Llangasty - Ty Mawr Management Plan 2015 - 2020

Site Key Facts Summary

This is a supplement to the 5-year management plan for Llangasty & Ty Mawr, owned by the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA). It aims to provide a basic summary of the key features and habitat management activities associated with the site.

The site fringes the southern edge of Llangorse Lake which is the largest natural lake in South Wales. The majority of the site is afforded protection as part of both the Llyn Syfaddan (Llangorse Lake) Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC), with several special features including a naturally nutrient-enriched lake with transitions to swamp, inundation vegetation, marshy grassland and drier habitats, together with a number of regionally rare and declining plant species, and important invertebrate populations. Although not currently a feature within the site’s SAC/SSSI citations, Llangorse Lake and its fringing habitats are of ecological importance to a variety of bird species.

A further portion of the site comprises Caeau Ty Mawr SSSI, which is one of the largest areas of unimproved lowland grassland in Brecknockshire.

Llangasty-Ty Mawr has the potential to be a flagship site within the National Park, and the ecological resource held here is very significant. The site is of significant conservation importance on a European, national and local level, due to the mosaic of habitats and species it supports. Its natural beauty, biodiversity interest, and location lend itself to quiet enjoyment by a number of users including tourists, casual walkers, local users and bird watchers.

The site is inherently a manageable site. It is an enclosed, defined area, with good baseline information and good working relationships with tenant farmers. Since the last plan the site has also profited from a suite of access improvements and capital works, delivered by NPA staff, specifically members of the warden team.

The full Management Plan should be referred to for a full description of the site’s biodiversity and other assets, current management, management issues, conservation objectives and related management actions (and priorities) for the next five years.

Location: c.10km east of Brecon, on the southern shore line of Llangorse Lake

Grid Reference: SO 1328 2619 (by small lakeside car park)

Size: c.47.38ha

Altitude: 154-165m

Nature Conservation Designations:
- **European**: Llyn Syfaddan (Llangorse Lake) Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- **National**: Llyn Syfaddan (Llangorse Lake) Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI), Caeau Ty Mawr SSSI
- **Local**: Variety of UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority/Section 42 Species & Habitats of Principal Importance for Conservation of Biological Diversity in Wales

Historic Features and Site & Landscape Designations:
The site contains a variety of undesignated features of historic interest. In addition, the following historic site and landscape classifications relate to the site:
- **Registered Historic Landscape (RHL)** - The site is within the Middle Usk Valley: Brecon and Llangorse Landscape of Special Historic Interest. Ref no. HLW (P) 7. (Register of Landscapes of Special Historic Interest in Wales, Cadw, 2001).
- Historic Landscape Character Area (HLCA) - Within the RHL the site is part of the HLCA 1174 Tal-y-llyn Historic Landscape Character Area (Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust) (http://www.cpat.org.uk/projects/longer/histland/usk/1174.htm)

- Essential setting area - Fields OS 9818, 1200 forms part of the Essential Setting for Treberfydd House Registered Historic Park and Garden. Register no. PGW (Po) 7 (POW) (Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of special interest in Wales: Part 1 Parks & Gardens, Cadw 1999).

- Historic settlement - Part of field OS 4721 is within the historic core of Llangasty village as defined by the Brecon Beacons National Park Historical Settlements Assessment, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, 1993, updated 2013 (http://www.cpat.org.uk/ycom/bbnp/bbnp.htm)

Other:
- Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (Zone ID 219, Eutrophic Nitrate Vulnerable Zone Area)
- Part of Landscape Area 14: Wye Valley Foothills of the 2012 Brecon Beacons National Park Landscape Character Assessment

Physical Infrastructure:
- Series of finger posts, kissing gates and sections of boardwalk facilitating the public right of way which passes through the west of the site
- Field gates, fencing, water troughs & ditch culverts, facilitating grazing management of site
- Bird hide with ramped access (current hide installed in 2012)
- 2 car parks, each with a wooden bench
- Memorial bench to Dorothea Raikes (set within stone wall adjacent to Llangasty car park)
- Orientation panel in Llangasty car park, etiquette signage and interior and exterior interpretation panels at the bird hide. Planned sculpture (incorporating audio) by entrance to Caeau Ty Mawr SSSI.

Tenure & Public Access
- Ownership: The site is under the ownership of the BBNPA and was acquired in a series of phases from 1991 onwards, with assistance from funding bodies including the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF).
- Tenancy: The site is managed under agreement by two separate tenant farmers through a combination of Agricultural Holdings Act Tenancy (AHA), Farm Business Tenancy (FBT) and grazing license.
- Public Access: A public footpath runs east-west through the fields located to the west of the small lake-side car park. A portion of the site (alongside the eastern most ‘panhandle’ of the lake) is not open to the public due to the sensitive breeding bird interest. Access here is limited to NPA staff and the Llangorse Lake Bird Ringing Group.
- Site boundary legal constraints: Neither the NPA ownership nor SSSI/SAC boundaries are consistently defined by fixed physical features on the ground, with the boundaries in places transecting field units. In particular, the precise NPA boundary with Llangorse Lake Common has been a historical sticking point and is accounted for differently on different maps, compounded by the fact that the lake margins and reedbeds change with time. In management practice however, the vegetation which fringes the lake to the north of Ty Mawr and which is part of both the SAC and SSSI has been managed by the NPA with the informal agreement of the Common’s landowner.
Key Biodiversity Features:
- Swamp (sedgebed & reedbed) & inundation communities
- Marshy grassland
- Unimproved neutral grassland
- Open standing water (ditches)
- Semi-natural broadleaved woodland, hedgerows
- Important vascular plant populations
- Two-tone reed beetle
- Variable damselfly
- Important breeding bird interest
- Water vole

Of particular significance are the site’s lakeside vegetation transitions from open water through to wetland and dry grassland, which are some of the best in Wales. This swamp, marginal and inundation vegetation is a feature of the Llangorse Lake SSSI and a key focus for the site’s management.

Key Public Enjoyment & Use Features:
- Undeveloped southern shores of Llangorse Lake, providing opportunities for quiet enjoyment of the natural world, including excellent bird watching.
- The site is served by the Public Right of Way network (paths are enhanced over wetter areas of ground with sections of boardwalk)
- Bird hide designed to be ‘accessible by all’
- Interpretative panels centred at main car park and bird hide, audio panel planned for entry point to Caeau Ty Mawr
- Two car parks (one for use by disabled visitors enabling improved access to bird hide and its locality)

Key Habitat Management Activities:
- Maintenance of grazing & cutting regimes (with flexibility to allow for weather conditions)
- Control of soft rush in key areas
- Control of scrub within reed and sedgebeds
- Rotational clearance of ditches and ditch banks
- Management of hedgerows & field-edge tree lines
- Management of mature pollarded willow trees
- Monitoring of protected habitat & species features

Overarching Site Management Goals:

The overarching goals guiding the site’s management are as follows:

- To achieve and maintain favourable condition for the national and locally important species and terrestrial habitat features associated with the fringes of Llangorse Lake.
- To ensure an effective contribution to the favourable conservation status of Llangorse Lake SAC & SSSI, of which the site is one part.
- To support the integrated management of all the special features that comprise Llangasty-Ty Mawr.
- To maintain and enhance recreational access and use of the site as a resource for public enjoyment and learning, whilst being sympathetic to the other goals above.
Key Habitat Management Activities

A summary of key management activities, to help achieve favourable condition for the site’s key habitat features, is provided in the two maps below.

Note: For full details of management policies and actions for each key habitat type, together with an indication of priorities and timings, please refer to Section 5: Management Issues & Actions, of the Management Plan.

Key to Broad Habitat Types:

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<td>Amenity</td>
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<td>Broad leaved woodland</td>
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<td>Marshy grassland</td>
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<td>Semi-improved neutral grassland</td>
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<td>Swamp &amp; Inundation communities (reedbed)</td>
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<td>Swamp &amp; Inundation communities/Marshy grassland</td>
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<td>Unimproved neutral grassland</td>
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Map 1 – Key Habitat Management Activities for Ty Mawr land block

**UNIMPROVED NEUTRAL GRASSLAND** (with areas of marshy grassland)
- Secure consistent grazing pattern to reduce regions of over & under grazing and enhance botanical diversity.
- Year 1/2 - Trial splitting into 2 grazing units (Field 8B9 and Field 10B11). Grazing F8B9 with ponies in late summer and F10B11 in spring/early summer.
- In longer term repair/install new fencing to establish 4 grazing units. No fence currently exists between Field 8 & 9 - electric fence may be useful in the interim. Ensure water troughs are operational.
- Be aware of any future opportunities to graze cattle on site.
- Fail field 9 in year 1 and clear scrub patches to improve sward, prevent further loss of grassland feature and encourage the palatability for ponies.
- Fail other fields on rotation to help reduce coarseness of sward & limit development of scrub.

**SWAMPY (reed & sedgebeds) & INUNDATION COMMUNITIES**
- Control willow scrub in reed & sedgebeds to prevent habitat degradation.
- Cut sedgebeds SS-3 on rotation in October (based on division into 6 blocks) to break up toward. Remove stumps if possible.
- Maintain unfenced boundary to the adjacent hay meadow to continue to keep it open to grazing cattle.
- Cut & stump treat willow scrub & trees in Reedbed 2, as required to reduce to less than 10% cover. Focus on regrowth in the block previously cleared in 2003 as a priority (turquoise hatched). If resource allows, begin clearing second block of willow saplings (pink hatched). Pollard mature willows.

**AMENITY**
- Trim grass around car park edge & along path to the hide.
- Maintain the open water scrape in front of bird hide (trim reed & scrub over the c.5m² area - Coppicing/scrub control alongside jetty & water inlet).

**BROAD-LEAVED WOODLAND**
Woodland block W2:
- Maintain the non-intervention policy to date allowing natural regeneration and retain standing and fallen deadwood habitats.
- Manage overhanging vegetation & repair fences along southern edge (alongside footpath).

**HEDGEROWS** (inc. ditch bank trees and scrub & mature trees)
(Locations across Llangenny & Ty Mawr)
- Hedges: - Rail to retain stockproofness and form, ideally in December/January to allow seed & fruit to persist.
- Maintain diversity of tree lines and scrub through regular coppicing, depending, Raking in conjunction with ditch management needs.
- Pollard crowns of mature willow every few years.
- Lissen with tenants to encourage flaking of field margins on rotation/side the scrub lines.

**DITCHES** (fields 8 - 11)
- Desert & refill ditches on a 5-year rotation to:
  - Maintain a diversity of open water & bankside habitats, with potential benefits for dragonflies and other invertebrates, water voles, aquatic & emergent plants
  - Provide water for livestock
  - Assist in surface water drainage of fields and trapping of silt/nutrients preventing runoff into the lake
  - Manage bankside vegetation in conjunction with ditch works (i.e. pollard mature willows, coppice tree & scrub lines)

**Date:** 04/02/2015  
**Scale:** 1:1,330
Map 2 – Key Habitat Management Activities for Llangasty land block

**AMENITY**
Stress grass and reeds in area to north of car park to maintain views across lake and picnic area.

**SWAMP & INUNDATION COMMUNITIES/MARSHY GRASSLAND**
Adjust grazing regime in field 1 & control soft rush to improve vegetation structure for breeding lapping and enhance botanical diversity. Aim for no more than 30% scattered soft rush.
- Flat young alder along northern edge of field to maintain open shingle for potential breeding birds.
- Allow early cattle grazing as ground conditions permit - 1st - trial 15-20 cattle shut in for 4 wks in April-May.
- Cut & bale post mid-July

**MARSHY GRASSLAND**
Manage soft rush in fields 1 & 3 to enhance botanical diversity and improve sward structure for potential breeding waders.
- Field 1, Field 3 - take early cut & bale or hard hard-graze and then weedwise regrowth in May/June. Repeat in year treatment may be necessary. Field 1 = priority.

**DITCHES (fields 1 - 5)**
- Desilt & reprofile ditches in 5-year rotation to:
- Maintain a diversity of open water & bankside habitats with potential benefits for dragonflies and other invertebrates, water voles, aquatic & emergent plants
- Provide water for livestock
- Assist in surface water drainage of fields and trapping of silt/nutrients preventing runoff into the lake
- Manage bankside vegetation in conjunction with ditch works (i.e. pollard mature willows, coppice tree and scrub lines)

**MARSHY GRASSLAND**
Maintain spring/summer cattle grazing, followed by late June/July cut and collect, to maintain open sward of variable height, enhance botanical diversity and aid soft rush control
- Circa 30 cattle ranging across fields 2-5:
  - Field 4 & 5 - cattle graze from April onwards, cut & bale late June/July
  - Field 3 - cattle graze late April/May, cut & bale late June/July
  - Field 2 - leave to grow before cut & bale late July
  - Cut & remove marshshet (and botanically rich) zone of vegetation along eastern edge of fields 2-5 on c. triennial basis in drier years as possible.
  - Remove cattle grazing over winter/very wet conditions to minimise poaching
  - Discuss regime annually with tenant and WRW - flexible approach required in view of weather and site conditions. Discretionary early cuts and rotation of the field to be shut up for a late cut may be desirable.
Management Constraints & Risks

The following general constraints apply. Constraints to the management of specific habitat features are given within Section 5: Management Issues & Actions, of the plan.

- **Resources** – Work will be limited by the availability of resources and labour. Resources for capital works may be bid for through the entry of part of the site into Glastir Advanced, applications to the NPA’s capital budget and external grant funding bids. The management actions necessary to improve/maintain the site’s habitats require clear tenancy agreements, regular warden time and liaison with tenants. Long term commitments such as monitoring and regular warden time are likely to be the most costly and difficult to achieve. Other mechanisms for management of the site may need to be evaluated, including handing over management to other conservation partners.

- **Legal boundary** – Whilst the lake edge habitats have been informally managed by the NPA with the informal agreement of the lake landowner, lack of clarity over the exact lake edge boundary could cause future difficulties if there was a change in ownership. The NPA boundary also transects fields. Thus, narrow portions of NPA land cannot be managed independently of the wider fields in which they exist.

- **Continuity of tenancies** – The site is fortunate to benefit from two well-established tenancies. Any future change of tenant poses a potential risk to continuity of management, especially the continued cattle grazing of the Llangasty land block. Tenancy agreements need to be revised in light of the updated management plan and changes to agri-environment schemes/ payments relating to the site. This will require specialist land agent input.

- **Complexity of habitats** – The lakeside habitats occur in intricate mosaics often not aligning with practical management units. This makes setting management objectives challenging.

- **Physical factors** – The weather will affect the growth and condition of the vegetation and timing of vegetation cuts and grazing. Changes in the level of the lake and winter flooding of the fields will also impact scrub control and cutting and grazing, which relies on the goodwill and reactive approach of the tenant graziers.

- **Wider environment** – The site may be impacted on by management activities on neighbouring land and in the wider catchment. The site somewhat acts as a buffer between the lake and adjacent farmland. Parts of the site’s semi-natural grasslands are vulnerable to seasonal nutrient run off from adjacent agricultural land.

- **Sedimentation & reedbed changes** – Over time the lake is naturally silting up and the depth will reduce over time, although at a very slow rate. It sits in a shallow natural basin and has a natural depth of just 2-3m. Due to its shallowness it is vulnerable to extra sediments as a result of ingress from surrounding land (via ditch systems, small watercourses and field run off). A reduction in open water area may in time be accompanied by changes to the fringing vegetation, for example increases in the spread of reedbed and scrub communities. The above factors need consideration when managing the NPA site - its ditches have a role to play in sedimentation trapping and the grasslands have a role as part of a buffer zone between the lake and surrounding land.
Legislation & BBNPA policies - The NPA has a duty under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended) to further the conservation interest of SSSIs as well as a duty to have regard to biodiversity (2006 NERC Act). The annual Strategic Grant Letter requires each of the three Welsh NPAs to take further action to safeguard Natura 2000 sites (SACs). Works that take place should obtain appropriate consent from NRW and should comply with the list of potentially damaging operations for the site.