



Otterbourne Park Wood

Management Plan 2014-2019

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Otterbourne Park Wood
Location:	Otterbourne
Grid reference:	SU458222, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 185
Area:	25.94 hectares (64.10 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Well used by nearby residents, this ancient woodland features oak, ash, maple and wet valley alders, some of which are believed to date back to 1800. A former Roman road ran through part of the site, evidence of which can still be seen.

2.2 Extended Description

Otterbourne Park Wood is situated in the county of Hampshire, north of Eastleigh between the A33 and A335 Winchester to Southampton roads. The Woodland Trust purchased part of the woodland in 1986 and was gifted a further area in 1996, with 23 hectares now in its ownership. It has been classified as a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation. The M3 motorway to the north and west now separates the woodland from the extensive Cranbury Park, whilst arable fields surround the remaining boundaries.

There are a variety of soils in the wood with chalk to the north and the London Clay to the south. The glacial valley within the wood is steep sided, so that a virtual scarp face of the clay is formed, facing north to east. It is to this formation that the wood owes its existence, since the wood was historically too steep and too slippery for arable farming. The line of a Roman road runs through the northern part of the wood. The main Roman road leaving Winchester (Venta Belgarum) in a southerly direction to Otterbourne, still remains in use today along Shawford Hill.

Otterbourne Park Wood is a fine example of ancient semi-natural woodland. The dominant tree species is oak, many of which are one or two feet in diameter and often over 100 feet tall. Regular felling of these oaks in the past has led to the appearance of faster growing species such as silver birch and rowan. There is a beautiful group of very old twisted and knarled oak pollards growing on a pebble bed in the north of the wood. On the plateau gravel areas in the higher western end are pedunculate oak coppice with birch and an understorey of holly. Much of the rest of the higher elevations are covered with pedunculate oak standards with ash and an understorey of hazel. Ash-maple stands can be found mainly on the lower lying clays in the north and east with wet valley alder woods found concentrated along seasonal stream valleys and major ditches in the south and far north.

The wood is very rich in ground flora. Flowers such as yellow pimpernel, yellow archangel and moschatel grow beneath the canopy, whilst honeysuckle clammers up trunks and branches. Even guelder rose is found in some of the more isolated damp areas of the wood.

The wood is traversed by one public footpath however there are several permissive paths that allow access to a majority of the woodland.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

The wood is located 1/2 mile south of Otterbourne village up Otterbourne Hill. This is on the east side of the M3 at junction 12.

The main public access point is off Park Lane on the western boundary where the only public footpath enters the wood. This links with an extensive permissive footpath network, several of which provide circular walks of different lengths.

Only limited roadside parking is available in nearby streets or at Otterbourne Green.

A less abled access kissing gate is located at the main entrance off Park Lane. All the internal paths can become very muddy and slippery in wet weather and remain this way for much of winter. Various permissive paths connect to surrounding countryside with stiles at points of access.

Nearest Bus Stop : Otterbourne Hill Green. Accessible from Winchester and Southampton on Solent Blue Line No. 1 (Information from Traveline May 2007 www.traveline.org.uk 0871 200 2233). From there the wood can be accessed via Park Lane.

Nearest Station : Eastleigh 2.5 miles

Nearest Public Toilets : Bishopstoke Recreation Ground (3 miles) (Information from Eastleigh BC 02380 688409)

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term intention is for Otterbourne Park Wood to be semi-natural woodland managed as high forest with a diverse species and age composition. The ancient woodland components such as specialist ground flora, mature and veteran trees, deadwood and archaeological features will be present, in a good condition and not declining. This will largely be achieved through minimum intervention however opening up shaded paths by coppicing along ride edges will ensure young trees continue to regenerate, increasing the structural diversity. The extent of the holly will be monitored and it will be controlled if it is deemed to be dominating the understorey.

Existing on site access facilities will be maintained and enhanced to suit the existing local demand which is classed as Grade A - high usage.

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 ancient semi-natural woodland is highly variable in its stand types and structure, though it appears that much of it was managed as coppice with standards for many centuries until the early 20th century. It now contains some trees of great stature and impressive diameters as well as coppice stools of considerable size

There are a significant number of individual trees with stool diameters greater than 150cm in the coppiced oak, ash, alder and hazel. Field maple stools are up to at least 100cm diameter at the base thus indicating their longevity. There is also a yew in the wood, prominently positioned above the line of the Roman Road, which has a base diameter measurement of over 140cm.

Approximately 60 Turkey oak were planted in the wood during the early 1900s.

Silviculturally, the woodland was probably last worked prior to World War 2, indicated by the present size of coppice regrowth of a number of species. It is highly probable that most of the trees under 60 years of age are of natural regeneration origin following opening up of the canopy by thinning/ felling works. It is likely that deer and rabbit pressure on regrowth was much reduced during this period. The present natural regeneration is mainly oak, birch and ash. Wild cherry, rowan, willow, aspen, hawthorn and elder are also present in the wood.

The ground flora is dominated by bracken, bramble and ivy but there are many typical woodland plants including yellow pimpernel, yellow archangel, moschatel and golden saxifrage throughout much of the wood. Common rush and wood rush are found along the paths and butchers broom is scattered throughout the wood. In the wetter areas, bugle and yellow marsh saxifrage occur with kingcups and lesser spearwort is abundant. There is also an area of cowheat (*Melampyrum*) together with patches of early purple orchid.

Significance

The woodland is a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation. Whilst Hampshire is a reasonably well wooded county Otterbourne Park Wood was cut off from adjacent large woodlands by the M3 being built. It's southern boundary is fringed by pasture and other semi-natural habitats along the Itchen valley. It is part of a rural, farmed landscape and is linked to other woodlands via hedgerows.

Otterbourne Park Wood has been in existence for a long time with significantly sized coppice stool sizes of many species indicating a more active management history.

The Trust's aim of protecting native woods and their wildlife can be met here at Otterbourne Wood

Opportunities & Constraints

Strong local resistance to tree felling due to historic management practices and difficult internal and external management access for extraction vehicles. Significant deer pressure (roe & muntjac) may prevent natural regeneration if shade levels are high. Bracken has potential to smother young trees.

Factors Causing Change

Deer Damage, Fly tipping, Chalara, holly encroachment

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The main objective will be to ensure the woodland contains a diverse mixture of species and tree age so it is resilient to any future changes and threats imposed on it (for example tree diseases). The rideside coppicing and potential effects of ash dieback (Chalara) will create gaps in the tree canopy which will add some structural diversity to the woodland and supplement the deadwood habitat. It is unlikely that restocking via planting will be needed because the woodland is already composed of a good mixture of species and natural regeneration is taking place where light levels allow. Woodland condition monitoring, using Woodland Trust methodology, will take place every 5 years to ensure that the composition of the woodland and any possible threats to tree survival (eg. deer) are monitored and any resulting action taken. Oak will continue to be the dominant tree species and the old oak coppice will be left to mature and die in situ. The amount of standing deadwood both in standards and coppice, will gradually increase. The woodland ground flora will be rich and diverse creating a haven for wildlife.

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

Objective: Secure a diverse structure, species and age composition including saplings and mature specimens.

During this plan period this will be achieved by:

- 1.4ha of coppicing along approximately 1000m of rides. The coppicing will create rides between 5 & 20m wide, with scalloped edges. Areas where there is vigorous holly growth will be prioritised.
- Once coppiced the rides will be maintained with a central grassy zone and scrub edges. This will be achieved by an annual path cut in August and coppicing alternate sides of the rides on a 5 year rotation
- where possible standing and fallen deadwood will be left
- a woodland condition assessment will be carried out at the end of this plan period (2019) to inform the next management plan review.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

Otterbourne Park Wood is popular with visitors and mainly used by dog walkers, the majority of whom are local. There is an informal space for parking outside of the management access gate off Park Lane. The wood was made more accessible by installing a kissing gate at the main entrance off Park Lane and a squeeze gap replacing the stile leading from the common. A public footpath runs from the management gate in the west of the wood off Park Lane, down the hill and exits onto a field on the eastern boundary. Complementing the single public footpath is a well developed and maintained permissive footpath network which provides pleasant circular walks of varying length. Path surfaces are gravelly and muddy most of the year, becoming very muddy and slippery in the winter months.

Significance

Informal public access fulfills the Trust's corporate aim of inspiring everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees. Well used by walkers in an area which is becoming more and more built up. The opportunity for countryside / woodland walks (of up to an hour) in the area would be severely limited without access to Otterbourne Park Wood. Hants Wildlife Trust created a 3.5 mile route with a leaflet called 'The Otter Trail' which runs through Otterbourne Park Wood.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

Some of the paths are quite wet, particularly towards the bottom of the wood.

Opportunities:

Wood lies very close to Otterbourne Hill village with the local pub only 500m from the main entrance. Good location for guided walks

Factors Causing Change

Potential increase in visitor numbers

Long term Objective (50 years+)

A well established and safe network of paths for informal public access. Visitors will find the woods aesthetically pleasing, with the entrances and paths allowing easy access to enjoy the woodland environment.

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

Objective: All rides and paths within the site (approx. 4.5km) will be maintained annually for pedestrian use.

During the plan period this will be achieved by:

- Annual management of 1000m of wide grassy rides will also take place (as described under the ancient woodland key feature) and this will have the effect of creating open sunny paths for people to enjoy.
- Annual safety inspections of trees in high risk zones (eg. the roadside), to ensure the wood is as safe as possible for visitors, neighbours and road users. A walk-over tree safety survey will be undertaken along maintained paths and rides every three years with any remedial work undertaken in the appropriate timescale.
- implementing an appropriate path cutting regime, one cut in July/August.
- All site infrastructure such as signs, footbridges, culverts and steps will be inspected annually and any remedial work undertaken in the appropriate timescale.
- in 2015 an audit of access infrastructure and signage will be undertaken. A work programme will be put together and implemented in 2016

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	23.49	Oak (pedunculate)	1940	High forest	Archaeological features, No/poor vehicular access to the site, People issues (+tve & -tve)	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance

Although a large area in size with different stand types reflecting differences in local geology, the bulk of Otterbourne Park Wood has the same management prescription. There are areas of pedunculate oak coppice with birch and an understorey of holly found on the plateau gravel areas towards the higher elevations in the north-west. These merge with pedunculate oak standards intimately mixed with ash and an understorey of hazel. Ash-maple stands, dominate the lower slopes in the north and east. The alder woods are concentrated in the wetter valleys of the wood around the larger ditches and streams in the south and at the very bottom of the hill in the north of the wood.

The existing high forest nominally dates from approximately 1900 although there are definite older individual specimen trees of greater age. Approximately 60 Turkey oak were planted in the wood in the early 1900s of which about one third have been felled to waste within the last decade.

One public footpath crosses the compartment from east to west and this is complemented by a maintained and popular permissive footpath network which extends to most parts of the woodland. Management Access is on the north-west side off Park Lane.

Ground conditions vary from gravelly on the upper ground to the north to wet clay on the lower ground to the south.

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.