



Butcher's Wood

Management Plan 2017-2022

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Butcher's Wood
Location:	Hassocks
Grid reference:	TQ303149, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 198
Area:	7.03 hectares (17.37 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Landscape Value, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc), National Park

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Butcher's Wood lies in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Ancient oak woodland is complimented by hazel, bluebells and other flora. A good network of paths gives easy access, although the site is prone to seasonal water-logging

2.2 Extended Description

Butchers Wood is a small (7.12ha) ancient semi-natural woodland at the northern extremity of the South Downs National Park in West Sussex. It is situated just outside of the village of Hassocks, between Burgess Hill to the north and Brighton to the south. The wood was originally part of the Danny Estate and was acquired by the Trust in December 1988, with funding from Mid Sussex District Council, The West Sussex Gazette, Clayton Parish Council and Hassocks Amenity Society.

The wider landscape surrounding Butchers Wood is a patchwork of field systems and housing, interspersed with relatively small scale woods, with the downs and coast to the south. To the north of the wood is the residential area of Hassocks. To the east runs a stream, with grazed fields beyond. To the west is a public footpath running beside the London to Brighton railway line. To the southwest is a meadow separating the wood from Lag Wood. To the southeast is Woodbine Cottage which includes a small part of the wood. The site is bounded on three sides by a chain-link fence (within the Trust's ownership) and to the north by garden fencing.

The terrain is very level, with the soil consisting of heavy Gault Clay which is prone to seasonal water logging. It has a high forest structure with oak as the main canopy tree and hazel as the main understorey species. There is a rich ancient woodland ground flora including extensive bluebells. Much of the hazel understorey has been coppiced in recent years by the Butcher's Wood Volunteers and in 1998, 2001 & 2003 a programme of selective thinning of the oak canopy was carried out.

The wood is accessible from public footpaths to the west and south and there is a good network of paths and rides allowing access to all parts of the site.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

General location:

Butcher's Wood is situated approximately 400 metres south of the village of Hassocks. It can be reached from the village centre by the public footpath that runs alongside the railway. The wood can also be reached from Clayton to the south via two public footpaths.

General overview of paths & entrances:

There are two kissing gates that lead directly into the wood from the public footpath that runs alongside the railway on the west boundary. There is also a stile on the southern boundary. The wood has many rides and smaller paths throughout. They are all unsurfaced and are very muddy after wet weather. The site is level.

Parking:

There is no car park at the wood. There is limited on-street parking in the residential area to the north of the wood.

Public Transport:

Nearest train station: Hassocks, approx 400m from the wood.

Nearest bus stop: Keymer Road, Hassocks, approx 400m from the wood via the public footpath. There are regular services throughout the day. Further information on public transport can be obtained from Traveline: www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk or tel: 0870 608 2 608).

Public Toilets:

Nearest public toilets are at Adastra Park, Hassocks, approx ½ mile away. There are disabled facilities accessible with a RADAR key. Information obtained from Mid Sussex DC website on 5/2/2007 (www.midsussex.gov.uk).

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

In the long-term (50 years plus) Butchers Wood will continue to be characterised by its thriving hazel coppice understorey, with native canopy species such as oak and hornbeam overhead, and ancient woodland ground flora continuing to dominate the woodland floor.

As the wood is small in scale, the surrounding land (designated SNCI) provides the diversity of habitat (e.g. open space, other woodland types, watercourses, scrub and hedgerows) that Butchers Wood alone cannot provide. Therefore, Butchers Wood can function and be managed predominantly as a coppice component of a wider mixed landscape, and does not need to provide an extensive variety of habitats.

Therefore, with coppice being the woods most significant feature, management will continue to focus on promoting a variety of structure and vegetation with the continued coppicing of hazel. However, a small proportion of hazel stools will be retained un-coppiced for longer periods to add to the diversity of age classes and increase old growth habitat niches in the understorey.

The woodland canopy will evolve naturally, as the small scale of the site does not lend itself to silvicultural intervention. Species will fluctuate according to natural conditions, with notable tree diseases (e.g. ash dieback) altering the canopy composition. While certain species may diminish (e.g. ash), other species (e.g. hornbeam and possibly oak) are likely to thrive in the changing conditions, such as increasing light levels created by the loss of trees in the canopy.

Dead or dying trees will only be felled if they pose a safety risk, and where possible the resulting wood will be stacked within the wood to increase dead wood habitat. Where dead trees do not pose a safety risk they will be left to provide valuable standing deadwood habitat. Non-native invasive species such as laurel will be removed.

By maintaining the existing network of permissive paths people will be encouraged to visit the wood. Infrastructure (gates, stiles, fences etc) will be maintained and the access provision will be monitored to ensure it is suitable for the level of use.

Continued support will be given to the volunteer group to encourage the local community to stay involved with caring for Butchers Wood.

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

Butcher's Wood is a small fragment of ancient woodland, typical of woods on heavy clay in the Low Weald of Sussex. It has a diverse tree, shrub and ground flora including many woodland specialist plants. The wood has probably been heavily modified by historic management including the planting of pedunculate oak approx 100 years ago, and has moved away from traditional coppice with standards management. This has led to a significant part of the wood (particularly the eastern part) having a high forest structure with many tall oaks with small crowns. Under this canopy there still remains an understorey dominated by hazel. In other parts of the wood the canopy also includes overstood ash and hornbeam coppice as well as frequent aspen and birch, and a few remaining large pines (Corsican and Scots). The understorey also contains field maple, hawthorn, blackthorn, crab apple, privet and goat willow.

The ground flora includes abundant bluebells along with wood anemones, yellow archangel, early purple orchid, moschatel, enchanter's nightshade and various woodland sedges.

The original footprint of the wood appears to have been reduced in modern times due to housing development to the north. It has also been fragmented by the railway to the west, as part of the wood still exists to the west of the railway. There is a woodbank along the boundary between the wood and the small meadow/secondary wood to the east (subcpt 1b).

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 and woodland creation sites.

Broadleaved woodland is the most extensive semi-natural habitat in Sussex. Much of this woodland is, like Butcher's Wood, ancient in origin and thus of high nature conservation value. Butcher's Wood forms a natural barrier against further building development and provides a link for wildlife and people to the wider countryside and the South Downs. Butcher's Wood is locally renowned for its spectacular display of bluebells in spring. Ancient woodland is irreplaceable and the prevention of its loss is one of the main aims of the Trust.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

Silvicultural management is restricted by the wet clay soils, long extraction route, small site area and visitor numbers.

Factors Causing Change

Animal damage e.g. deer browsing of hazel coppice and squirrel damage. These influences on the wood will be monitored through regular observation, in particular to assess the regeneration of hazel after coppicing.

Natural regeneration of oak, ash, hornbeam etc

Colonisation of remnant meadow (cpt 1b) by oak (and currently ash), scrub and ASNW ground flora. Ash dieback is present and will affect the ash within the wood and surrounding landscape. This is likely to have a significant impact on the structure of the woodland, creating open areas where ash diminishes, giving opportunity for other species to establish in their place. There is likely to be an increase in dead wood as a result of the disease and this will be retained on site where possible, in places where it does not present a hazard to neighbours or visitors to the wood.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The ASNW wood will be characterised by its thriving hazel coppice understorey, native canopy species such as oak and hornbeam overhead, and ancient woodland ground flora continuing to dominate the woodland floor.

A variety of structure and vegetation will be evident with varying re-growth of coppiced hazel, and the retention of a small proportion of un-coppiced hazel stools.

The woodland canopy will evolve naturally, with species fluctuating according to natural conditions; however, a minimum of 50% total canopy cover will be present across the wood.

There will be an abundant level of dead wood on the woodland floor and standing dead wood retained where it does not present a hazard.

Non-native invasive species will be kept in check through appropriate management.

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

To sustain or increase the diversity of understorey, regeneration and structure in the woodland over the 5 year plan period. This will be achieved through the following:

- An area of approximately 0.25 hectares of hazel will be coppiced annually by volunteers. Other understorey species such as hawthorn and field maple will be left to establish, and dead wood and beneficial wildlife features (e.g. rotting stumps and trailing honeysuckle) will be retained. Some of the coppiced wood will also be retained in small log-piles to increase dead wood habitat.
- Compartment 1b will be mown annually in August after flowering, to encourage colonisation of ground flora and to maintain the semi-open habitat that this compartment provides.
- A deer impact assessment will be carried out in 2020 to monitor the impact of deer on regeneration of vegetation in the woodland. Re-growth of the coppiced understorey should reach 1.5m in height within 3 years.
- A woodland condition assessment (WCA) will be carried out in 2022 to assess the composition of the woodland to measure against the 2017 WCA to identify if current operations are sustaining or increasing diversity in the wood.

5.2 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

Butcher's Wood is situated approximately 400 metres south of Hassocks, a large village with a population of over 7500 people. It can be reached from the village centre by the public right of way footpath that runs alongside the railway, and also from Clayton, a smaller village to the south, via two public footpaths.

The footpath alongside the railway leads to the west boundary of the wood, and there are two kissing gates that lead directly into the wood from there. There is also a stile on the southern boundary which is accessible from the footpath alongside the railway via a short walk through a small privately owned meadow adjoining the wood. A trip to Butchers wood could be one stop in a wider visit to the South Downs either on foot by heading south on the public footpath alongside the railway, or by train from the station at Hassocks. Alternatively, a visit to Butchers Wood could be combined with a visit to the Woodland Trusts Costells Wood, at Scaynes Hill, approximately 9 miles north, just off of the A272.

On first impressions Butchers Wood appears hidden away, but immediately upon entering the wood you will have access to a network of unsurfaced rides and paths which allow access through the entire wood. The terrain is very flat, and paths can become muddy and waterlogged during and following wet weather, but with a range of routes to choose from, it should always be possible to walk in the wood even in the wettest weather. Nevertheless wellingtons are strongly advised in wet weather!

Most of the woodland paths are flanked by hazel which forms wooded 'corridors' to walk through, with taller oak, ash and field maple overhead. Some paths will pass through temporarily open areas, which have been created by the local resident volunteer group who coppice the hazel each winter, to help sustain the fantastic array of woodland wildflowers that grow in the wood, and to increase the diversity of shrub growth, which benefits wildlife. The volunteer group has been going for over 25 years, and there are currently around 20 volunteers who meet regularly on weekends in the winter to coppice the hazel, and they are always looking for new recruits to join them!

The woodland wildflowers form a spectacular carpet in spring, with bluebells being the main attraction. They are extremely sensitive to disturbance so visitors must stick to the main paths, and in recently coppiced areas the volunteers stack cut branches as dead hedges to direct visitors to minimise trampling of ground flora. For a special trip to see the bluebells look out for guided walks lead by local conservation groups, advertised on the noticeboard at the Northwest entrance or on the trusts website.

A walk to the eastern edge of the wood leads to a more open wooded meadow, alongside the Lag stream. The wetter nature of this area is given away by the presence of stream-side willow and alder trees.

Exiting the wood via the stile on the south boundary leads to the meadow and adjacent Lag Wood which are both privately owned but publically accessible. The footpath alongside the railway is also accessible from here via a short walk west, through the meadow.

Significance

It has been proven that access to woodland provides an improved quality of life, with benefits to both mental and physical health. Butcher's 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.

A deeper personal connection with the wood exists for those people who choose to volunteer there. Local residents take pride in their active coppicing in a tradition that reaches back for hundreds of years, and gain an increased sense of community through socialising with like-minded neighbours and by having an active role in the conservation of their local wood. As well as providing an ecological benefit to the woodland, the coppiced areas also provide visitors with continual interest as the hazel re-grows and the wildlife that inhabits it varies from year to year.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

There is limited parking near the wood, with only residential roadside parking available. The relatively small size of the wood also means that visits are likely to be of short duration, and possibly as part of a wider walk or day trip to other locations. Therefore, current access infrastructure is proportionate to visitor numbers and use of the wood.

Wet ground conditions will lead to some damage to paths and ground flora due to trampling, and the largest numbers of visitors are likely to be attracted to the wood in the spring and summer, particularly when woodland ground flora is flowering.

Opportunities:

New volunteers are always welcome to join the existing volunteer group to help with hazel coppicing in the winter.

Factors Causing Change

Hazel coppicing - Immediately after coppicing, new areas of the wood may appear open to public access, and sensitive ground flora may be damaged by trampling. Dead hedging will be used to direct visitors to the main paths to minimise trampling of ground flora in coppiced areas.

Ash dieback - The impact of this disease may lead to increased dead wood and trees, and will be assessed in tree inspections due to public access to the wood.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The wood will remain accessible via the network of rides and paths throughout the site. Visitors from further afield will have an interesting stop-off point on their journey in the wider countryside, and local residents will treasure the wood as a peaceful place to walk, picnic, or soak up the sights and sounds of nature. The wood will strengthen community spirit by providing a place for volunteer and forest school opportunities for those who wish to be more active in the wood.

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

During this plan period, the short term objective is to continue to provide public access at Butcher's Wood which is safe and enjoyable, and to enable the local volunteer group to continue conservation activities within the wood. This will be achieved by:

- Installing a new noticeboard opposite the northwest entrance to the wood in 2018.
- Strimming and cutting back vegetation along the main paths and entrances annually.
- Carrying out annual tree inspections and remedial work in line with the trusts Tree Risk Management policy.
- Carrying out an annual infrastructure inspection to assess the condition of all structures within the wood (e.g. gates, stiles etc).
- Providing the volunteer Woodland Working Group with specific annual conservation tasks such as hazel coppicing.

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	6.65	Oak (pedunculate)	1900	High forest	Mostly wet ground/exposed site	Connecting People with woods & trees	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Landscape Value, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc), National Park
ASNW. Predominantly oak (P1900) over hazel. Other species include coppiced ash, hornbeam and field maple with aspen, birch and the occasional Corsican and Scots pine.							
1b	0.40	Open ground	1900	Non-wood habitat		Connecting People with woods & trees	Area of Landscape Value, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc), National Park
Secondary woodland with oak and ash, and open ground in the form of a remnant meadow. ASNW ground flora and scrub are colonising the edges of the open ground. Mature oak, alder and ash are present adjacent to Lag stream on the East boundary.							

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.