

## Habitat Action Plan: Wet Woodland

### Current status and Importance

- A rough estimate of the remaining wet woodland in the UK is 50,000-70,000ha (UK BAP).
- wet woodland is usually a component of other woodland types occurring in areas where water accumulates, such as seasonally wet or poorly drained soils. Boundaries can be gradual or sharp and can change substantially over time.
- The historical use of the woodland can affect its structure. For example, alder woods with a history of coppicing are likely to have a substantially different structure to naturally occurring wet woodland.
- In Kirklees, wet woodland is primarily found in Floodplain areas, but can also be found in association with hillside streams, peaty hollows and wet slacks on the hillside. It is believed to be very scarce in the district.
- As it occurs in wet areas, when managed properly it plays an important role in alleviating flood risk and conserving water resources.
- An area of upland mixed ash woodland is known to occur within one Local Site (Site of Wildlife Significance).



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### Species Use

- Typical tree species are willow (*Salix alba*), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), downy birch (*Betula pubescens*) and aspen (*Populus tremula*) but a wider range of species can occur in drier areas (including oak, beech, ash and pine).
- The ground flora varies depending upon altitude, shade and degree of water inundation but may include mosses, rushes, ferns and plants such as opposite-leaved golden saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*), bistort (*Polygonum bistorta*) and a number of *Ranunculus spp.*
- Many moist woodland habitats within the district have been colonised by invasive non-native species, especially Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*) and Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens balsamifera*).

### Conservation Issues

- The clearance and conversion of floodplains to other land uses, such as housing, has led to the loss of significant amounts of wet woodland.
- Lowering of water tables through drainage resulting in development of drier woodland.
- Inappropriate grazing which can change the woodland structure and degrade ground flora. This is especially so in the uplands and alongside streams elsewhere.

- Flood prevention measures can change the area of suitable sites.
- Poor water quality can negatively affect habitats.
- The dominance and colonisation of non-native invasive species.

## Objectives

- Establish extent of wet woodland and potential areas for recreation, especially where this contributes to flood alleviation and water resource management.
- Maintain and manage areas of wet woodland appropriately within other woodland types.
- Restore suitable sites (ie those with flushes and prone to flooding) to wet woodland avoiding other semi-natural habitats of biodiversity interest (upland mixed ash woodland often occurs around flushes).
- Monitor research into the role of wet woodland sites as a means of flood alleviation and as carbon sinks.

## Target areas for habitat management and creation

The habitat can be found within all zones of the district although the most relevant are:

- The Valley Slopes,
- The Flood Plain,
- The Pennine Foothills.

The habitat can also occur at all elevations. For further information, please see the Biodiversity Opportunity Zones Map at [www.kirklees.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/biodiversity)

NB Natural England must be consulted on any proposal within nationally and internationally designated sites.

## Targets

- To be decided.

## Key Links and Organisations

- Site protection: Kirklees Council, Peak District National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, Natural England.
- Management and restoration through Woodland Grant Scheme: Forestry Commission.
- Management and restoration of wet woodland in Kirklees: Kirklees Council, White Rose Forest, Colne Valley Tree Society, The National Trust, Yorkshire Water.
- Survey: Kirklees Wildlife and Landscape Advisory Forum, West Yorkshire Ecology.

## See Also

- [UK BAP Wet Woodland Habitat Action Plan](#)
- [UKBAP: Lowland Deciduous Woodland](#)
- [UK BAP Upland Mixed Ashwoods Habitat Action plan](#)
- [UKBAP: Upland Oak Woodland](#)
- [Forestry Commission](#)
- Guidance for the management of Woodlands: Kirklees Council Environment Unit. (available at [www.kirklees.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/biodiversity))