



Westcott Wood

Management Plan 2016-2021

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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 or contact the Woodland Trust (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.

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. 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

Site name:	Westcott Wood
Location:	Moretonhampstead
Grid reference:	SX785871, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 191
Area:	5.72 hectares (14.13 acres)
Designations:	National Park, Planted Ancient Woodland Site

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Part of the Teign Valley Ancient Woodland complex, this is a popular wood among local people. It rises quite steeply up from the road so you will need to be quite fit to explore it.

2.2 Extended Description

Westcott wood is situated in the hilly countryside on the north-eastern fringe of Dartmoor National Park adjacent to the B3212 Moretonhampstead - Exeter road. The nearest village is Docombe; 1 km west. A public footpath leads from the highway through the wood towards the hamlet of Westcott. The site has moderate landscape value in its immediate valley setting of pastoral fields and small woodlands. Situated within the Dartmoor National Character Area (150) this woodland is typical of the fringe wooded valley areas of north eastern Dartmoor. The site is on the tip of a spur of the large Teign Valley Ancient Woodland complex and is only 1.5 km from the popular visitor spot of Steps Bridge.

Solid geology consists of the Dartmoor Granite intrusion giving rise to fertile brown earths and free draining grit soils. There are large granite boulders in some parts of the wood.

The wood lies on a moderate to steep north facing slope which is part Planted Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) and part secondary conifer plantation. The area next to the road is believed to have been open secondary woodland and rough pasture fields previous to conifer planting. There is an area of restocking of native broadleaves and conifer plantations, separated by a power line.

Remnant native flora exists around the edges of the wood and along the ride where light levels are greater. The site slopes uphill away from the road.

It is not well used by the public except a few local residents as parking is difficult on the main road and there is limited space for parking at the entrance.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

There are two main ways of accessing Westcott Wood. The main entrance comprises of a management gate and squeeze gap stile, which is of limited width and allows only pedestrian access, in a small pull-in directly off the busy B3212 through to Doccombe from the A30 Moretonhampstead to Exeter road. This unfortunately offers very limited parking with room enough for only one vehicle and has poor visibility for exit back onto the road. As the road has no pavements and there is no other safe parking within a short distance along the road access to the wood is best gained via the public footpath network.

The second Access point to the site is via a field gate on the south-eastern side of the wood on the route of a public footpath. This route leads from the roadside entrance, through the wood and on to the village of Westcott. Although the walk through the woodland is relatively short it provides a quiet woodland experience over a rough forest track with a natural, unmodified surface which can be uneven, and climbs approximately 20 metres over its length (approximately 300 metres).

Nearest public toilet - Moretonhampstead is the nearest town (approximately 4 miles) with facilities for visitors. Toilets can be found in the Court Street Car Park in Moretonhampstead. Further information can be found on the Teignbridge District Council website - www.teignbridge.gov.uk under "Environment" and then "Teignbridge Services".

Nearest bus stop - The nearest bus stop is in Doccombe approximately half a mile from the site (along busy, narrow country road with no pavements) on the route between Exeter and Moretonhampstead.

Further information about public transport provision is available from Traveline - www.travelinesw.com or by phone on 0870 608 2 608.

Information on toilets and public transport gathered November, 2015.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Westcott will be a predominantly broadleaved woodland sitting well in the surrounding landscape. With a decreased number of coniferous trees, the increasing broadleaved element will be of varying ages and species consisting mostly of Oak, Hazel, Birch and Ash whilst Rowan, Birch, Holly and Sycamore will be present in smaller numbers. There will be a wide range of natural flora and fauna within the woods. Browsing by deer will be controlled sufficiently to allow regenerating trees to survive and grow on to maturity and there will be a growing stock of standing and fallen deadwood.

This will be achieved by gradual thinning of conifers to allow light to the forest floor and thus encouraging native flora and tree species to establish themselves whilst preventing coarser vegetation such as bracken and bramble from dominating.

Once the canopy has been restored to a predominant broadleaved composition, subsequent management will be interventions designed to create minimal ecological impact yet maintain the health, vigour and diversity of the woodland. There will be very little open space in this small woodland except small temporary glades and the path and track system

The tranquil character of the woodland will be retained and used for low key recreation by mainly local visitors and some tourists, generally passing through this small wood on the public right of way.

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 Ancient Woodland Site

Description

A Coniferised Ancient woodland site on land previously managed as Oak Woodland planted 1961 with mature Douglas Fir, Sitka Spruce and Western Hemlock. Parts of this wood hosts small remnant populations of flora and fauna associated with ancient woodland, including Oak standards. The lower slopes of the wood are plantation secondary woodland but have some AW characteristics such as old wood banks, deadwood & some native flora.

A clear fell area was restocked 2000 with native broadleaves (core Oak and Ash) and a small proportion of natural regeneration (Hazel, Rowan & Birch) absorbed into the restock at subcompartment 1a

Significance

PAWS recovery and restoration is a prime objective of the Trust to achieve Corporate aim of no further loss of Ancient Woodland. Restoration of PAWS and thereby linking and increasing area of AW under semi-natural cover is an objective of management of Dartmoor National Park HAP for woodlands. Westcott also lies only 500 metres from the Teign Valley SSSI complex, designated for being a fine example of semi natural Upland Oak/Hazel woodland. It is also only 1.2 km from the large ancient woodland restoration project of Fingle woods.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: current management access, landscape impact of operations, potential historic feature damage. large granite boulders preventing access .

Factors Causing Change

Regeneration of non-native species i.e. Western Hemlock & Douglas Fir, tree mortality due to pests & disease especially loss of Ash to Ash dieback. Instability following thinning. Bramble colonisation too great to allow regeneration, deer populations increasing. Invasive non-native plants such as Laurel, Rhododendron and Himalayan balsam.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The AWS will be managed as high forest CCF using selection thinning to maintain diversity in structure and species supporting a varied habitat for associated woodland fauna and flora. The PAWS area will have been restored to a predominantly broadleaved composition made up of a wide variety of tree species. Standing and fallen deadwood will form an integral part of the woodland.

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

- 1 - Continue PAWs restoration process through gradual selection thinning creating canopy gaps to support broadleaf regeneration, increase coverage of ASNW vegetation and enhance levels of biodiversity.
- 2 - Implement deer impact assessment exclosures to ascertain levels of browsing and its influence on BL regeneration.
- 3 - Ensure Oak planted in 2000 does not become suppressed and killed by regenerating Birch or Sycamore.
- 4 - Improve roading access for timber haulage.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

Informal public access is via a public footpath that leads through the site. There is no parking, and the path is not well used. Areas away from the path appear to be little frequented apart from use by a few local residents.

Significance

Whilst informal public access is a fundamental Woodland Trust Objective it is also important in Dartmoor National Park management plan, and here at a very local level, for residents. The only managed path is a public right of way (footpath)

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraint: The wood is isolated in the path network and is also small and difficult to access. There is a lot of more attractive woodland with good access in close proximity (Teign Valley).

Opportunity: By converting from coniferous to semi-natural cover there is an opportunity to increase visitor enjoyment, particularly for passing road users. Fewer conifers within the National Park will improve the landscape.

Factors Causing Change

Promotion of path by outside bodies and thus increased visitor numbers.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

A site that is pleasant, easy and safe to visit with features and facilities providing an informal experience for local visitors, and the general public

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

Maintain current level of visitor access provision.

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	0.69	Mixed native broadleaves	2000	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site	Ancient Woodland Site, Informal Public Access	National Park, Planted Ancient Woodland Site
<p>A clear fell area (1999) restocked 2000 with native Broadleaves (core Oak and Ash). A small proportion of natural regeneration (Hazel, Rowan & Birch) was absorbed into the restock. Groundflora varies across the slope ranging from bracken dominated on the upper slopes to bramble on the lower. A small area of Japanese Knotweed exists on the boundary. A boundary of hazel and beech exists on the roadside boundary. A power line (10kv) divides this sub comp. from 1b, there is also a line spur across to the adjacent private bungalow.</p>							
1b	2.34	Douglas fir	1961	PAWS restoration	No/poor vehicular access to the site	Ancient Woodland Site, Informal Public Access	National Park, Planted Ancient Woodland Site
<p>Douglas Fir and Sitka Spruce (all p1961) plantation with occasional remnant oak standards and little understory. Occasional small areas of conifer regen. exist. Indicative AW flora remains in small areas, running from W11a on the PAWS to W10e on the lower (ex-pasture) slopes. Flora is best along the ride where Wood sorrel, Primrose, Dogs Mercury and ferns are frequent. Beech is present on the roadside boundary. Sweet chestnut is rare as a standard throughout.</p>							
1c	2.70	Western hemlock	1961	PAWS restoration	Gullies/Deep Valleys/Uneven/Rocky ground, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Ancient Woodland Site, Informal Public Access	
<p>WH P 61. Very little ground flora due to shading. Some remnant Oak on old boundaries and some WH ring barked or felled around these in recent past (@2015) making access even more difficult. Numerous boulders litter the slope which is steep in places and NE facing. Machinery access very poor.</p>							

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2017	1b	Thin	2.30	183	421.15
2017	1c	Thin	2.70	57	153.02
2019	1c	Thin	2.70	37	100
2020	1c	Thin	2.70	37	100
2021	1c	Thin	2.70	37	100
2022	1b	Thin	0.69	145	100

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.