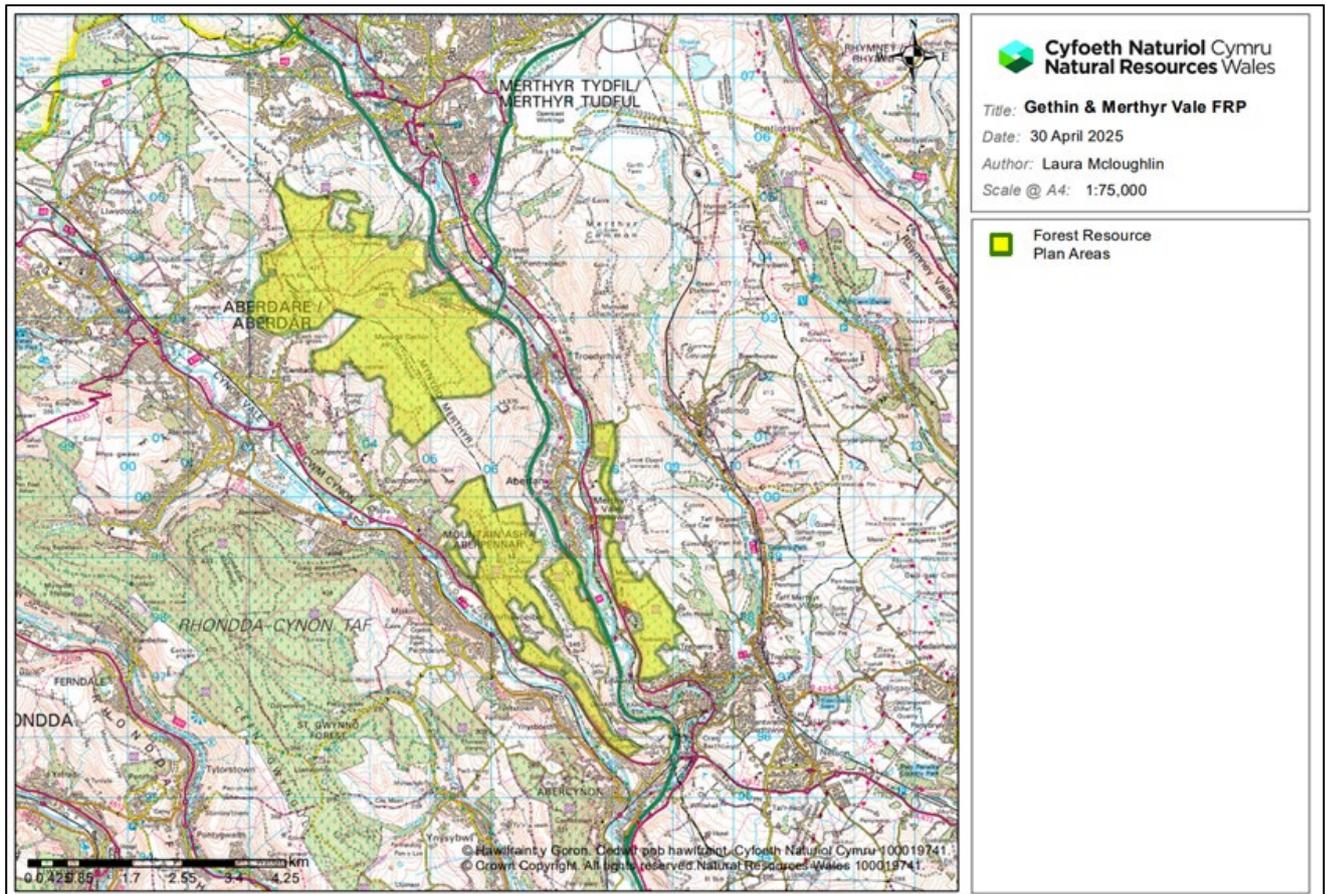


# Gethin, Allen's Estate & Merthyr Vale Forest Resource Plan Summary Objectives

These will set the management objectives for the forest resource plan and wider activities for NRW in order to maintain and enhance the resilience of ecosystems, and the benefits they provide. We have developed objectives using the 8 themes of the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS). Each theme unites policies, legislation, strategies, standards and forest certification requirements.



The Gethin & Merthyr Vale FRP covers just over 1,365ha and is made up of approximately 5 woodlands. The setting for the woodlands are steep sided valleys close to the communities of Merthyr Tydfil to the North, through Aberfan, Mountain Ash and Troedryhiw and down to Treharris and Abercynon in the South. The majority of the FRP extends between the River Taff to the east and River Cynon to the West and sits within the wider Taff Catchment. The FRP provides multiple benefits with some areas providing valuable timber resource, others with a focus on Recreation (i.e. Bike Park Wales) and habitat restoration (Ancient Woodland Restoration, GCN habitat, Grassland habitat).

UKFS Theme	10 year Objectives
General Forestry Practice	<p><b>Sustainable Management of the Welsh Government Woodland Estate - Timber production</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining timber production where appropriate (Gethin Main Block, Allen’s Estate in particular as these generally have good access).</li> <li>• Where site conditions and crop characteristics allow, look to employ continuous cover systems to provide opportunities to diversify species and structure of the woodlands, which will enhance the sustainability and resilience of the forests, as well as provide economic benefits. There are some well thinned conifer areas, particularly in the Gethin main block and Allen’s Estate and these should be maintained for management via Low Impact Silviculture.</li> </ul> <p><b>Forest infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The FRP requires investment in forest infrastructure and facilities to allow access for short-term tree felling for safety and powerline work and potential longer-term future management.</li> <li>• Access is required to reach some of the last remaining stands of larch where timber is still viable (e.g. Gethin Main block). This will enable more diverse management prescriptions and increase our capacity for regular thinning and Low Impact Silvicultural management in these areas. Where larch is in species mixes it can continue to be thinned out where possible.</li> <li>• Consider areas where access for large scale timber harvesting is difficult and investigate potential for smaller scale local fuel wood markets in the future (e.g. Aberfan, Treharris)</li> </ul>
Forests & Climate Change	<p><b>Forest Resilience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to diversify the forest species, age and structural composition to increase resilience to pests and diseases, and the effects of climate change (e.g. windthrow and wildfire)</li> <li>• Remove remaining stands of larch where appropriate and use this opportunity to diversity species/restore ancient woodland</li> </ul> <p><b>Wildfire</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many areas within this FRP have a high wildfire risk. Wildfire resilience is a key area of work for local teams</li> </ul>

	<p>and progressing well within the main Gethin block. This is important to protect the timber resources and Bike Park Wales and will continue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work with neighbouring landowners, partners, South Wales Fire Service and the community to raise awareness and reduce the risk of wildfire through education and forest design – planning and delivering appropriate fire control measures during and after operations, such as creating and managing fire breaks around restock areas, managing our remnant open habitat through a cutting regime/grazing where appropriate to reduce fuel load.</li> <li>• There needs to be some investment in fire planning and controls in other blocks which will be addressed through operational plans inline with the South Wales Central Wildfire Strategy documents <a href="#">Wildfire Wise Wales Wildfire Prevention &amp; Mitigation Strategy</a> and <a href="#">Wildfire Wise Wales Land Management Guide</a></li> </ul>
Forests & Biodiversity	<p><b>Biodiversity and Connectivity</b></p> <p>Work with partners and other NRW teams to identify and deliver opportunities to connect and enhance priority species and habitats (e.g. heathland, acid grassland, broadleaved woodland) and protected sites and species (e.g. Great Crested Newt, Goshawk within the main Gethin block) within and adjacent to these woodlands, to improve resilience and connectivity by creating nature networks/Conservation Area Networks and prevent negative impacts from management activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great Crested Newts are an important species using the main Gethin block and work should continue to protect and enhance the protected species and its habitat and look at opportunities to increase habitat availability of wet areas, rough grassland and scrub.</li> <li>• Continue to connect and restore ancient and native woodland in line with Welsh government woodland strategy. There are pockets of remnant broadleaves and clusters of larger mature broadleaves throughout all the blocks that will be maintained where possible</li> <li>• Work on connecting, managing and protecting open habitats, rides, roadside verges and the forest edge where it connects to non-woodland habitat outside of the FRP area to benefit a wide range of species including Marsh Fritillary</li> <li>• improving riparian habitat connectivity through introducing appropriate buffers of riparian woodland at restocking (and first thinning where improvements are needed)</li> <li>• Ensure consideration of Priority Habitat within and adjoining the FRP area for protection, extension and</li> </ul>

	<p>connectivity. Explore effective management opportunities on open land e.g. grazing, annual cutting regimes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look into opportunities to connect up with work ongoing on Resilient Ecological Networks (RENS) mapping &amp; delivery, working with local teams and external partners (e.g. Local Nature Partnerships).</li> </ul>
<p>Forests &amp; Historic Environment</p>	<p><b>Protect the Historic Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to identify and protect important heritage and archaeological features (including non-scheduled archaeological features), including the historic natural environment taking account of updated Heneb hotspots.</li> <li>• There are 8 scheduled monuments within the Gethin &amp; Merthyr Vale FRP area which will be protected from forest operations and have been considered in the forest design with appropriate open space for their settings, these will continue to be regularly maintained in line with CADW management plans.</li> <li>• There are a few Veteran trees within the Gethin Main block and more within Allen’s Estate, Treharris, Merthyr Vale and Aberfan. These need to be kept and protected from operations nearby with consideration to how much they are exposed.</li> </ul>
<p>Forests &amp; Landscape</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This forest area is highly visible to a number of communities and busy highways so the plan will improve the visual diversity of the forest by increasing the structural diversity and species diversity within and between stands and increasing riparian and native woodland.</li> <li>• Gradually more of the forest management will be done through Low Impact Silvicultural System and Continuous Cover Forestry minimising landscape impacts and increasing structural diversity, where clear-fell is the appropriate silvicultural system, plan smaller felling coupes where possible to limit impact on the forest landscape.</li> <li>• Continue to improve landscape amenity, using choice of silvicultural system and diversification as above and species mixes, and in addition reduce any hard lines and artificial breaks through softening edges with successional and mixed woodland.</li> </ul>

Forests & People	<p><b>Recreation &amp; Wellbeing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Bike Park Wales in the main Gethin Forest block. Forest Management must be delivered in line with the Future Forest Vision for that site</li> <li>• Continue to maintain other areas of the FRP for quiet recreational pursuits e.g. walking, cycling, horse riding</li> <li>• where appropriate work with our partners and communities to identify how and where the WGWE can deliver nature-based solutions for health and wellbeing and provide opportunities for more people to connect with nature.</li> <li>• Work with partners (Police, PSB, LAs) to deter and educate the public about illegal off-roading and fly-tipping</li> <li>• The forest will be incorporated into the National Forest for Wales network over the next few years</li> </ul> <p><b>Being good neighbours</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to consult and engage our partners, communities and other stakeholders regarding up and coming operations and management of the forest to foster good working relationships, improve education and knowledge about sustainable forest management and reduce conflict e.g. being clear about access during operations and sign posting alternatives and ensuring the safety of our visitors</li> </ul>
Forests & Soil	<p><b>Soil management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to follow good practice to limit damage to soils during harvesting and site preparation, considering if soil disturbance can be minimised by the choice of cultivation</li> <li>• Consider areas we can reduce reliance on heavy machinery and use lower impact options e.g. horse logging to limit soil compaction, rutting and erosion</li> </ul>
Forests & Water	<p><b>Water management</b></p> <p><b>Flood Risk</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forestry management will not contribute to flood risk both within the woodlands and offsite. Opportunities should be sought and implemented to reduce any potential risk of flooding, this will be achieved through good forestry practice in accordance with the latest UK Forestry</li> </ul>

Standard, following relevant forestry guidance and silvicultural practices that help mitigate surface water run-off and having due regard to the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for Wales [40996 National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management in Wales \(English\)](#)

- We will engage with the Lead Local Flood Authority during planning of felling operations
- Detailed consideration of measures to reduce the volume of flows leaving forest blocks should include Natural Flood Management (NFM) where this is appropriate
- Progress work on improving the drainage network through disconnecting drains from watercourses,
- Look at opportunities for the WGWE within this plan to support and align with the Taff Strategy Catchment Masterplan and explore options for more novel ways of working

#### **Water Quality & Water Resources**

- Forestry management should not cause a reduction in water quality both within on-site water features and watercourses draining off-site – this will be achieved through good forestry practice in accordance with the latest UK Forestry Standard Guidance and increasing our riparian buffer woodland where we will aim for a mix of shaded and lightly shaded habitat guided by local objectives.
- Continue to expand and improve Riparian Woodland habitat to create a more natural riparian corridor for ecological connectivity
- Progress work on fixing blocked/collapsed culverts and removing barriers to wildlife (e.g. consider where culverts are creating a barrier and need updating or removal)