



Northdown Wood

Management Plan 2007-2012

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Northdown Wood
Location:	Bickleigh
Grid reference:	SS929061, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 192
Area:	9.11 hectares (22.51 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Landscape Value

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

A beautiful, peaceful woodland with superb spring flowers hidden away in the rolling hills between Exeter and Tiverton. Fantastic for a walk with school age kids or a quiet solitary stroll.

2.2 Extended Description

Northdown Wood extends around the side of a south-facing hill, quite concealed in the landscape. However, the wood is visible from roads to the south. The area is predominately in pasture and the farm to the south ranches Red Deer. This is an Ancient Semi-Natural Wood dominated by oak and ash high forest tree cover and three separate blocks of larch. Springs break along the entire woodland slope and create wet flush habitats. The wood has been affected by storm damage in the past and in places has a varied structure. Ground flora also varies due to the soil variance across the slope and the numerous spring breaks but no notable species are recorded.

The wood was managed for timber in the past, but it is believed to have been last worked commercially in the late 1960s. After a period of neglect it has had sporadic thinning operations since coming into WT ownership (1984). A council lay-by on the main A396, Tiverton to Crediton road is available for car parking but the wood is set back from view and is not well visited. The site is reached via an exceptionally wet permissive track. Management access also follows this route and is virtually impassable at certain times of year. A circular ride network follows the contours of the slope, part of which follows the route of the old Tiverton road known as 'Prowses Lane'.

The Trust is responsible for the boundary to the south against the deer farm.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Via a permissive path following the field boundary to the wood boundary across farmland, from the public highway at Drayway Cross. A circular loop path exists in the wood. This is seasonally very wet. In places the path is quite steep.

There is parking for this woodland in a layby on the A396 approx a mile past Bickleigh and there is space for about five cars. From the lay-by take the track up to the left and follow the ride to the entrance to the wood. This ride can get very wet and boggy and the cattle have made it very uneven. There is a high two step stile that needs crossing and the entrance to the wood is through a reverse kissing gate with a small step over.

The internal paths are muddy tracks that can be narrow in places. The top track climbs up to the western boundary and the bottom track descend steeply into the centre of the wood.

The nearest bus stop is just before the junction in Bickleigh, although the A396 is narrow with blind corners and walking along it is not recommended. However there is a roundabout route via Bickleigh Castle and quite country roads that is more suitable for walking to the woodland.

The nearest toilets are in Tiverton and Lowman Green, Market Car Park and Phoenix Lane and all three have RADAR key toilets (www.directenquiries.com).

This information was correct on 20/06/2007 and local travel information can be found on www.travelline.com.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

To maintain the High Forest Ancient Woodland in favourable condition.

Management of Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW)

Natural processes and self selection will be used to diversify the woodland in the long term. The wood will be left to minimum intervention with safety inspections being the only work undertaken that may affect the tree canopy of the woodland.

Informal Public Access

To ensure the woodland is an enjoyable and safe place to visit by maintaining the paths and 1 entrance for public access. Drainage (culverting) of rides for management access would drastically improve conditions for visitors but only if management access could be improved at the entrance, however as stated above this is unlikely. If levels of public use remain low, then maintenance levels of access will be questioned again at the next plan review.

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

Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland, predominately W10 western Oak wood, with small areas of W8. Three blocks of Larch occur along the slope. A number of older (veteran) trees occur on the boundaries of the wood. Sycamore is present but in low density.

Significance

Western Oak Woods are internationally important and included in the Devon County BAP. Management of this area of ASNW helps assist the Trust in meeting its core aims of no further loss of Ancient Woodland and to maintain and enhance biodiversity. The site was acquired with the objective of being managed as a native woodland nature reserve.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: management access is along an historical feature (Prowse's Lane) outside WT ownership; this lies wet for much of the year. Little wildlife information is known for the wood to assist in long term management decisions. The wood could be deemed prominent in the landscape. Opportunities: further diversification of wood structure in short term will lead to less management input in long term

Factors Causing Change

Invasive Sycamore, Deer Damage, Squirrel Damage

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Allow the woodland to naturally develop to mixed broadleaved high forest through natural processes, regenerating areas through to older/veteran trees.

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

There will be no intervention in the plan period. The wood will be allowed to develop through natural processes forming gaps in the canopy and allowing the establishment of regeneration. The success of regeneration will be observed at the end of each plan period to determine whether there is a need for intervention.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

Informal public access is via permissive track from the public highway with a circular ride network in the wood. Note: Part of the upper ride (along Prowse's Lane) is outside WT ownership. There is virtually no other access available in the wood due to the nature of the slope.

Significance

Whilst access is a fundamental Woodland Trust Objective it is also important in this area of Devon which has limited access to Ancient Woodland.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: Poor access conditions inhibit visitors and likely visitor numbers with levels of visit presumed low (by observation of path use). Current presumed levels of access do not justify expense of culverting paths.

Opportunity: Visitor enjoyment would be dramatically heightened and use might increase should management access improvement work be undertaken.

Factors Causing Change

drainage and spring seepages

Long term Objective (50 years+)

A site that is pleasant, easy and safe to visit with features and facilities appropriate to providing an informal experience for the visitor within the rural setting.

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

Maintain the circular path through the woodland in a condition fit for seasonal access.

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	5.64	Oak (sessile)	1940	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Landscape Value
<p>Sub compartment 1a is predominantly a mixed broadleaf (W10) stand of oak coppice and standards, ash coppice as well as beech and sycamore with the occasional large holly and wild cherry. Younger ash coppice is much less numerous in sub compartment 1a than in compartment 2. All species are estimated to have been established around 1940 with a proportion of oak at an earlier date of 1920.</p> <p>A small percentage of sweet chestnut is also located within the stand, as are small pockets of larch which are estimated to have been established around 1970.</p> <p>Understorey is comprised of occasional ash, sycamore, elder and hazel coppice as well as patchy holly.</p> <p>Ground flora species include occasional primrose, bluebell and fern as well as patchy bramble. Both squirrel and deer damage is evident within the stand.</p> <p>Sub compartment 1a has a steep southerly aspect.</p>							
1b	0.52	Japanese larch	1975	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Landscape Value
<p>Sub compartment 1b is predominantly a thinned larch plantation estimated to have been established around 1975 (over W10), with a mixture of ash estimated to have been established around 1980. The occasional large oak is also scattered within the stand and is estimated to have been established around 1940.</p> <p>Under storey consists of occasional elder and oak coppice.</p> <p>Ground flora is predominantly heavy bracken.</p> <p>Sub compartment 1b has a steep southerly aspect.</p>							
1c	0.40	Mixed broadleaves		High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Landscape Value

Sub compartment 1c is a thinned larch plantation estimated to have been established around 1975, (over W10) with a mixture of oak, ash and sycamore estimated to have been established around 1960.

The occasional large oak is also scattered within the stand and is estimated to have been established around 1940.

Understorey consists of occasional elder and oak coppice.

Ground flora is predominantly heavy bracken.

Sub compartment 1c has a steep southerly aspect.

2a	0.00	Oak (sessile)	1940	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Landscape Value
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Sub compartment 2a is a mixed broadleaf stand of over mature coppice (Predominately W10 with some W8). Species include oak, ash, sycamore and beech all estimated to have been cut around 1940.

The occasional cherry and large holly are also located within the sub compartment, as is a small proportion of larch situated at the western end of the stand.

The main canopy structure remains fairly open allowing the natural regeneration of both ash and sycamore estimated to have become established between 1975 and 1990.

Under storey is comprised of hazel coppice, holly and the occasional elder.

Ground flora species include primrose, lords and ladies, fern and patchy bramble.

Sub compartment 2a has a steep southerly aspect running down to a small brook.

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2009	1b	Thin	0.52	0	0
2009	1c	Thin	0.40	0	0
2009	2a	Thin	2.60	0	0
2014	1b	Thin	0.52	0	0
2014	1c	Thin	0.40	0	0
2014	2a	Thin	2.60	0	0

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.