



Approach to Archaeology & the Historic Environment

Introduction and Background

Woodlands are important in the history of Wales and form part of its cultural heritage. Woodland management is generally less intensive than other forms of land use and therefore many well preserved historic sites exist within woodlands, particularly native woodlands.

Surviving archaeological evidence takes many forms, the most obvious being earthworks and old structures. In upland areas of Wales, where land has remained relatively undisturbed, earthworks can be extensive. Many woods in Wales contain ditches and banks that can help us understand how our ancestors managed the land. Ancient woodlands and veteran trees often have great archaeological value in their own right. For example, the form of trees (such as pollards) can provide important evidence of past use. Good planning is essential in order to protect the archaeological and historic interest in woodlands and avoid damaging important features.

Both the Forestry Commission's Archaeological guidelines¹ and UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS standard) require that historic features, archaeological sites and historic landscapes are identified and measures are taken to protect them. These are requirements of the Better Woodlands for Wales (BWW) scheme.

The purpose of this document is to provide Management Planners, owners and FC Wales staff with an overview of how the BWW scheme will help protect the archaeological and the historic environment in woodlands in Wales.

Definitions

¹ Currently under revision – due for publication in late 2008.



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Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM): The Welsh Assembly Government maintains a list or 'Schedule' of ancient monuments of national importance. Monuments that are included in the Schedule have statutory protection. The list is compiled by Cadw, the historic environment service of the Welsh Assembly Government.

Non-scheduled sites: The Welsh Archaeological Trusts² (WATs) manage and update the Historic Environment Record, which is a record of the most important non-scheduled historic environment sites. This information forms part of the Wales Sites and Monuments Record.

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The BWW scheme is designed to incorporate archaeology and the historic environment in both the management planning and implementation phases of the scheme. Planners will have access to information for scheduled and non-scheduled sites before preparing management plans. The scheme aims to prevent damage to archaeology features and to manage woodlands in a way that respects the past. This often means managing the woodland setting around important features in a sympathetic way. The work you do must not damage or destroy sites identified in the Plan as being of historic or archaeological importance. This contract only provides permission to carry out the operations specified in the Plan on sites of historic or archaeological importance.

Best practice may not involve simply deforesting archaeological features, unless, for example, there is a high risk of damage from windthrow. In many situations, an over-storey of trees may be an ideal way to ensure that any visible archaeology remains visible and does not become obscured or damaged by dense ground vegetation and scrub.

Planning Process & the role of the Archaeological Trusts

Information relating to SAM sites will be available to Planners at the Foundation Plan stage as part of the Constraints Report. Where a SAM site is present the Planner is required to consult Cadw as a compulsory responder, as the plan develops and take account of any comments received. In some circumstances, owners may be able to access funding from Cadw for the management of SAM sites.

² Welsh Archaeological Trusts: Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust; Gwynedd Archaeological Trust; Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust, Cambrian Archaeological Trust.

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There is additional protection for SAM sites. If Cadw, as the statutory consultee, have identified the need for Scheduled Monument Consent for certain operations in the Plan, or you wish to carry out other operations not specified in the Plan, you must secure Cadw's consent before starting any work.

If Historic Parks and Gardens are identified in the plan area or buffer (from the constraints check information) - Cadw must be contacted as a compulsory responder.

The process for non-scheduled sites is as follows: The heritage management sections of the Welsh Archaeological Trusts (WATs) have been contracted by Forestry Commission Wales to provide expert information on non-scheduled archaeological sites and the historic environment. The WATs will check all BWW applications for archaeological/historic environment interest. Where an interest is identified, the WATs will carry out either:

- a) A desk based assessment³ (known as a WHE1), or
- b) A more detailed assessment, which will require field survey (known as a WHE2)

The desk-based assessment (WHE1) will provide practical advice and information on protecting the historic site or feature. The WHE1 will be available for viewing on the case file.

The WAT's will use their professional judgement regarding which schemes need a desk assessment. In some cases, the WATs may recommend in the desk assessment that a more comprehensive assessment that includes field survey (WHE2) is needed. In such cases, they will discuss the need for a survey with the Management Planner and relevant FCW Woodland Officer (WO). If advised by the WAT that a WHE2 is required, the WO will make the final recommendation to proceed with the field survey.

Where an archaeological discovery is made and no previous assessment has been carried out, the Management Planner must notify their WO. The WO may then ask for an assessment to be made.

³ The following criteria will be used in deciding whether a desk-based assessment is required: areas of woodland with a known presence of archaeological sites; areas of woodland with no recorded presence of archaeological features but which are considered to have a high potential for the 'discovery' of archaeological sites; areas of woodland where a known range of historic influences on woodland management and exploitation has taken place, as well as known areas of agriculture, woodland management or industrial use.

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Information from the archaeological assessment should be recorded in the BWW Management Plan and marked on the maps (see 'How to use Information from External Sources'). Archaeology and the historic environment will generally be recorded as a 'factor' affecting a habitat feature (see BWW guide to incorporating Specialist Assessment into BWW Management Plans). Contractors should also be made aware of the location of historic sites - in most cases the boundaries of such sites should be marked before forest operations begin.

BWW Grants for Archaeology & the Historic Environment

Woodland Improvement Grants will support a range of operations that may be needed for protecting archaeology and the historic environment. Examples include: controlling threats such as fencing to exclude stock, thinning, uneconomic clear-fell, control of invasive plants and veteran tree management.

Further Information

FC Forests & Archaeology guidelines (ISBN 0855383291)

BWW Guide for Woodland Owners

BWW How to incorporate Specialist Assessment into Management Plans

BWW How to use Information from External Sources

UKWAS standard