



# South Plantation

## Management Plan 2012-2017

## MANAGEMENT PLAN - CONTENTS PAGE

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
Introduction	
Plan review and updating	
Woodland Management Approach	
Summary	
1.0 Site details	
2.0 Site description	
2.1 Extended Description	
3.0 Public access information	
3.1 Getting there	
3.2 Access / Walks	
4.0 Long term policy	
5.0 Key Features	
5.1 Landscape Value	
5.2 Informal Public Access	
5.3 Planted Ancient Woodland Site	
6.0 Work Programme	
Appendix 1: Compartment descriptions	
Glossary	
<b>MAPS</b>	
Access	
Conservation Features	
Management	

## THE WOODLAND TRUST

### INTRODUCTION

The Trust's corporate aims and management approach guide the management of all the Trust's properties, and are described on Page 4. These determine basic management policies and methods, which apply to all sites unless specifically stated otherwise. Such policies include free public access; keeping local people informed of major proposed work; the retention of old trees and dead wood; and a desire for management to be as unobtrusive as possible. The Trust also has available Policy Statements covering a variety of woodland management issues.

The Trust's management plans are based on the identification of Key Features for the site and setting objectives for their management. A monitoring programme (not included in this plan) ensures that these objectives are met and any necessary management works are carried out.

Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

### PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATING

The information presented in this Management plan is held in a database which is continuously being amended and updated on our website. Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations. Please either consult The Woodland Trust website [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk) or contact the Woodland Trust ([wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk)) to confirm details of the current management programme.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and a summary of monitoring results can be obtained on request.

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## WOODLAND MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The management of our woods is based on our charitable purposes, and is therefore focused on improving woodland biodiversity and increasing peoples' understanding and enjoyment of woodland. Our strategic aims are to:

- Protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future
- Work with others to create more native woodlands and places rich in trees
- Inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees

All our sites have a management plan which is freely accessible via our website [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk). Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) under licence FSC-C009406 and through independent audit.

In addition to the guidelines below we have specific guidance and policies on issues of woodland management which we review and update from time to time.

We recognise that all woods are different and that the management of our sites should also reflect their local landscape and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives. Guidelines like these provide a necessary overarching framework to guide the management of our sites but such management also requires decisions based on local circumstances and our Site Manager's intimate knowledge of each site.

The following guidelines help to direct our woodland management:

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.
2. We establish new native woodland using both natural regeneration and tree planting, but largely the latter, particularly when there are opportunities for involving people.
3. We provide free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe.
4. The long term vision for our non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites is to restore them to predominantly native species composition and semi-natural structure, a vision that equally applies to our secondary woods.
5. Existing semi-natural open-ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained and new open ground habitats created where appropriate.
6. The heritage and cultural value of sites is taken into account in our management and, in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.
7. Woods can offer the potential to generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We will therefore consider the potential to generate income from our estate to help support our aims.
8. We work with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders in developing the management of our woods. We recognise the benefits of local community woodland ownership and management. Where appropriate we allow our woods to be used to support local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.
9. We use and offer the estate where appropriate, for the purpose of demonstration, evidence gathering and research associated with the conservation, recreational and sustainable management of woodlands. In particular we will develop and maintain a network of long-term monitoring sites across the estate.
- 10 Any activities we undertake will conform to sustainable forest management principles, be appropriate for the site and will be balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

## SUMMARY

This public management plan briefly describes the site, specifically mentions information on public access, sets out the long term policy and lists the Key Features which drive management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site - their significance is outlined together with their long (50 year+) and short (5 year) term objectives. The short term objectives are complemented by a detailed Work Programme for the period of this management plan. Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. A short glossary of technical terms is at the end. The Key Features and general woodland condition of this site are subject to a formal monitoring programme which is maintained in a central database. A summary of monitoring results is available on request.

## 1.0 SITE DETAILS

<b>Site name:</b>	South Plantation
<b>Location:</b>	Sheldon
<b>Grid reference:</b>	ST110090, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 192
<b>Area:</b>	12.19 hectares (30.12 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Environmentally Sensitive Area

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Extended Description

South Plantation is located in Mid Devon in a peaceful rural area approximately 1km west of the small village of Sheldon (population 191 in 2001). It is situated within the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is also part of an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA). This stretch of woodland forms part of a wooded scarp slope that is characteristic within the Blackdown Natural Area. The scarp has steep north-westerly aspect that levels out to a gentle gradient at its base. Underlying geology comprises of clays-with-flints and Greensand on the higher ground to the Jurassic clays and mudstones towards the valley bottom. To the south runs a quiet country lane. A short boundary with another wood that extends along the scarp exists to the south-east with fields adjoining the other boundaries.

The presence of old boundary features indicate the woodland may be secondary however the current woodland boundaries remain unchanged since the First Edition OS of 1890.

Wet woodland at the base of the slope has formed where water emerges at the base of the greensand. This semi-natural woodland habitat is hidden by the coniferous planting of the 1970s on the drier upper slopes.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

There are two access points into South Plantation. The first is at the northern end of the wood directly off the lane running along the boundary of the site. There is a management gate with a squeeze gap next to it which is of limited width and allows only pedestrian access. There is no vehicle pull-in at this entrance and limited space down the lane making car parking difficult. The second entrance is found at the southern end of the wood off an unmetalled road which runs along the top of the scarp. A flight of steps takes you down the steep slope to the base of the slope. From here the path has a natural, unmodified surface that is boggy in places and involves climbing over several old field banks.

The wood is less than 1/2 mile from the village of Sheldon via either a footpath across open fields or along an unclassified track which has a rough surface (Church Lane). The public footpath from Sheldon to Hayne Farm takes you within 50m of the northern entrance before heading down the driveway of South Farm which is adjacent to the wood. To link with this path it is possible to walk out of the wood at the northern end and the short distance along the road.

Nearest public toilet: Motorway Services, Junction 28 M5 Cullompton (accessible without going onto the motorway)- approximately 5 miles by road - open 24 hours, facilities for disabled people - not open 24 hours. Information as at March 2006 - locally gathered. Also Station Road Cullompton - including RADAR key accessible toilets for disabled people - not open 24 hours. Information from Mid Devon District council website [www.middevon.gov.uk](http://www.middevon.gov.uk) May 2007

Nearest bus stop: There is a general lack of public transport in the area with only limited bus services being provided none of which currently (2007) serve the nearest villages of Blackborough and Sheldon. Some services run from Honiton to Dunkeswell Airfield & the Sheldon Turn which are approximately 2 1/2 miles & 2 miles away respectively. Walking to the site from these bus stops will involve walking along narrow country lanes, without pavements, and up and down steep slopes. Please see Traveline website [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk) or phone 0871 200 22 33 for details. Information gathered May 2007.

### 3.2 Access / Walks

## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Maintain and expand the percentage of native tree species, protect and develop linkage to semi-natural habitats to sustain key flora and fauna and in the wider designated landscape (AONB/ESA).

Semi natural areas will be managed towards as or high forest, by allowing natural processes to diversify and restructure the species and canopy structure. The coniferised areas of woodland will be restored to predominantly broadleaf woodland by 2030. Some conifer (no more than 20% canopy cover) may be retained for local landscape character. Selective thinning will develop opportunities for natural regeneration of native species during restoration phase however a lack of successful regeneration and/or dominance by non natives such as Western hemlock/Rhododendron/Laurel may require intervention to protect native species.

Maintain the public access in line with ongoing access requirements and enhance if necessary subject to demand.

Proposals support the corporate objective: Aim 2 - Protecting native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future.

Proposals support the corporate objective: Aim 3 - Inspiring everyone to enjoy and values woods and trees.

## 5.0 KEY FEATURES

The Key Features of the site are identified and described below. They encapsulate what is important about the site. The short and long-term objectives are stated and any management necessary to maintain and improve the Key Feature.

### 5.1 Landscape Value

#### Description

South Plantation occupies a section of scarp running along the side of a small valley within the Blackdown Hills AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). At the top of the site is an area of mixed conifers established in 1970 in three blocks. Surrounding these blocks and on the lower slopes of the site is an area of broadleaf cover. The wood positively contributes to the wooded feel of the scarp that is typical of the Blackdown Natural Area.

#### Significance

The wooded scarp is an important feature of the local landscape and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The woodland forms a link with adjacent semi natural woodlands many of which are ancient.

Aim 2 - Protecting native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunity: remove conifers at the top of the scarp by gradual thinning and restore wood to a more native appearance and character.

Constraints: Limited track infrastructure, water is abstracted from two points in the south of the site.

#### Factors Causing Change

None

#### Long term Objective (50 years+)

Ensure that South Plantation remains as a prominent feature in the local landscape and continues to positively contribute to the wooded feel of the scarp that is typical of the Blackdown Natural Area.

#### Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

Operational objective

During thinning and felling operations, review the impact on landscape.

## 5.2 Informal Public Access

### Description

Rural site with limited public usage. Although entrances are located at or near the roadside there is limited parking and the main use is thought to be by locals, and guests at the adjacent South Farm holiday cottages>Visitors to the adjacent Forestry Commission woodland use the Woodland Trust site as the two are connected by an unmetalled track.

### Significance

Useful access provision linked with adjoining accessible woodland.

Aim 3 - Inspiring everyone to enjoy and values woods and trees.

### Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunity: to maintain low key access appropriate to the low level of use. Links in with wider area of woodland open to the public

Constraints: steep slopes, & wet ground on lower slopes making some parts of the path boggy in the autumn/winter. No circular path within wood - circular route involves walking back up the road.

### Factors Causing Change

Waterlogging of path surface

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

Woodland offers informal, low key level of access for a quiet recreation experience predominantly by locals, and occasional tourism visitors. There is no intention to add further facilities such as boardwalking, due to low usage and the shifting nature of the spring lines.. The boardwalk already present along the footpath will be retained and maintained as necessary.

### Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

Operational objective:

Accessible, woodland that offers a range of woodland experiences that the public can enjoy.

Maintenance of entrances, paths and other site furniture appropriate to the level of use and demand from the local population.

maintain ditch along north-western boundary clear of leaves and woody debris to prevent flooding over neighbouring land.

### 5.3 Planted Ancient Woodland Site

#### Description

South Plantation occupies a prominent position in the landscape. Currently, sub cpt 1b comprises coniferous species planted in the 1970s mainly Western Hemlock and Douglas Fir. The site has many ancient woodland features and a strong diversity of ancient woodland species.

#### Significance

The restoration of sub cpt 1b to native woodland cover will be highly beneficial to the woodland habitat and semi natural links with the surrounding woodland and hedgerow network. Intervention is necessary to improve the woodland habitat and to arrest the "natural" regeneration of coniferous species.

Aim 2 - Protecting native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

Poor economic value of conifer, limited harvesting access, seeding of coniferous species.

#### Factors Causing Change

Declining habitat value due to low light levels limited by dense conifer canopy and current conditions favouring shade tolerant regeneration of self sown conifer, beech and holly in particular.

#### Long term Objective (50 years+)

Ongoing removal of conifer in sub cpt 1b, to achieve a largely semi-natural canopy cover by 2050.

#### Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

Operational objective

Ongoing removal of the remaining conifer to stimulate native woodland regeneration of beech, oak, ash, rowan, willow, birch and holly, mimicking semi natural structure. Natural processes of decline and regeneration will be allowed to dominate in semi-natural woodland areas.

1. Continue to lightly thin conifers until they are removed from the site. Timing and intensity of the interventions should be set by surveys carried out as for PAWS sites to assess the response of ground flora and natural regeneration of broadleaf trees and identify "hotspots". Although it is not possible to remove all of the conifer before seeding age is reached (at 40 -60 years) the majority of the cover should be removed towards the beginning of this period. A PAWS style survey will be carried out to identify if there is a need to thin the conifers in 2012. If this survey identifies that thinning would benefit the wood, this would be carried out before the end of the plan period.

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## 6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By
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## APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	9.66	Birch (downy/silver)	1950	High forest	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access to the site	Informal Public Access, Landscape Value	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Environmentally Sensitive Area
<p>Sub-compartment comprises mainly of birch and oak with beech and ash. Pollarded beech (estimated p1870) can be found growing on old field boundaries at the base of the sandy ridge. Regeneration of beech, oak, ash, rowan, willow, birch and holly present in canopy gaps. Ground flora consists of bryophytes including harts tongue, hard, buckler and male ferns and club mosses and grasses in more open wet areas. Run-off from a nearby chicken factory comes into the wood via a culvert in the wall at the roadside and to the south water is abstracted from the wood at two points. The area has a north-westerly aspect.</p>							
1b	2.52	Western hemlock	1970	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site	Informal Public Access, Landscape Value	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Environmentally Sensitive Area
<p>Divided into three blocks consisting of mainly conifers (p1970) on the drier soils stretching along the top of the scarp with Western hemlock as the dominant species with some Douglas fir in the southern block. Occasional birch, holly and beech regeneration present. Ground flora is present in patches under the heavy shade cast by the western hemlock showing a response to the thinning carried out in 1996 and 2004. Species present include buckler and hard ferns with ground ivy and holly regeneration. The stand has a north-westerly aspect.</p>							

## GLOSSARY

### **Ancient Woodland**

Ancient woods are defined as those where there has been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD. In Scotland ancient woods are defined strictly as sites shown as semi-natural woodland on the 'Roy' maps (a military survey carried out in 1750 AD, which is the best source of historical map evidence) and as woodland all subsequent maps. However, they have been combined with long-established woods of semi-natural origin (originating from between 1750 and 1860) into a single category of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland to take account of uncertainties in their identification. Ancient woods include Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (see below). May support many species that are only found in ancient woodland.

### **Ancient Semi - Natural Woodland**

Stands in ancient woods defined as those consisting predominantly of native trees and shrubs that have not obviously been planted, which have arisen from natural regeneration or coppice regrowth.

### **Ancient Woodland Site**

Stands in ancient woods that have been converted to plantations, of coniferous, broadleaved or mixed species, usually for timber production, including plantations of native species planted so closely together that any semi-natural elements of the understorey have been suppressed.

### **Beating Up**

Replacing any newly planted trees that have died in the first few years after planting.

### **Broadleaf**

A tree having broad leaves (such as oak) rather than needles found on conifers (such as Scots pine).

### **Canopy**

The uppermost layer of vegetation in a woodland, or the upper foliage and branches of an individual tree.

### **Clearfell**

Felling of all trees within a defined area.

### **Compartment**

Permanent management division of a woodland, usually defined on site by permanent features such as roads. See Sub-compartments.

### **Conifer**

A tree having needles, rather than broadleaves, and typically bearing cones.

### **Continuous Cover forestry**

A term used for managing woods to ensure that there are groups or individual trees of different ages scattered over the whole wood and that some mature tree cover is always maintained. Management is by repeated thinning and no large areas are ever completely felled all at once.

### **Coppice**

Trees which are cut back to ground levels at regular intervals (3-25 years).

### **Exotic (non-native) Species**

Species originating from other countries (or other parts of the UK) that have been introduced by humans, deliberately or accidentally.

### **Field Layer**

Layer of small, non-woody herbaceous plants such as bluebells.

### **Group Fell**

The felling of a small group of trees, often to promote natural regeneration or allow planting.

### **Long Term Retention**

Discrete groups of trees (or in some cases single trees) that are retained significantly past their economic felling age. Operations may still be carried out within them and thinning is often necessary to maintain stability.

### **Minimum Intervention**

Areas where no operations (such as thinning) will take place other than to protect public safety or possibly to control invasive exotic species.

### **Mixed Woodland**

Woodland made up of broadleaved and coniferous trees.

### **National vegetation classification (NVC)**

A classification scheme that allows an area of vegetation to be assigned to the standardised type that best matches the combination of plant species that it contains. All woodlands in the UK can be described as being one of 18 main woodland types (W1 - W18), which principally reflect soil and climatic conditions. For example, Upland Oakwoods are type W11, and normally occur on well drained infertile soils in the cooler and wetter north and west of Britain. Each main type can be subdivided into numerous subtypes. Most real woods contain more than one type or sub-type and inevitably some woods are intermediate in character and can't be properly described by any sub type.

### **Native Species**

Species that arrived in Britain without human assistance.

### **Natural Regeneration**

Naturally grown trees from seeds falling from mature trees. Also regeneration from coppicing and suckering.

## **Origin & Provenance**

The provenance of a tree or seed is the place where seed was collected to grow the tree or plant. The origin is the geographical location within the natural range of a species from where seeds/tree originally derives. Thus an acorn collected from a Turkey oak in Edinburgh would have an Edinburgh provenance and a southern European origin.

## **Re-Stocking**

Re-planting an area of woodland, after it has been felled.

## **Shrub Layer**

Formed by woody plants 1-10m tall.

## **Silviculture**

The growing and care of trees in woodlands.

## **Stand**

Trees of one type or species, grouped together within a woodland.

## **Sub-Compartment**

Temporary management division of a compartment, which may change between management plan periods.

## **Thinning**

The felling of a proportion of individual trees within a given area. The remaining trees grow to fill in the space created.

## **Tubex or Grow or Tuley Tubes**

Tubes placed over newly planted trees or natural regeneration that promote growth and provide protection from animals such as rabbits and deer.

## **Weeding**

The control of vegetation immediately around newly planted trees or natural regeneration to promote tree growth until they become established. Either by hand cutting or with carefully selected weed killers such as glyphosate.

## **Windblow/Windthrow**

Trees or groups of trees blown over (usually uprooted) by strong winds and gales.