WOODLAND TRUST

Beechland Mill Wood

Management Plan 2017-2022

MANAGEMENT PLAN - CONTENTS PAGE

ITEM **Page No.**

Introduction
Plan review and updating
Woodland Management Approach
Summary
1.0 Site details
2.0 Site description
2.1 Summary Description
2.2 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 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland
5.2 Connecting People with woods & trees
6.0 Work Programme

Appendix 1: Compartment descriptions
Glossary

MAPS

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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 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:	Beechland Mill Wood
Location:	Newick
Grid reference:	TQ412204, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 198
Area:	4.81 hectares (11.89 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Acquired by the Trust in three separate sections over a period of 16 years, the whole wood is now known as Beechland Mill. There are good displays of bluebells in spring.

2.2 Extended Description

Beechland Mill Wood is situated 500m south of the village of Newick, in East Sussex. The wood was acquired by the Woodland Trust in three sections: a meadow donated in 1981 and planted in 1982 (now Cpt 1c); Mill Wood purchased in 1988 (now Cpt 1a); the north-eastern section donated in 1997 (now Cpt 1b). The acquisitions were made possible by members of the Wallinger family of Newick. All internal boundary fences have now been removed and the whole wood is known as Beechland Mill Wood at the request of the donors.

The wood occupies part of the southern side of a small east-west valley with a small seasonal steam and is mainly surrounded by semi-improved grassland. The wood is linked to other small woods and shaws by wide hedgerows typical of the Low Weald of Sussex. The site is largely on Tunbridge Wells Sand and Wadhurst Clay which gives rise to some wet soils prone to waterlogging.

Mill Wood is mostly ancient semi-natural woodland with mature oak over a hazel understorey. There are good displays of bluebells in the spring. The area at the western end has a series of pits/ponds, dams and spillways associated with its previous industrial use. Along the stream alder, willow and ash are more dominant.

The north-eastern section of the wood along the valley bottom and containing the stream is partly secondary woodland although it appears to be long established. Tree species include oak, ash and birch with alder, hazel and willow along the stream. The flora includes woodland specialist plants such as dogs mercury, bluebell, wood anemone and enchanter's nightshade. There is a further pond bay in this part of the wood.

In the south-east, the land was formerly a rough, sloping meadow. In 1982 it was planted with widely-spaced broadleaved trees (native and non-native) which have now closed canopy. Species include oak, ash, wild cherry and small-leaved lime.

The wood can be accessed by three public footpaths from the village and one from the south and is well-used by local people. It currently hosts Forest School sessions for pupils form Newick primary school. Local footpath volunteer group Newick Rootz undertake occasional tasks in the wood including an annual hedgelaying session. The wood suffers from occasional minor anti-social behaviour.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

General location:
Beechland Mill Wood is situated south of the village of Newick. It is accessible via a variety of public footpaths from the village and from Chailey Lane to the south. The wood is 450m from Allington Road along the public footpath adjacent to the primary school. All of the paths have gradients and can be muddy following wet weather.

General overview of paths & entrances:
There are 5 entrances into the wood. There are stiles at the western end and on the southern boundary, a kissing gate at the north-eastern corner and no restrictions at the central northern and southern entrances on the public footpath that crosses the site. The paths within the wood are generally narrow, unsurfaced and have some moderate gradients. They can be very muddy after wet weather. There are several narrow footbridges at stream-crossing points and steps leading out on one of the paths.

Parking:
There is no car park near the wood. The nearest parking is on Allington Road, approx 500m from the site.

Public Transport:
Nearest train station: Haywards Heath, approx 6 miles from the wood, via the A272.
Nearest bus stop: junction of Allington Road and A272, approx ¾ mile from the wood along a residential road with pavements and public footpath. There are regular services from Uckfield and Haywards Heath. Information obtained from Traveline website on 9/3/12 (www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk or tel: 0870 608 2 608).

Public Toilets:
Nearest toilets: Orchards shopping precinct, Haywards Heath, approx 6 miles from the wood. Disabled facilities accessible with a RADAR key. Baby-changing facilities. Information obtained from Mid Sussex DC website on 9/3/2012 (www.midsussex.gov.uk).

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Beechland Mill Wood is characteristic of many unmanaged ancient and recent woods in Sussex. The existing variety of structure and species can be maintained and improved in the long term largely by a policy of minimum intervention, allowing the processes of natural succession to take place, i.e. with no silvicultural operations such as coppicing or thinning. Over time the canopy of oak in Mill Wood will change as mature oaks die or are blown over, creating gaps for natural regeneration of species such as birch, willow, hornbeam and hazel. Ash may be lost as a species in the wood due to disease. Along the stream, gaps may also be created by the collapse of shorter-lived species such as willow and alder. These processes will eventually lead to a more diverse age structure across the site. The small area of planted trees (Cpt 1c) will be managed for safety reasons while it is used by the Forest School.

Some periodic management will be carried out along main rides and paths where it will benefit public access as well as adding a minor element to the structural diversity of the wood. Dead or dying trees will only be felled if they pose a safety risk, otherwise they will be left to provide a valuable deadwood habitat.

The wood will continue to be a valued amenity for the village of Newick, providing low-key access (as part of the wider landscape) and a location for activities such as Forest School and volunteering.

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 Semi Natural Woodland

Description

This key feature covers the whole wood although not all of it is ancient in origin. Mill Wood (cpt 1a) is mostly ancient semi-natural woodland (NVC W10a) with a canopy predominantly of pedunculate oak (100 years+ old) over a sparse hazel understorey. Along the stream the main species are alder, goat willow and hazel. Also present as part of the understorey and as occasional canopy trees are wild cherry, ash, sweet chestnut, holly, silver birch, hornbeam, crab apple, hawthorn and beech. Along the southern edge of the wood there is much evidence of damage from the 1987 storm. The wood has good displays of spring flowers, particularly bluebells with wood anemone, dogs mercury and Ribes spp.

The area of Cpt 1b along the stream also has ancient woodland characteristics with oak (approx 70 years old), hazel, alder, willow, beech and field maple. Ground flora includes bluebell, wood anemone, wood sorrel along with bramble and nettle.

The maturing planted area of Cpt 1c has an intimate mix of tree species including ash, oak, lime and cherry along with hawthorn, crab apple and the occasional southern beech (Nothofagus spp). Some of the ground is bare of flora but bluebells are colonising from surrounding areas.

As well as the earthworks relating to the previous industrial use of part of the site, there are various woodbanks within and around the site relating to probably medieval land divisions.

Significance

Woodland is the most extensive semi-natural habitat in Sussex. Much of this woodland is ancient in origin and of intrinsically high nature conservation value. Beechland Mill Wood forms part of an extensive network of wildlife habitats, connecting with shaws, hedgerows, parkland and along the stream to the river Ouse beyond. The wood is known locally for its show of bluebells in spring.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: poor access across neighbouring farmland, slopes, earthworks and heavy clay soils prevent silvicultural management.

Factors Causing Change

Squirrel damage.
Rabbit damage.
Loss of species due to disease eg ash.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The semi-natural areas of the site will continue to develop by natural processes. In the long-term this will include the windthrow or death of large canopy trees leading to the formation of small temporary gaps in the canopy. These will then regenerate with a mixture of trees likely to include birch, hazel and alder initially and oak in the longer term. Ground flora species will also benefit from the change in light conditions although dense bramble may inhibit species such as bluebell. The accumulation of coarse woody debris will improve the biodiversity of the site significantly. Holly may become more dominant in the understorey at the expense of hazel. It is likely that ash will be lost to disease although the occasional tolerant tree may survive.
The planted area may lose some of its dominant species such as ash and cherry to disease. Replacement species from natural regeneration may include alder and birch.

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

During the 5-year plan period (2018-22) there will be no silvicultural interventions in the wood. Management will be focussed on maintaining rides and paths throughout the site (including laying the northern boundary hedge) and maintaining some of Cpt 1c for safety to enable the Forest School to have a semi-permanent site for appropriate activities within the wood.

- Cut back ride edge along approx. 400m in Cpt 1a (2018)

5.2 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

The wood is approx 500m south of Newick (population approx 2500). It can be reached via various public footpaths from Allington and Church Roads with access points at the north-east, north and north-west points of the wood. Two of these footpaths cross the wood and continue to the south to join Cornwell's Bank. All entrance points are pedestrian only, have low-key WT signage and include stiles and kissing gates. To the west the footpath network links to the Sussex Ouse Valley Way.

Within the locality there is other public access land at Chailey Common (ESCC), Sheffield Park (NT) and Park Wood (FC). Other Woodland Trust sites in the area are Costells Wood (Scaynes Hill, 5 miles) and Views and Lake Woods (Uckfield, approx 5 miles).

Within the site there is a network of paths (approx 1000m) giving access to much of the wood. The stream is crossed by 5 footbridges. The paths become muddy after wet weather and alternative routes are often made by walkers.

The site is well used by local people, mainly for dog walking (WT access category B: 5 - 15 people using one entrance per day). In addition the wood currently hosts Forest Schools sessions for Newick CE Primary School. Local footpath volunteer group Newick Rootz undertake occasional tasks within the wood to help maintain and improve the rights of way and also participate in an annual hedgelaying day.

Significance

Beechland Mill is a small but attractive ancient woodland mainly enjoyed by the people of Newick. It is well connected to the village and the wider landscape by a network of public footpaths.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: access on foot only, across fields, limits access by less-abled people.

Factors Causing Change

House building in the village and nearby will lead to an increase in visitor numbers which may be detrimental to sensitive aspects of the woodland habitat such as ground flora.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The wood will continue to be well used and appreciated by local people. There will continue to be opportunities for the community to be engaged with the site and its management via volunteering, Forest Schools or informally by activities such as litter-picking and reporting.

The provision of signage, infrastructure and path maintenance will be in keeping with the level of use and will not detract from the rural surroundings. Likely increases in visitor numbers and their effect on the ancient woodland habitat will need to be monitored to ensure there is minimal impact.

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

The wood will be maintained in a safe condition, suitable for the level of use, with annual inspections of infrastructure. There will be opportunities for community engagement via Newick Rootz volunteer group and Forest Schools (for as long as these continue under their own arrangements).

- Annual path cutting (1000m).
- Annual infrastructure inspection: signs; bridges; steps; stile; gates.
- Annual tree safety inspection including Forest School area in Cpt 1c.
- Annual hedgelaying event with Newick Rootz (Jan-Mar).
- Replacement of signage at 5 entrance points (2017).
- Woodland Condition Assessment prior to next plan review (spring 2022) will include human impacts on the woods ecology.

6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By

APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	2.58	Oak (pedunculate)	1900	Min-intervention	Archaeological features, No/poor vehicular access to the site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Connecting People with woods & trees	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland
Mill Wood. Ancient semi-natural woodland (NVC W10a). Predominantly P1900 oak over hazel. Other species include hornbeam, wild cherry, beech, sweet chestnut, yew, crab, holly and hawthorn. Ground flora is dominated by bluebell with wood anemone, dogs mercury and Ribes spp. A small stream runs through the northern part of the Subcpt. The western end includes a water-filled depression and various earth structures that appear to relate to historic water management (pond, bay and spillway). The northern boundary of this Subcpt is a hazel hedge that has been laid in sections over several years, starting in 2012.							
1b	1.42	Oak (pedunculate)	1935	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Connecting People with woods & trees	
Part ancient semi-natural and part secondary but long established broadleaved woodland. Includes a small but important area of wet woodland along the stream with tree species including alder, birch, willow, hazel, pedunculate oak, elder, ash and birch. There is a small area of pure hazel coppice immediately to the east of the public footpath. Ground flora includes bluebell, wood anemone, lesser celandine, dogs mercury, wood sorrel, bramble and nettle.							
1c	0.80	Mixed broadleaves	1982	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access within the site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Connecting People with woods & trees	
Secondary woodland. P82 mixed broadleaved plantation. Species include oak, ash, wild cherry, small-leaved lime, field maple, crab, hawthorn and southern beech. Ground flora includes bluebell colonising from area to N and old hedge/shaw forming southern boundary with neighbouring farmland.							

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.