



Rushlye 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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Rushlye Wood
Location:	Bells Yew Green, Frant
Grid reference:	TQ609364, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 188
Area:	4.38 hectares (10.82 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Tree Preservation Order

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Perfect for an afternoon stroll after a pub lunch or watching a game of cricket, this small ancient woodland, dominated by coppiced chestnut and birch, is abundant with spring flowers and a perfect habitat for butterflies with its wide rides.

2.2 Extended Description

Rushlye Wood is small ancient semi-natural woodland on the edge of the village of Bells Yew Green, near Tunbridge Wells, in the East Sussex part of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It was acquired by the Woodland Trust from a private landowner in 1988. Previously it had been part of the Camden Estate.

Up until the late 1970's the wood contained many mature trees, both conifer and broadleaved. Most of these trees were illegally felled and extracted in 1979 leaving the wood in very poor condition. The mature trees that were left standing around the western and southern boundary and in the roadside strip following this felling were protected by Tree Preservation Orders in 1980 and 1984.

Subsequently the understorey of mainly sweet chestnut coppice has re-grown and birch regeneration has filled many of the gaps created by the felling. In addition the central part of the main wood and the roadside strip were planted with native broadleaves in 1991. The poor condition of the wood was exacerbated by the presence of invasive and ecologically-damaging cherry laurel, *Rhododendron ponticum* and *Lonicera nitida* (shrub honeysuckle). These species have been cleared and subsequent re-growth sprayed with herbicide. The ride network within the wood has also been widened to prevent heavy shading as the surrounding trees grow.

Ground flora includes extensive bluebell as well as wood anemone, yellow pimpernel and ferns as well as much bramble and bracken.

The wood is reached from Bells Yew Green cricket field across which there is public and management access by permission of the Camden Estate (via their agents, Cluttons). There is a good network of rides within the main wood which is mainly used by local dog-walkers.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

General location:

Rushlye Wood is situated in the village of Bells Yew Green, near Tunbridge Wells. The wood is accessible via the cricket ground to the north-east of the village centre. From the cross-roads the entrance to the cricket ground is approx 200m along Hawkenbury Road (narrow, no pavements) and Cricketers Close.

General overview of paths & entrances:

The only entrance into the wood is a narrow kissing gate (adjacent to a field gate) from the cricket ground. The rides within the wood form several loops. They are unsurfaced with either grass or bare earth. In some places they are uneven and there are occasional wet areas. The rides are generally level.

Parking:

The only car parking in the village is at the train station (pay and display) approx 600m from the wood. From the station the wood is reached by walking south along the B2169 to the cross-roads and then turning left onto Hawkenbury Road (no pavements).

Public Transport:

Nearest rail station: Frant (Bells Yew Green), approx 600m from the entrance to the wood.

Nearest bus stop: Bells Yew Green cross-roads, approx 300m from the wood. There are several services per day from Tunbridge Wells and Lamberhurst. Information obtained from Traveline website on 23/11/2006.

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 are at Linden Park Road, The Pantiles, Tunbridge Wells, approximately 3 miles away. There are disabled toilets accessible with a RADAR key, available from the tourist office in The Pantiles. Opening hours: 7am-7pm. Parking available within 100m.

Information correct as at 22/11/2006. Further information is available from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Environmental Services (www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk).

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The wood will largely be left to develop by natural processes. The small size of the wood with its predominantly young tree stock and poor management access largely excludes a policy of active silvicultural intervention. The wood will be kept free of any damaging invasive species such as rhododendron and cherry laurel. The ride network will require periodic management to keep the wood accessible by visitors and to maintain a small percentage of open canopy across the site. Where safe to do so, standing deadwood will be retained.

Over time some of the remaining mature canopy trees, particularly oak, will develop veteran characteristics that will support important populations of invertebrates, fungi, birds and mammals associated with old trees. Tree diseases may alter the species composition of the wood, reducing the current dominance of sweet chestnut

Low-level public access will continue with appropriate maintenance of the ride network. it is not anticipated that visitor numbers will increase significantly and visitors will still largely be residents of Bells Yew Green, accessing the site on foot.

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

Rushlye Wood is an ancient woodland which is now recovering to a semi-natural condition following a period of commercial timber management and exploitation and a subsequent invasion by ecologically-damaging species such as cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), *Rhododendron ponticum* and *Lonicera nitida*. These species have now largely been eradicated. There are several large sections of timber left from this period which now add to the decaying wood component of the site.

The woodland is classed as NVC W10a (oak/bracken/bramble, typical subcommunity) on acidic, seasonally-waterlogged soils. The dominant tree species is coppiced sweet chestnut with abundant birch. Semi-mature oak, beech and sweet chestnut are restricted to the western part of the wood. Other species include crab apple, yew, holly, rowan, hawthorn, broom and hazel. Much of the chestnut coppice is in very poor condition, suffering from ink disease (*Phytophthora* spp) and subsequent windblow.

The ground flora includes abundant bramble, bracken and honeysuckle and has good displays of bluebells and wood anemones. There is a network of grassy rides throughout the wood.

The roadside strip (Cpt 1b) is secondary woodland and contains mature oak, beech, Douglas fir and Scots pine with birch and holly.

Significance

Ancient woodland now occupies only 2% of land in the UK. It is home to more threatened species than any other habitat in the UK. Rushlye Wood is within the High Weald area of ancient woodland concentration.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: small site with poor management access; gas pipeline.

Factors Causing Change

Natural succession to high forest.

Squirrel and deer damage.

Invasive holly.

Tree disease: ink disease in sweet chestnut.

Decline in mature trees along SE boundary due to recent developments on the adjoining cricket ground (raised ground level/trenching).

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The wood should continue to develop its semi-natural characteristics with long-lived mature trees such as oak and sweet chestnut beginning to develop veteran tree characteristics. Unmanaged coppice and maturing birch will collapse in places to create gaps for subsequent tree regeneration. Species such as birch and holly should continue to thrive but sweet chestnut may become much less dominant due to disease.

Ground flora associated with ancient woodland such as bluebells and wood anemones should continue to spread without being threatened by invasive species such as laurel, rhododendron and Lonicera and to a lesser extent holly.

The rides will be well-defined providing some open canopy across the site.

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

During the plan period the wood will be managed as necessary to maintain the ride network, ensure invasive species are controlled and deal with hazardous trees.

- Annual Zone A tree safety survey (alternating summer and autumn). Particular attention to be given to trees adjoining cricket ground. Next due: summer 2018.
- Ride management. Assess and mark trees (May) and carry out work (Sept-Oct) (2020).
- Woodland condition assessment to inform management plan review including presence of invasives, tree disease etc. (2022).

5.2 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

The main part of the wood can be accessed from Cricketers Close, Bells Yew Green, via the western edge of the cricket field. This access has been permitted by the Executors of Lord Camden via their agents RH and RW Clutton (East Grinstead). There is a squeeze gap leading into the wood and onto a network of unsurfaced rides throughout the site. These rides are currently maintained annually but can be wet and muddy in places. The wood is mainly used by local dog walkers from the adjoining village. It has a WT access category C: low usage (fewer than 5 visitors per day) with maintained paths.

Significance

This is a significant area of amenity land on the edge of a small village.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: permissive public access to the site is only at the discretion of Bayham Estate Land Agents; no parking nearby.

Opportunities: to provide low-key public access to woodland in an area of largely privately owned woodland

Factors Causing Change

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The site will continue to be used and enjoyed by the local population. The entrance will have appropriate access infrastructure and signage in keeping with its setting and low-key use. A significant increase in visitor numbers is not anticipated.

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

The ride network will be maintained as necessary to permit continued safe access.

- Annual strimming of ride edges.
- Biennial Zone B tree safety survey. Next due: summer 2019.
- Assessment of access infrastructure and signage to inform management plan review (2022)

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	4.02	Sweet chestnut	1980	Min-intervention	Services & wayleaves	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Connecting People with woods & trees	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Tree Preservation Order
<p>A small isolated ASNW - NVC W10a. Poor quality sweet chestnut coppice (approx 30 years old) with naturally regenerated birch. Some mature oak and beech remain mainly on the western side. P91 restocking (oak, wild cherry, beech) in centre of wood. Other tree species include beech, rowan, holly and aspen. Ground flora includes bramble, bracken, honeysuckle, bluebell and wood anemone. The whole site formerly had extensive areas of invasive cherry laurel and Rhododendron ponticum which have now been cleared. The wood is surrounded by a mixture of farmland, housing, light industry and a cricket ground.</p>							
1b	0.30	Mixed broadleaves	1900	Min-intervention	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Connecting People with woods & trees	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Tree Preservation Order
<p>A strip of mixed woodland between Bells Yew Green cricket ground and Hawkenbury Road. It contains some mature trees including birch, oak, beech, sweet chestnut, Douglas fir and Scots pine. There is an understorey of planted and naturally regenerated trees including wild cherry, rowan, oak, beech, hazel, elder and ash. Along the roadside there is extensive cherry laurel. Ground flora is dominated by bracken and bramble.</p>							

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.