

Fit for the future: Managing Clocaenog forest

Clocaenog forest is a working model of a different approach to forestry and it shows that alternatives to clearfell can be productive in terms of timber supply whilst also delivering big wins for biodiversity and improving forest resilience in the face of climatic changes. The time and resources invested in Clocaenog over the last two decades means it is a forest fit for the future.

Clocaenog forest covers an area of 4,166 hectares. Just under half of it is managed using Low Impact Silvicultural Systems (LISS) which rely on the gradual and successive thinning of crops to produce a more structurally diverse forest. It is managed to deliver multi-purpose benefits, including biodiversity conservation for key species such as red squirrel, black grouse and the small pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly.



Clocaenog is one of the three focal areas in Wales for red squirrel conservation. We manage the forest, in partnership with others, to support their ongoing conservation, for example by leaving stands of Norway spruce un-thinned and maintaining connective corridors. We are currently undertaking a population reinforcement project through the release of captive bred red squirrels.

Commenting on the conservation work, Craig Shuttleworth, Honorary Visiting Research Fellow, Bangor University said:

“The Clocaenog red squirrel reinforcement is a fantastic example of citizen science, an exemplar of applied species conservation practice in a working commercial conifer plantation. The findings and lessons being learned are not only ground breaking but will resonate into the wider national management of invasive grey squirrels and restoration of the native red squirrel”.

Targeted forest management practices also help support a significant population of the small pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly which breeds and moves between the small patches of wet grassland and bog throughout the forest where the larval food plants (marsh violet) occur. In relation to black grouse, we work in partnership with others to manage the estate and adjacent upland Hiraethog area to retain an open upland habitat, with rotational heather management.

Clocaenog is also one of a network of five research sites across Great Britain where LISS are being practically demonstrated, improving the future skills of foresters.

Pursuing SMNR:

