

Ecological restoration of conifer forests: research and applications

University of Wales, Bangor - 14/15 September 2006

A total of 52 people from a wide range of organisations including Butterfly Conservation, Woodland Management, and Forest Research met at Bangor in the second week of September to discuss the potential synergy on conservation/restoration of woodlands, through the cooperation of ecologists, forest scientists and forest managers. The meeting began on the evening of Wednesday 13th September with a reception addressed by David Wright, head of the School of the Environment and Forest Sciences. There were indoor sessions in the mornings of the following two days and field excursions in the afternoons. Ten speakers including Professor James P. Kimmins from the University of British Columbia and Dr Roque Rodríguez from the University of Santiago de Compostela (Spain) gave informative and challenging presentations covering various aspects of ecological restoration. Topics included harvesting in the natural disturbance ecology, the potential role of conifer plantations in the restoration of biodiversity, PAWS restoration and herbivore impacts, wind as a constraint to gradual restoration and butterfly conservation. All presentations can be reviewed on the Tyfiant Coed website at <http://tyfcoed.bangor.ac.uk>.

The field trip on 14th September visited Coed y Brenin (Coed y Mynydd Forest District) and looked at different approaches to restoration ranging from a gradual method to a more radical and instant removal of conifers. After an introduction to the forest and the vision of the District by local area manager Aled Thomas there was a lively debate on the philosophical, ethical and practical implications of restoration. The participants also visited the permanent monitoring plots of the University of Wales, Bangor (Tyfiant Coed project) and had a short introduction to the Meirionnydd Oak Woodland Project. Friday's excursion started with an introduction to the butterfly and red squirrel conservation projects at Clocaenog forest (Coed y Gororau Forest District). The District Planning Forester, Richard Carrick provided the group with a broader perspective on the challenges facing the future management of Clocaenog. Finally delegates were able to examine a joint University of Wales, Bangor/Forest Research experiment demonstrating several approaches to transformation of Sitka spruce plantations to continuous cover forestry (Tyfiant Coed project). The meeting was co-funded by the British Ecological Society and the Forestry Commission, Wales.

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