



Nellington Wood

Management Plan 2019-2024

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Nellington Wood
Location:	Rusthall, Tunbridge Wells
Grid reference:	TQ556397, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 188
Area:	2.20 hectares (5.44 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Green Belt, Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

A sweet little wood tucked in a valley between Rusthall and Langton Green, featuring a winding stream and pond. Delightful mixture of old oak trees and younger deciduous trees and holly, with amazing bluebells in the spring.

2.2 Extended Description

Nellington Wood is a small (2.2 hectare) urban-fringe woodland on the edge of the village of Rusthall to the west of Tunbridge Wells, Kent. The wood was acquired by the Woodland Trust in 1988. The woodland lies within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Tunbridge Wells Metropolitan Green Belt and is designated as a local Site of Nature Conservation Value (SNCI) by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

A remnant ancient semi-natural woodland, the wood is situated in a small steep-sided valley with a stream flowing from the south-east, via a small pond, through the site in a north-westerly direction. Another stream rises in the north-west part of the wood and flows north to join the main stream. The pond was restored in 1997, with the dam and overflow being re-built and the silt removed.

In spite of extensive damage during the storm of 1987, the wood still contains many large trees, mainly oak, beech, sweet chestnut and ash as well as a handful of more unusual exotic species such as London plane, horse chestnut and red oak. There are frequent examples of tree-sized holly, particularly along the southern boundary and areas of the western boundary. Due to the thick closed canopy in many areas of the site, there is a limited understorey, which is predominantly native species such as holly and hazel, with willow and alder along the stream and yew scattered throughout. Previously there were extensive areas of invasive cherry laurel as well as bamboo but most of this has been cleared in years past. There are a few remaining large cherry laurels which have purposely been left in place due to the slope and the sensitivity of the area. Occasionally bamboo shoots sprout up on site and cherry laurel frequently seeds along the stream and the eastern half of the site, which are removed regularly, as required.

The surrounding land use is predominantly residential housing, with a care home and a primary school a short walking distance from the wood. There are three entrances into the wood, connected by paths, allowing for a short circular walk. Rustic steps have been installed on the steeper slopes and two railed footbridges allow visitors to cross the stream. Being a shaded valley, the paths can become quite muddy in wet weather. The southern and eastern entrances open onto a paved public footpath which connects the nearby high street of Rusthall to the housing development to the west of Nellington Wood. The north entrance connects to a public footpath which leads cross-country toward the village of Speldhurst.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

General location:

Nellington Wood is situated on Nellington Road, approx. 400m to the east of the centre of the village of Rusthall, Tunbridge Wells. The wood can be reached from the village by suburban roads with pavements. There are also public footpaths to the north and south of the wood. The path to the south allows access from the residential areas of the neighbouring village of Langton Green.

General overview of paths & entrances:

There are three entrances into the wood all served by squeeze gaps. One is on Nellington Road; one is from the public footpath on the southern boundary and one from the public footpath at the northern end of the wood. The wood is situated in a small valley along a stream so most of the paths are on a gradient and there are 2 sets of steps on the steeper sections. There are two narrow footbridges crossing the stream near the northern end of the wood and near the pond in the south. The paths are frequently muddy even in summer. There is an unfenced pond (approx. 1.5m deep) so visiting children need to be supervised.

Parking:

Parking near the wood is limited to on-street parking on adjacent suburban roads.

Public Transport:

Nearest train station: Tunbridge Wells, approx. 2 miles from the wood.

Nearest bus stop: Co-op, Rusthall, approx. 500m from the wood via suburban roads with pavements. There are frequent services from Tunbridge Wells town centre/train station. Further information on public transport can be obtained from Traveline: www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk or tel: 0870 608 2 608).

Public Toilets:

The nearest public toilets (including disabled facilities) are at Wellington Rocks, on the northern edge of Tunbridge Wells Common, off Bishops Down (A264), Tunbridge Wells, approx. 1.5 miles from the wood.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Nellington Wood will continue to be a small ancient semi-natural woodland refuge and a local green space for the residents of Rusthall and Langton Green. Intervention will be limited to addressing the issues that pose the greatest risk to the ecological condition of the site and the safety of its visitors.

With only a small number of ash on site, the wood will be mostly unaffected by ash dieback. Invasive species will likely continue to be the greatest threat to the health and resilience of this woodland. Regular monitoring for invasive species such as cherry laurel and bamboo will ensure that regeneration is caught before it takes over the understorey.

The older trees such as the oak and sweet chestnut will be left to develop veteran characteristics that will support important populations of invertebrates, fungi, birds, and small mammals associated with large old trees. The pond and stream will remain a unique feature of the woodland; providing an essential water source for the wildlife using the site and adding a sense of tranquillity for human visitors to the site.

Low-key access provisions will be maintained to ensure the public continue to enjoy safe and open access to Nellington Wood. This includes annual management of entrances, infrastructure, and paths and removal of any dangerous or fallen trees in these areas. The wood will be made as safe as practical for visitors and neighbours through regular tree safety inspections along the paths and boundaries with roads and housing. Any trees felled for safety concerns, will be left in situ to provide valuable deadwood habitat.

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

Nellington Wood is a small (2.2 ha) remnant of ancient woodland. The steep sided valley in which this woodland sits proved historically impossible to cultivate, meaning this site has been wooded for centuries and as a result, has become a small refuge for ancient woodland species.

The underlying slightly acid loamy and clayey soil is slowly permeable and prone to waterlogging. This soil type is of moderate to high fertility and supports a wide range of pasture and woodland types. Nellington Wood is no exception as it displays a diversity of tree, shrub, and ground flora species. Maturing oak, beech and sweet chestnut are the dominant canopy species, with some holly reaching canopy heights (>12m) and only rare ash trees. Of the large exotic species in the wood the most notable still standing is the London plane (*Platanus x hispanica*) growing by the stream. Other species present include birch, sycamore, rowan, wild cherry, and lime with alder and willow along the stream. The understorey is dominated by holly, though some hazel, hawthorn, and yew is also present, mainly in the valley bottom near the stream. The holly, particularly in the areas heavily hit by the 1987 windstorm along the eastern and southern boundaries, continues to grow from the horizontal stems, forming extensive heavily shading thickets. The ground flora in these light-limited areas is sparse. In more open areas, the ground flora contains a high proportion of bramble; though other woodland plants such as bluebell, lesser celandine, cleavers, and lords and ladies can also be observed. Young sycamore saplings and ash suffering from ash dieback dominate the regenerating tree species.

The wood had been heavily modified by the planting and encroachment of non-native trees and shrubs, such as red oak, cherry laurel and bamboo. Though much was removed under previous management cycles, laurel and bamboo regeneration continue to sprout up annually.

Situated at the head of a small stream, in a steep sided valley, the wood has the moist, warm microclimate associated with gill woodland throughout the High Weald of Kent and Sussex. These conditions allow ferns, mosses and liverworts to thrive. Other woodland specialist ground flora species present include bluebells, primroses and golden saxifrage.

The pond provides a habitat for newts, frogs and toads and has previously even had small fish present. However pollution, choking invasive non-native species such as water fern and parrot's feather, and disturbance from dogs has reduced the ecological health of the pond habitat.

Significance

The amount of ancient semi natural woodland (ASNW) left in Britain has been drastically reduced over the last century. Approximately 40% of England's ASNW is found in the southeast. ASNW is very important due to the continuity of woodland cover over hundreds of years, in which time a diverse range of woodland habitats has developed that supports a correspondingly diverse range of flora and fauna. This diversity cannot be found in younger secondary woodland or woodland creation sites.

Gill woodland of the High Weald provides a stable moist micro-climate which favours a rich growth of ferns and bryophytes. The sheltered, damp gills provide ideal living conditions for ferns, mosses, liverworts and lichens. Many of these species are more characteristic of the mild and humid oceanic climate of Wales and Cornwall than that of the South East.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

- Silvicultural management is restricted by the steep terrain, small size, and regularly waterlogged soils. The steps leading from the main entrance also make vehicular access extremely difficult.

Opportunities:

- To work with local visitors on improving pond health (i.e. litter removal, weed pulling, education to limit dogs entering the pond and preventing debris build-up of the pond overflow).

Factors Causing Change

- Animal damage (i.e. squirrel and rabbit browsing of tree and shrub regeneration and badgers altering the woodland floor);
- Wind damage uprooting mature shrubs and trees, likely to worsen with the increase in extreme weather events associated with climate change; ;
- Tree disease, such as ash dieback will have a small effect due to the low numbers of the tree species, but the wood may lose all remaining individuals;
- Sycamore seedlings are dominating tree regeneration in more open areas and so the percentage of sycamore present in the canopy is likely to increase overtime;
- Constant regeneration of invasive species, such as cherry laurel and bamboo as well as the potential for other garden escapees from neighbouring properties;
- Invasive nature of holly on site is shading out the ground flora;
- Garden waste along shared boundaries; and
- The pond and stream receiving large amounts of polluted run-off from the road during heavy rain.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long term objective will be to support structurally diverse, resilient ancient woodland, comprising predominately native broadleaf species. Ancient woodland components will continue to be evident and lower storeys secured by natural regeneration. A younger age class of trees will be present in gaps created by the felling carried out under tree risk management or natural death of older trees and by minor management works. The understory will comprise of native shrubs with a ground layer of specialist woodland plants and ancient woodland indicator species. Invasive non-natives will not be posing a threat to the establishment and growth of native trees and shrubs, nor will holly be left to dominate the understory. Good deadwood habitat will be present through standing and fallen dead trees and ancient living trees. Veteran trees of the future will be developing in character. The health of the pond and stream, with respect to invasive species, litter, and erosion will be protected as part of the general woodland monitoring programme, whereby corrective actions are taken as required.

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

In the next five years, the main objective for this ancient woodland site will be to retain its varied composition and structural diversity and control invasive non-native species. This can be achieved with the following management activities:

- Annual monitoring for tree hazards in garden and road boundary trees (Zone A) and every two years along footpaths (Zone B); address any safety concerns as required. Felled trees will be left on site to add important deadwood features to the site.
- Removal of cherry laurel and bamboo regen throughout the site for the first two years (2020 and 2021), focusing particularly along the stream and the valley bottom. Monitor for success of removal and rate of regeneration.
- General pond maintenance to repair the dam and overflow mechanism as required. An action is scheduled for 2019.
- Monitor holly regeneration and target removal along the path networks, if required.

5.2 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

Nellington Wood is situated between the villages of Rusthall and Langton Green in the outskirts of Tunbridge Wells, Kent. The woodland is surrounded on three sides by residential development. The main entrance off of Nellington Road is less than 200m from Rusthall High Street. Rusthall is a modern village of nearly 5000 residents and a further 5000 residents live in the neighbouring ward of Speldhurst (which includes Langton Green).

The woodland is 1 of only 17 sites designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Value by the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. These are sites that have been assessed as important to local communities, particularly in urban areas, as they provide residents with an opportunity for direct contact with nature. Nellington Wood is a Woodland Trust access category B site, seeing moderate regular usage each day. The main visitors are local dog walkers.

The site can be accessed via three pedestrian entrances (squeeze gaps). One off Nellington Road in the south-east of the site (main entrance), one off the public footpath to the south of the site, and one off the public footpath to the north of the site. Paths from these entrance points link to a short level circular route up and down both sides of the stream. None of the paths are surfaced and are prone to becoming muddy, particularly in wet weather.

The stream is crossed via a narrow wooden footbridge in the north and a railed boardwalk over the dam that forms the pond in the south. There are rustic steps leading down the valley from the two entrances in the south and a relatively new handrail has been installed parallel to the steps leading from the main entrance. As mentioned, the pond was created by damming up the stream and installing an L-shaped culvert with overflow, to prevent excessive flooding. The water level fluctuates with precipitation and can raise quickly following road-surface run-off in heavier rains. The overflow mechanism must be cleared from time to time as it gets filled with sticks and debris, jamming the flow.

The main entrance, including vehicle gate and breadboard signage was updated in 2017.

Significance

It has been proven that access to woodland provides an improved quality of life, with benefits to both mental and physical health. Despite being a small site, Nellington Wood provides the local community with easy access to woodland, with fantastic spring flowers and wildlife interest, due to the fact that the wood is ancient and that there is a stream running through the central valley of the site.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

- There is limited parking near the wood, with only residential roadside parking available.
- The relatively small size of the wood means that visits are likely to be of short duration.
- The woodland is situated in a valley meaning that the steep gradients from the two southern entrances could limit accessibility for some potential users.

Opportunities:

- Though this tends to be a quiet site, a woodland warden would be a welcome addition to carry out simple litter picks, clearing away stream blockages, posting important notices at entrances, and reporting vandalism or hazardous trees to the Woodland Trust.

Factors Causing Change

- The paths are prone to seasonal water-logging which leads to path creep widening bare-ground surfaces.
- The design of the pond means that the overflow mechanism can easily be jammed by people throwing branches etc. into it and requires manual removal of debris to return to normal function. This scenario can also lead to flooding and exacerbate the issues of path creep near the pond.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The wood will remain an attractive and popular place for local people to walk-in, explore, learn, and enjoy. Free and open access will continue through a well maintained but low key suite of visitor facilities suitable to the small size and frequency of visitors to the site. The water features will continue to be a unique woodland feature, adding tranquillity to the visitor experience.

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

During this plan period, the short term objective is to continue to provide safe and open access at Nellington Wood. This will be achieved by:

- Annual monitoring for tree hazards in garden and road boundary trees (Zone A) and every two years along footpaths (Zone B); address any safety concerns as required.
- An annual path cut and entrance maintenance (summer).
- Renewing the small welcome signs at the southern and northern entrances in 2020.
- Infrastructure (steps, access points, and footbridges) to be monitored annually and maintained/replaced as necessary.

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	2.20	Mixed broadleaves	1850	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site, Site structure, location, natural features & vegetation, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Connecting People with woods & trees	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Green Belt, Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance

Small urban-fringe ASNW. Two storied structure with oak, beech and sweet chestnut as dominant canopy species. Understorey species include hazel, holly, goat willow, rowan, sycamore. Ground flora species include bluebells, bramble, ferns and mosses. There are also some mature exotic tree species such as London plane, red oak and horse chestnut. The site suffered extensive windblow during the storm of 1987. A small stream crosses the site from SE to NW. There is a small in-line pond with dam and overflow. The terrain slopes towards the stream, steeply in places. Soils: slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with seasonal waterlogging. The surrounding landuse is predominantly residential housing with some grassland and woodland to the north.

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.