

Llandudno Feral Goat Management Plan

Conwy County Borough Council
Llandudno Town Council
Mostyn Estates
Natural Resources Wales
RSPCA



This Plan is a manual for managing the feral goat population on the Great Orme and Llandudno, Conwy, North Wales. The Plan is intended to enable a consistent approach in how partnership organisations contribute to the monitoring and management of the goat population and their associated activity.

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd.

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Conwy County Borough Council

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this Plan is to document how the feral goat population of the Great Orme and Llandudno is monitored and managed by partnership agencies, to secure the future survival of the herd, and allow for co-existence of the herd alongside the local community and its needs. The Plan describes the roles and responsibilities of each partnership organisation in managing the feral goats and details the procedures used to plan and monitor activity associated with their management.

2 Historical Background

A brief history of how the goats came to be on the Great Orme:

Kashmir goats originate from Tibet, Nepal, Ladakh and Kashmir - where they are called Changthangi, Changra or Pashmina goats.

- 1819** Kashmir goats brought to France from Persia, via the Crimea – of the 1,500 animals acquired only 256 arrived safely at Marseilles and Toulon.
- 1823** Christopher Tower of Weald Hall, Essex visited Paris and purchased two female and two male goats.
- 1828** Christopher Tower manufactured a cashmere shawl and won an award. King George IV was impressed by the article and given a pair of Kashmir goats – this began the Windsor herd and they were placed in Windsor Great Park.
- 1837** Queen Victoria presented with a pair of Kashmir goats by the Shah of Persia when she came to the throne.
- 1844** Queen Victoria presented the Royal Welsh Fusiliers with the first Kashmir goat mascot – this started the tradition of the reigning monarch providing the mascot. The regiment's connection with a goat goes back to the Battle of Bunker Hill (America) in 1775 and they have been parading a goat since 1777. Until 1844, the regiment provided its own goat.
- 1890s** A pair of the Windsor Great Park goats were given to Major-General Sir Savage Lloyd-Mostyn by Queen Victoria – possibly around the time when he finished serving as Colonel of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. The goats were initially kept at Gloddaeth Hall, where they bred, and they were released onto the Great Orme sometime after.

- 1936** The Windsor Great Park goats relocated to the Zoological Society of London's HQ in Regent's Park – the herd is now located at Whipsnade Zoo, Bedfordshire.
- 1980** Great Orme established as a Country Park. Prior to this, the number of goats was generally kept at around 30 to 50 by the Mostyn family's gamekeeper. Numbers slowly increased from about 1985 until there were about 60 animals in 1990.
- 1990s** Complaints regarding damage to adjoining properties became regular. The inference at the time (which in retrospect appears to have been incorrect) was that the Great Orme could not support the population at that level. Thirty goats were relocated to Flatholm, however there was an angry backlash from a significant proportion of the local community who did not want to see the goats interfered with. The population subsequently rose from 32 to 59 goats by 1994. A working group (comprising Council officers, Countryside Council for Wales, Mostyn Estates and a local veterinary surgeon) considered the various options. It recommended that the population of feral goats be controlled through shooting individual animals, targeting ones that were sick, injured or very elderly. This recommendation was supported by the Great Orme Country Park Working Party and Aberconwy Borough Council's Planning Committee but was overturned at Full Council following a large public demonstration at Bodlondeb.
- 2001** In the absence of a clear way forward the goat numbers remained unchecked and in the autumn of 2000 stood at 211. In 2001, the Council resolved to reduce the herd size over the long term to secure the future of the goat population. Advice was sought from a wide variety of sources about long term management of the herd. Control mechanisms such as castration and progesterone implants were considered, along with relocation of some goats as a means of reducing numbers on the Great Orme and ensuring the long term survival of the breed. After consideration of all options, the Council resolved to manage the herd through a combination of progesterone implants and relocation of small numbers of goats.
- 2017** Progesterone became unavailable for use in the UK. After a short time with relocation as the only option for managing the herd, advice was sought from various agencies. Contact was made with what is now the Animal & Plant Health Agency, who were carrying out a research project into the use of an immunocontraceptive trademarked GonaCon. Successful discussions were had and funding sought and this became the first use of GonaCon to manage a free-living mammal population in Europe.

3 Current Situation

The Great Orme goats are a much-loved symbol of Llandudno. Although they usually live on the Great Orme, they are often spotted around the town during winter and spring. It is evident that phenological patterns (seasonal biological events) influence the behaviour of the Great Orme goats. Between January and April the goats, particularly some groups of billies, will expand their range from the Great Orme, often found in residential areas close to the Great Orme and areas surrounding The Oval (home to Llandudno Cricket Club, a play area and bowling green).

However, in 2020 and 2021, the goats made international news when they strayed further than usual because of the quieter conditions during the Covid pandemic and the restrictions on human movement and mixing. This resulted in billy goats from the Great Orme exploring further and further afield than normal, throughout Llandudno's town centre and retail parks, eventually reaching areas outside Llandudno such as Craig y Don and Llanrhos. They were also to be found in areas designated SSSI (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) nearby, such as Nant y Gamar and Gloddaeth Hall woods. Interestingly, no nanny goats were seen to be involved in the explorations of Llandudno and surrounding areas. This pattern of behaviour has continued long after restrictions on human movement were lifted and the town returned to normal life.

4 Legal Responsibility

The goats of Llandudno have roamed in a wild state for over 100 years and were originally a gift to Lord Mostyn from Queen Victoria. Although once in the ownership of Lord Mostyn, the goats have reverted to a wild state and are therefore now regarded as wild animals.

No one person or organisation is legally responsible for the goat populations of Llandudno and they may only become someone's property if they are 'confined'.

As the goats are feral animals, it is therefore not the Council's legal responsibility to keep the goats on the Great Orme by way of fencing or 'containment'. If damage is being caused to adjoining properties, the onus is therefore on those property owners to keep the goats out.

A land owner has a legal entitlement to act on behalf of an animal's welfare, if a wild animal is in distress whilst on their land.

The Council may also act to control populations of wild animals that reside on its land, where those

animals are not protected by law and by means that are not prohibited by law.

The management of the feral goat herd and habitats in which they reside has a direct impact on the Council's statutory obligations in managing biodiversity:

- Certain habitats and species are protected under statute through the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019.
- The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 introduces an enhanced Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystem Duty on public bodies to ensure that biodiversity is an important part of decision making. Public authorities in Wales are required to report on the actions they take to improve biodiversity and the promotion of ecosystem resilience.
- Section 6 of The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 makes biodiversity an integral part of decision making, enforcing a duty upon public authorities to seek, maintain and enhance biodiversity. Section 7 replaces section 42 of the NERC Act 2006 placing a duty on government to publish, review and revise lists of living organisms and the types of habitat, which they consider to be of key significance in sustaining and improving biodiversity across Wales.
- Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 gives power to Local Authorities to acquire, declare and manage Local Nature Reserves (LNR) following consultation with National Resources Wales.

5 Partner Organisations

The partner organisations have an interest in the feral goats by virtue of land ownership, community interest, conservation or animal welfare. Participation and fulfilment of the respective roles described in this Plan is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time. As a matter of professional courtesy, 12 months' notice of withdrawal should be given.

- **Conwy County Borough Council**
 - Act as a partner agency of the Llandudno Feral Goat Management Group to seek solutions and drive action on goat related issues and management strategies
 - Develop the Feral Goat Management Plan
 - Ensure the effective implementation and monitoring of the Plan

- Organise, chair and provide secretarial support for partner meetings
 - Facilitate an annual progress and update review
 - Monitor and co-ordinate management techniques for maintaining the optimum population of goats
 - Act on behalf of the animals' welfare, if a wild animal is in distress whilst on land owned or managed by Conwy County Borough Council, liaising with local vets or the RSPCA if necessary
 - Provide financial support at an agreed level to deliver the Plan
- **Llandudno Town Council:**
 - Act as a partner agency of the Llandudno Feral Goat Management Group to seek solutions and drive action on goat related issues and management strategies
 - Raise feral goat issues on behalf of the local community
 - Provide financial support at an agreed level to deliver the Plan
- **Mostyn Estates Ltd:**
 - Act as a partner agency of the Llandudno Feral Goat Management Group to seek solutions and drive action on goat related issues and management strategies
 - Provide financial support at an agreed level to deliver the Plan
 - Provide resource and support to carry out goat collections, roundups and relocations
- **Natural Resources Wales (NRW):**
 - Act as a partner agency of the Llandudno Feral Goat Management Group to seek solutions and drive action on goat related issues and management strategies
 - Provide financial support at an agreed level to deliver the Plan
 - Provide advice, support and resources for management of the SSSI/SAC habitats in which the feral goats reside
- **RSPCA (National):**
 - Act as a partner agency of the Llandudno Feral Goat Management Group to seek solutions and drive action on goat related issues and management strategies
 - Assist with goat welfare issues in the town or on private land. As the RSPCA is a charity with very limited resources, they will assess each case individually to determine how best they can respond.

- **RSPCA (Aberconwy Branch):**
 - Act as a partner agency of the Llandudno Feral Goat Management Group to seek solutions and drive action on goat related issues and management strategies
 - Provide financial support where possible to deliver the Plan
 - Provide expert advice and support on animal welfare issues
 - Provide practical assistance with goat welfare issues where the use of a tranquiliser dart gun is required

6 Goat Population Management

The approach to sustainable management of the population of the Llandudno feral goats was developed in partnership with UK Government APHA (Animal & Plant Health Agency), RSPCA, NRW (Natural Resources Wales) and a local veterinary surgeon. As a result, Conwy County Borough Council, with support from partners, uses a combination of population monitoring and management strategies aiming to keep the herd of goats within the current target population range:

- Biannual (Spring and Autumn) goat counts of the whole herd on the Great Orme
- Spring kid counts
- Roundups for health checks and administration of GonaCon contraceptive vaccine
- Relocating groups of goats (to conservation organisations or sites in the UK)

The target population is calculated annually based on the demographics of the herd as determined from the counts and with reference to the numbers required to maintain a sustainable herd in the habitat available. The current population target is 120 – 130.

Goat Counts

Goat counts are scheduled by Conwy County Borough Council's Country Park Warden in order to monitor the total number of feral goats on the Great Orme.

Three goat counts are carried out at intervals throughout the year. The first full count of the herd takes place in the Spring between April and May, which is later repeated in Autumn/Winter between November and December. A count of the number of kids born each year is also carried out at the end of March.

The counts calculate the total number of billies, nannies and kids that are residing on the Great Orme each year. Through an understanding of the make-up of the herd, informed decisions can then be made using population modelling techniques to determine what action, in terms of contraception and relocation needs to be considered and planned.

Goat Roundups

Goat roundups may be carried out every three years, dependent upon the results of the annual goat counts and population modelling. The contraceptive vaccine GonaCon has been shown to be effective for approximately 3 years in goats, hence this interval between the round-ups taking place.

The roundups are carried out on the Great Orme to capture nanny goats for vaccination or revaccination with the contraceptive, and for relocating goats, if necessary or possible.

The roundups involve constructing temporary fencing to guide the goats to holding pens so that GonaCon can be administered or a health check from a vet can be carried out before relocating. A significant number of people (at least 30) are required to provide the resource to secure the goats into the holding pens. Dogs are not used.

Birth Control Programme

Since 2009, Conwy County Borough Council and partners have been working with the Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA) (formerly FERA) on a research trial involving the use of an immunocontraceptive vaccine known as GonaCon. GonaCon targets gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) and has been shown to be an effective single-dose vaccine in several species. It has been shown to reduce female fertility for several years, with the model showing that vaccination of 75% of adult females would reduce population growth rate to close to zero.

CCBC GonaCon is only licenced for research purposes, therefore continued use of GonaCon as a population management technique depends on:

- a) making all possible efforts to capture sufficient goats to make a research useful study as well as implementing a successful management strategy, that is, at least 2/3 of the current estimated total female population.
- b) for 3 years undertaking biannual (Autumn, in October or November, and Spring, in April or May) population counts and annual kid counts (in March or April) where kid presence is recorded for tagged individuals plus a proportion of untagged females with kids.
- c) obtaining support from veterinary practitioners to apply for the import licence to obtain and administer the GonaCon vaccine
- d) having funding secured from the partnership agencies to successfully obtain and deliver the above

Relocation of goats

Relocation of groups of feral goats has been used, alongside contraception, as a means of controlling the population since 2001. Initially, the availability of feral goats for conservation grazing purposes was advertised through the Grazing Animals Project newsletter*. Latterly, advertising has not been necessary and word of mouth from conservation organisations, mostly in England, has led to further interest in taking Great Orme goats for grazing purposes on several SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest).

The Country Park Warden has liaised with interested parties, sometimes with the assistance of the RSPCA, to check that the proposed new owners and their premises are suitable for the goats to be relocated to. Being a herd animal, and considering the goats' welfare, groups of goats have been relocated, mostly to locations where a semi-wild existence can be offered to closely replicate the goats' feral nature on the Great Orme.

Livestock movement controls were first introduced after the foot and mouth disease outbreak (FMD) in 2001. In order to comply with this and subsequent legislation when relocating goats, the Council has a CPH number (Community Parish Holding number) for the land where the feral goats reside. All livestock holdings must have a CPH number so that the government can trace livestock movements to prevent and control disease. Each relocation of goats involves the goats being appropriately tagged to comply with the Sheep and Goat (Records, Identification and Movement) (Wales) Order 2015. This order also requires records to be kept in the form of a flock book and for all movements of goats off the holding to be recorded via completion of Animal Movement Licence Form (AML1). Licence forms are submitted to EIDCymru. The Welfare of Animals (Transport) (Wales) Order 2007 (WATO) requires transporters or hauliers to carry documentation referred to as an Animal Transport Certificate. This requires them to record the origin and ownership of the animals, place of departure and destination, and the expected duration of travel to be checked and assessed. Section 2 of the AML1 form covers the WATO regulations set within Wales.

Great Orme goats have been relocated to various countryside sites around the UK, for the purpose of conservation grazing. The organisations and locations are:

- Kent County Council Countryside Service
- Private grazier – grazing National Trust owned hillfort near Crickhowell, Brecon, Powys
- Private grazier – grazing land near Whitby, North Yorkshire
- Private grazier – grazing SSSI coastal cliffs, Ynys Mon
- Bristol City Council - The Avon Gorge

- Suffolk Wildlife Trust
- Private estate south of Bristol – grazing SSSI limestone grassland
- Private grazier – grazing SSSI coastal cliff land owned by Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council

*The Grazing Animal Project (GAP) was developed in 1997 to aid the development of conservation grazing, defined as 'grazing that meets nature conservation objectives'. GAP is a UK-wide partnership network of practitioners and advisers from the nature conservation, agricultural and livestock sectors. The partnership has operated with a number of partners, including: DEFRA, Natural England, the National Trust, and the Ministry of Defence.

7 Intervention Protocols

As the goats are feral animals, no party has a legal responsibility to keep the goats on the Great Orme by way of fencing or 'containment'. If the goats were permanently contained or enclosed, they would become the property of the party containing them and lose their feral status, therefore non-intervention is the default position.

However, occasional and scheduled intervention, if agreed by partners on grounds of unacceptable risk to human or animal welfare, may occur. Owing to the difficulties and risks involved in organising, managing and co-ordinating the round up of goats in urban areas, intervention will only occur as an appropriately scheduled and organised task at periods when a round up is likely to be successful. Previous experience in dealing with roaming billies has given intelligence on when collections are most likely to be successful and when they are most likely to fail. Phenological patterns and biological rhythms can influence the behaviour of goats, therefore there are certain periods of the year where roundups will not be carried out as the goats would likely return to the location following collection.

Scheduled roundups will only be considered during April and May when it is more likely that the goats will stay on the Orme. Roundups will only be considered if roaming goats appear to have settled in a single location for a period of two weeks and if the location is safe for both the goats and the individuals involved in the round up, due to the health and safety risks involved in rounding up goats in an urban area.

When a round up is deemed absolutely necessary, on grounds of unacceptable risk to human or animal welfare, at a time when the operation is likely to be successful, Conwy County Borough Council will work with Mostyn Estates and the other partner agencies to carry this out.

8 Directing a Request to a Partnership Agency

This section describes some of the common issues that are reported by the public to partner agencies and aims to confirm where certain report types should be directed to in the first instance.

Report Types

This table describes the types of reports and identifies the responsible party.

Report type	Description	Responsible party
Injured or distressed goat on the Great Orme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The goat appears to have suffered injury, appears to be unwell or shows signs of sickness, or is trapped on the Great Orme in Llandudno 	Conwy County Borough Council*
Injured or distressed goat in the town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The goat appears to have suffered injury, appears to be unwell or shows signs of sickness, or is trapped on private land in Llandudno (gardens, roads, commercial properties) 	RSPCA
Goat causing concern on a public highway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The goat is causing an obstruction to or presenting a risk to users of a highway 	North Wales Police
Goat causing damage to private property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The goat is causing damage to private property 	N/A – Landowner or property owner responsibility
Goat fouling on a high amenity pavement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There is an excessive amount of goat excrement on a pavement that has a lot of use, near a school, town centre or outside a public amenity 	Conwy County Borough Council

* In conjunction with local vet or RSPCA where necessary

9 Communications with Goat Partnership Agencies

Section 5 of this manual identifies which partner agency a report should be submitted to depending on the circumstances. The following section provides the contact details and telephone numbers for the relevant goat partnership agencies, as well as the Council's website which is available to provide further information and advice on the management of the feral goats.

Partner Agency	Telephone Number	Email Address	Website
Conwy County Borough Council – Environment, Roads and Facilities Advice Team	Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm number: 01492 575337	erf@conwy.gov.uk	www.conwy.gov.uk/greatorme
North Wales Police	101 for non-emergencies	northwalespolice@northwales.pnn.police.uk	Live chat North Wales Police www.northwales.police.uk/ro/report/
RSPCA	0300 1234 999		www.rspca.org.uk/utilities/contactus/reportcruelty

10 Partnership Management Contributions

Financial - Conwy County Borough Council, Mostyn Estates Ltd, Llandudno Town Council, Natural Resources Wales, Aberconwy Branch of the RSPCA

Practical - Conwy County Borough Council, Mostyn Estates Ltd, RSPCA (National), North Wales Police

Advisory – Natural Resources Wales, RSPCA (National), Aberconwy Branch of the RSPCA, Animal & Plant Health Agency

11 Long Term Management Objectives

OB01 - Manage herd so that the breed survives into the future both on the Great Orme and, working with other organisations, ensure ex-situ herds of the breed exist elsewhere in the UK

OB02- Manage herd on the Great Orme so that conflict with human neighbours is minimised and that the individual goat's welfare is ensured, as much as is possible, in a wild, free roaming herd.

OB03- Manage herd to ensure damage to SSSI/SAC habitats is limited.

OB04 - Manage herd to ensure that positive management of SSSI/SAC habitat continues in the form of scrub control by browsing goats.

OB05 – Seek funding to invest in lifecycle monitoring and planning toolkits

OB06 – Seek funding to carry out research project

OB07 – Seek funding to secure adequate habitat enhancements and maintenance