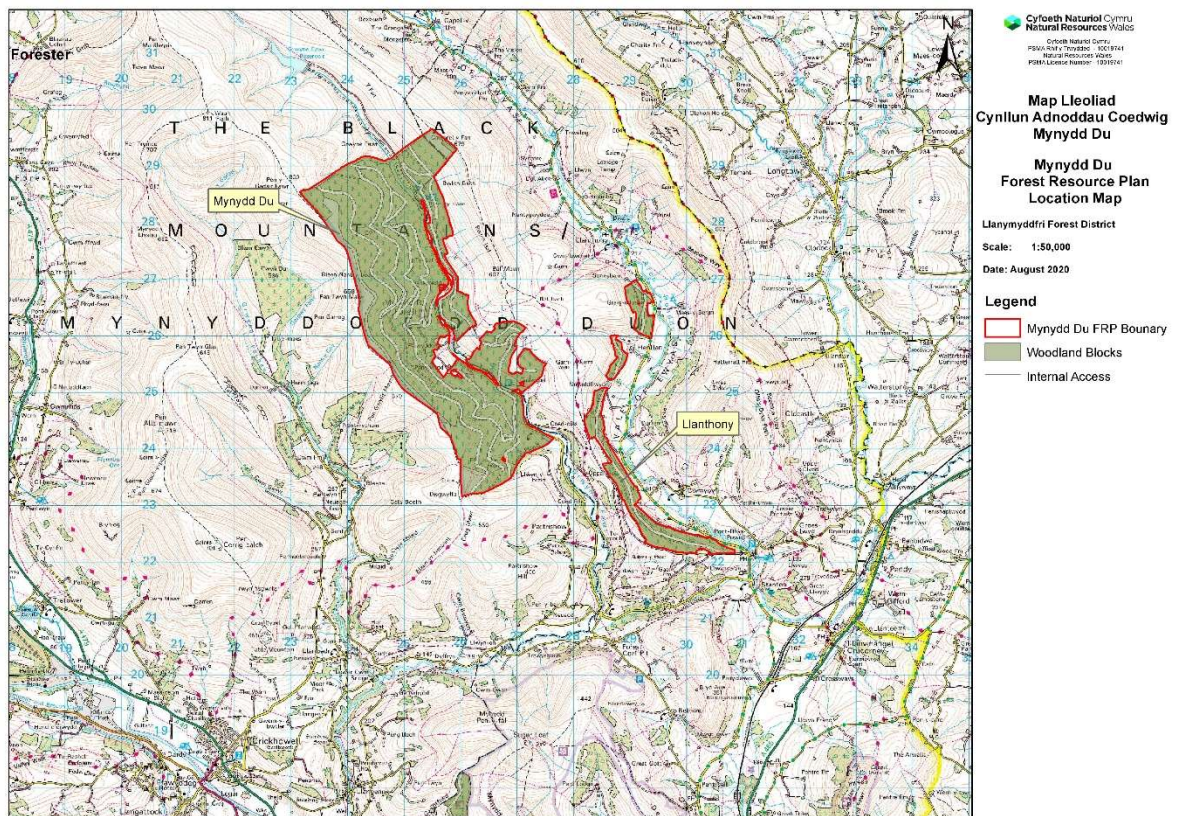


# Mynydd Du and Llanthony Forest Resource Plan

## Summary of Objectives

### Location and Setting

- The Mynydd Du & Llanthony forest resource plan amounts to 1,262 hectares situated to the North East of Crickhowell in the heart of the Black Mountains.
- The plan area incorporates two distinct woodland blocks. The main Mynydd Du Forest area fills both sides of the Grwyne Fawr valley, running from sheltered riparian woodland along the valley bottom, to the high hill ground at over 700 metres on its western flank. Llanthony Woods lie in an adjacent valley to the east and comprises a diverse chain of old estate woodlands, running along the western slopes of the very scenic Vale of Ewyas.
- Though straddling the Powys-Monmouthshire county line, all the woodland area within this forest resource plan (FRP) lies within the Brecon Beacons National Park planning authority.



## Summary of Objectives

The following management objectives have been proposed in order to maintain and enhance the resilience of ecosystems, and the benefits they provide:

- Continue to maintain a sustainable supply of timber production through the design of felling and choice of restock species and through the utilisation of site appropriate silvicultural systems.
- Diversify the species composition of the forest, with consideration to both current and future site conditions, increasing resilience to pests, disease and climatic changes, whilst building a robust forest for future generations.
- Enhance the structural diversity of the woodland through the application of Low Impact Silvicultural Systems (LISS) where appropriate and through consideration of the scale, size and timing of clearfell operations. A diverse permanent forest structure will be maintained, incorporating areas of well thinned productive conifer with a wide age class diversity, riparian and native woodland, natural reserves, long term retentions, and a mosaic of open habitats.
- Prioritise the restoration of Ancient Woodland Sites, which include the majority of the Llanthony Forest block and riparian corridor of Mynydd Du, through the gradual removal of conifers from these areas, using LISS where viable.
- Manage for the protection of soils and water, to facilitate improvements in riverine habitats within the Usk SAC and Usk Tributaries SSSI, expanding the buffering potential of the existing riparian woodland network, favouring LISS where viable in the lower reaches of the catchment, scheduling operational activities to avoid compaction and mobilisation of sediments from fragile local soils and ensuring compliance with best practice requirements of the Water Framework Directive.
- Expand the area identified for routine thinning interventions, facilitating PAWS restoration and LISS management where appropriate, while improving future stand stability, timber quality and amenity value within planned clearfell coupes.
- Ensure the availability of appropriate forest infrastructure to safely facilitate the proposed levels of thinning and harvesting activity, while mitigating risks to soils, water and associated habitats.
- Support habitat connectivity along riparian zones, forest roads, PROW and other access routes, through appropriate management of verges and open ground, through the enhancement of riparian woodland, ASNW and PAWS features, and by linking effectively with adjoining habitat networks. Along with other flora and fauna, undertakings will benefit key European protected species recorded in the vicinity and which are notable features of adjoining Natura 2000 sites.

- Plan for the phased removal of any remaining areas of significant larch, avoiding the need for reactive *Phytophthora* sanitation fellings in future.
- Review the use of appropriate silvicultural systems in coupes immediately adjacent to private properties, high voltage utilities and the public highway, largely concentrated along the central valley of Mynydd Du, to ensure the future safety and stability of these features.
- Identify and investigate areas suitable for deep peat restoration where viable, to support carbon storage, water regulation and biodiversity. Monitor and evaluate restored areas.
- Maintain and monitor the effectiveness of open habitat and successional woodland areas acting as a buffer against the Black Mountains SSSI, finding an optimal balance between buffering effects, maintenance of landscape character, and effective utilisation of productive ground within the woodland.
- Manage impacts from invasive regeneration, targeting the removal of Himalayan Balsam from the Llanthony woodland area in co-operation with other stakeholders, and plan for the phased removal of Western hemlock from LISS managed areas of the woodland.
- Address the long-standing issue of sheep browsing damage within Mynydd Du, which currently limits the successful establishment of all non-Sitka spruce crops, through a co-ordinated approach to preventing stock incursion across the forest.
- Prepare for the anticipated rise in local deer populations through active consideration of future control requirements during the design of felling and restocking coupes.
- Maintain and improve recreation opportunities, promoting sustainable low impact access along well managed paths, forest roads and PROW, that contribute to the connectivity of open and wooded habitats within the forest.
- Identify heritage and cultural features and plan for their protection during forest operations to avoid damage or concealment.
- Maintain the character of the two distinct woodland blocks as they lie within the wider landscape and consider visual perception for the benefit of visitors and residents.

## Summary of the main changes that will occur within the forest:

- Mynydd Du will remain an important productive woodland, providing a sustainable supply of timber to support employment and the Welsh economy.
- Species and structural diversity will be significantly enhanced, providing greater resilience to pests, disease and climate change.
- The expansion of a broadleaf corridor along the lower Grwyne Fawr valley and restocking of 'mid-slopes' with a more diverse mixture of productive species, will see a progressive reduction in the proportion of Sitka spruce.
- The restoration of ancient woodland sites will see all of Llanthony, and parts of the lower valley of Mynydd Du, undergo a steady conversion back to native broadleaf woodland.
- An incremental 'Low Impact Silvicultural System' (LISS) approach will be favoured for restoration of ancient woodland areas and parts of the productive crop where constraints allow, bringing 258ha (21%) of the woodland under continuous cover management.
- Riparian corridors and successional woodland buffers will be expanded and managed to ensure the condition of higher conservation value features and surrounding designated sites are protected and enhanced, and to improve connectivity between habitats.
- In Mynydd Du, some of the taller conifer stands adjacent to the county road, that cannot be safely managed under 'LISS', will be felled and restocked with native broadleaves.
- The remaining larch crops will be removed over the plan period, due to the presence of *Phytophthora ramorum* in the area.
- Other aspects of the woodland's management, such as the provision of healthy access opportunities for the community and the identification and preservation of heritage features within the forest will remain important objectives.