

**CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU  
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES**

**SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST: MANAGEMENT STATEMENT**

**MONMOUTHSHIRE            FIDDLERS ELBOW**

**Date of Notification:**            1971, 1983 and 4 June 1991

**Site Area:**                        44.3ha

**Introduction:**

This management statement contains CCW's opinion of the way in which the SSSI should be managed in order to maintain its special interest. It also provides a basis for future discussions and decisions on the conservation management of the SSSI. It is important that any work described in this statement are fully discussed with and formally consented by CCW, before any of these management activities are started.

The document sets out a vision for the features of interest; it describes the key issues affecting the features of interest and outlines any management considered necessary to safeguard those features.

It is very important to recognise that management may need to change with time. Problems that we are aware of today may be resolved or completely removed and new unforeseen problems may arise. New improved management techniques may also become available. Consequently the management outlined in this document is considered appropriate for the short term but may need to change in the long term.

**Features of Special Scientific Interest:**

Semi-natural broadleaved Woodland

As well as the feature listed above, Fiddler's Elbow has other habitats that are essential to the maintenance of the special wildlife interest. These include running water and scrub. This diversity of habitats similarly supports a wide range of species and these too are a key component of the special interest of the site. Unless it is specified below, management of this site should aim to look after these habitats as well as the listed features of interest.

**Long Term Vision for the Site and Features:**

Fiddlers elbow will continue to be covered by at least 90% of semi-natural broadleaved woodland. The range of woodland communities within the site, dominated by locally native species such as oak and lime, will be maintained. The ground layer will contain canopy species as seedlings and plant species typical of semi-natural broadleaf woodland

such as bluebell, yellow arcangel and primrose. In the long term, the canopy will include trees of all ages and particular attention will be given to maintaining old veteran trees. Dead wood, standing and fallen, will be retained to provide habitat for invertebrates, fungi and other woodland species.

Dormice are present in this wood; management should take into account this species' habitat requirements. There are basic habitat management principles for this species, to ensure an adequate diversity of woody plant species, trees and shrubs, that are physically interlinked to allow the dormice passage between them without having to come down to the ground. They must also have a succession of different foods from April through till November. Key food species includes hazel, brambles, oak, honeysuckle and sycamore.

### **Key Management Issues:**

#### ▪ **Past management**

Much of this woodland has been managed as high forest, with coppice dating from the Second World War. Some older stands occur in the more inaccessible areas, e.g. on the steeper slopes. To maintain high forest across the area, minor selective thinning should be introduced to improve the woodland structure.

Coppicing may be introduced in appropriate areas. The coppice coupes should be in small irregular patches to allow the dormice access from one area to another as different foods become available. This type of management will ensure that at least some of the shrubs will be old enough to flower and fruit whilst the others are maturing.

#### ▪ **Grazing**

Maintaining an appropriate grazing regime is critical in sustaining this site, when woodland is grazed for many years it can prevent the natural regeneration of the woodland since seedlings are given no opportunity to grow into viable trees.

There is a serious deer problem in this woodland; they use the site because it is sheltered and quiet in the winter months. The site is connected to the larger woodland areas of High Meadow Woods and the Forest of Dean therefore deer regularly move through the site. It is necessary to control the number of animals grazing in the wood using appropriate control measures. Fences should be erected and maintained around areas of regeneration in order to prevent damage.

#### ▪ **Invasive and exotic species**

This is a small problem and all localities are known about. A programme of thinning with a view to complete eradication exists for Japanese Larch and Sweet chestnut.