Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Within Herefordshire Mixed Deciduous Woodland can be divided into three main categories: Lowland Oak and Mixed Woodland, Lowland Beech and Yew Woodland and Upland Mixed Ashwood Woodland. The former category encompasses large areas of Herefordshire's woodland as it occurs on a full range of soil types and includes most semi natural woodlands occurring on land below 200m. Beech is considered a native species in Herefordshire and of high nature conservation value. Where Lowland Beech and Yew woods occur on calcareous soils the canopy includes ash, sycamore, yew and whitebeam whereas oak species become a canopy component on more neutral-slightly acidic soils. There is very little upland mixed ash wood, with small fragments around the fringes of the Black Mountains, often managed as coppice or wood-pasture. The total extent of woodland in Herefordshire is 17,785ha, of which 12,519ha is ancient, 6,375ha is ancient semi-natural, 6,144ha is plantations on ancient woodland sites and 5,266ha of other woodlands.

Many are considered ancient woodlands and have only survived as conditions were too steep, too wet or too infertile for conversion to agriculture. Although many of these sites are now managed for nature conservation purposes, nearly all the woodlands of Herefordshire were intensively managed in the past. Those on ancient sites were mainly treated as coppice or coppice-with-standards, but this practice has been in decline, resulting in the mature stool-grown trees. (Note differential in interest and impact of sycamore by age class.)

Threats
- Uncertainty over the future and content of Countryside Stewardship schemes
- Woodland damage from deer, grey squirrels, rabbits and wild boar
- Fluctuations in value of timber affecting the economics of woodland management
- Non-native invasive species e.g. cherry laurel, rhododendron and Himalayan balsam
- Lack of interest, expertise/skills and incentives resulting in lack of management
- Inappropriate management and development including restocking with inappropriate species
- Fragmentation of woodlands by deterioration of surrounding habitat
- Tree diseases – particularly ash dieback
- Climate change particularly species tolerance to future climate and arrival of new diseases
- Game bird rearing – inappropriate cover planting, nutrient enrichment, depletion of ground flora and invertebrates and introduction of alien seed
- Direct and indirect impacts of adjacent development – increased footfall and recreational pressure, pets, ground water impacts etc.
- Lack of resource to provide evidence e.g. monitoring of key species and ground truthing woodland inventory

Current Action
- National forestry policy presumption against clearance of broad-leaved woodland
- Felling licences required to follow current good practice and policy
- Some designated SSSI and SACs, within AONBs and Conservation Areas and/or have TPOs.
- Herefordshire Ancient Woodland Inventory now completely updated against Tithe maps and other evidence but still requires ground truthing
- Appropriate tree planting through schemes, planning gain, community action etc.
- Deer Initiative and deer management groups
- Monitoring and recording within some woodlands (bats, lepidoptera, dormice etc.)

	Objective	Action
A	Evaluate existing habitat extent including defining ASNW/PAWs/Recovering/secondary woodland	7,9
B	Maintain the total extent and distribution	2,3,4,8
C	Target resources to restore 1,500ha (including 650ha of PAWS restoration) and create 50ha focussing on linking habitats together	2,4,8,10
D	Reduce the impacts of deer, grey squirrel and wild boar	1
E	Increase age range and encourage diversity of stand structure	6,8,10
F	Monitor and mitigate the impact of recreational woodland use	5,9
G	Control non-native and invasive species	1,4
H	Improve resilience of woodlands to climate change and disease	2,9

	Actions	Target
1	Actively control grey squirrel, deer and boar numbers to reduce damage to woodland	Annual
2	Target funds from CS and other funding sources	Annual
3	Increase demand for 'added value' sustainable wood products or biomass fuel	Annual
4	Promote appropriate reversion of conifer and non-native woodland to semi-natural broad-leaved woodland	Annual
5	Assess damage of inappropriate recreational activity and lobby relevant user groups to reduce impacts	Annual
6	Produce advice, set up demonstration events and workshops with relevant land managers	2020
7	Review definition of ASNW/PAWS/secondary and recovering PAWS and set appropriate targets	2018
8	Gain funding for restoration and creation including the development of appropriate partnership projects	2020
9	Monitoring of management in major intervention sites to inform future advice	Annual
10	Encourage local propagation of trees, from local seed sources	2020

Lead Partner	HWT
Key Partners	HTF, FC, WT, WVAONB, HTWN