



Beacon Wood

Management Plan 2015-2020

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Beacon Wood
Location:	Loxley
Grid reference:	SK297895, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 110
Area:	2.78 hectares (6.87 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Tree Preservation Order

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Close to Sheffield city centre in the valley of the River Loxley. A network of footpaths provide excellent links between the city and the moorland of the National Park. Visitors to Beacon Wood are estimated to exceed 2,000 per year.

2.2 Extended Description

The Woodland Trust purchased the land from a private owner on the 22nd May 1989. This ancient oak woodland is located just off the western fringe of Sheffield, in a narrow band between the city and the Peak District National Park (which lies a further 1.5km to the west.) Public access to the site is provided directly from Rowel Lane, which links the B6077 at Loxley to the B6076 at Hill Top. Well-wooded valleys dissect a landscape of dry stonewalls and pasture. Beacon Wood is located in the valley of the River Loxley that has a steep and extensively wooded southern valley side much of which has been identified as ancient in origin.

Major blocks of this woodland are contiguous with the site to the northwest and southeast. Together they impose a dramatic impact on the landscape being highly visible from Loxley, the B6077 and public rights of way which traverse the opposite valley side. The site itself rises besides the broad and shallow River Loxley up a 50m north facing escarpment to a public right of way where the slope breaks to a shallower 40 degree incline. Towards the northern bounds of the wood the abruptness of the slope softens to a steady 35 degree incline. The soil is generally rich and fresh with a boggy

area below a spring issuing from the sites centre.

The site lays a mere six kilometres from the city centre, the nearest suburb of which is Stannington 300m along one of several footpaths to the east. Where these paths emerge on Rowel Lane they link in with the site's main public access point, in the south-eastern extremity of the wood. From here a public right of way continues into the site, ascends a flight of steps and follows a wide break in slope at the top of the escarpment. It heads in a north-westerly direction to the sites northern entrance where welcome signage has been installed. This right of way forms part of an intricate and varied network of footpaths and trails the river providing excellent links between the city and the moorland of the National Park beyond. The valley of the River Loxley is extremely popular for recreation and visitors to Beacon Wood have been estimated to exceed 2000 per year.

This ancient woodland is known to have occupied this site for at least 400 years. A preliminary investigation into the site conducted by the Sheffield Wildlife Group indicated that in 1841 the wood was known as Baeon Wood a name derived from a previous owner A Mr Richard Baeon who purchased some land in 1604 in the area around Worth House (between Dungworth and Storrs). Woodland contiguous with the Trust's property to the north is noticeably lumpy as it contains the remains of many sunken air-raid shelters, which served the local factory during WWII when it was commissioned for the production of ordnance. (The timber removed in 1998 proved worthless to the contractor and had to be disposed of as it was full of bomb shrapnel . It was not even suitable to be used for firewood due to the danger when cutting). It has also been speculated that there could have been ganister quarrying in or near wood at some point in its history. The condition of the trees in the wood indicates it has been managed for broadleaved timber production.

This ancient woodland site is dominated by a canopy of well spaced (~20m apart), tall, mature trees that have obviously been well managed in the past for timber production. The oldest specimen trees are found congregated alongside the footpath. Mature sessile oak represents 75% of the canopy with two distinct age classes present; approximately p1910 (60%) and approximately p1870 (15%). Sycamores become prevalent on the escarpment slope (20%) with most age classes represented but predominantly p1945 with the odd p1870 specimen near the path. A few old beech (p1870) can also be found in the northwest of the wood (5%) scattered amongst the younger oak. The under storey is sparse and consists of the odd old rowan with holly, hawthorn, whitebeam, elder and hazel scattered thinly. Regeneration is confined to sycamore on the escarpment slope elsewhere little can be found later than p1940. A few elm suckers sprout from the rotting hulks of old trees that have succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease and it is this dead wood which forms an important component of this wood's structure. Much is present on the ground shaded by bramble as well as the odd rotting high stump. The site has an interesting groundflora. The top of the wood is dominated by a high mat of bramble whereas elsewhere open carpets of bluebells and woodrush can be found. Other ancient woodland indicator species include wood sorrel, wood anemone and yellow archangel. Bracken is present throughout as well as more common species like bistort, dock, nettle, stitchwort, creeping buttercup, rosebay willowherb, broadbuckler fern, male fern and cleavers.

The site received support from a WGS grant concerned mainly with improvements to woodland condition and public access. The first concentrated on the 0.5ha in the top of the wood with the selective felling of sycamore and replanting of oak in 1998. Consequently sycamore has been eradicated in this zone altogether however the failure of oak saplings to establish has led to a very open area of woodland covered with a dense bramble mat. The younger oaks p1910 within this area however are capable of closing most of these canopy gaps over time. In 2002 improvement to public

access involved the help of volunteers in the maintenance of steps and path improvements. Other more general activities on site have included monitoring of sycamore regeneration, litter collection, tree safety work, inspections and risk assessments, boundary maintenance, entrance and stile maintenance, the cutting back vegetation along paths and maintenance of welcome signage and seating. An additional length of permissive path looping through the top of the wood was abandoned when it was realised it was little used and expensive and impractical to maintain.

Where the site abuts pastureland to its south the boundary consists of dry stonewall in various states of repair. Where this is not stock proof in itself the neighbouring farmer has erected an additional post and wire fence alongside. Other boundaries with neighbouring woodland have been allowed to remain discrete with ownership lines demarcated by the occasional fence post or ivy clad remains of dry stonewall thereby allowing the wood to merge with its surroundings. The sites north eastern boundary is merely determined by the river and a continuation of its east west course where it turns north, nothing on the ground marks this demarcation however it roughly follows the top of an embankment before dropping across the escarpment to meet the river.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

ACCESS TO SITE

This ancient oak woodland is located just off the western fringe of Sheffield in a narrow band between the city and the Peak District National Park (which lies a further 1.5km to the west.) Public access to the site is provided directly from Rowel Lane, which links the B6077 at Loxley to the B6076 at Hill Top.

ENTRANCE AND FOOTPATHS

Direct from Rowel lane a public footpath passes into the site and ascends a flight of steps and follows a wide break in slope at the top of the escarpment. It heads in a northwesterly direction to the sites northern entrance where welcome signage has been installed. The path continues as part of the valley's intricate public right of way network. Permissive footpaths within the wood are unmodified earth tracks and are dry enough to make easy access throughout the wood for most of the year. The terrain is undulating in parts with small sections of steeper gradient

PARKING

Parking can be found in Rowel Lane nearly opposite the entrance to the wood in the bottom of the valley.

PUBLIC TOILETS

None known in the surrounding area

BUS STOPS

Situated on Rowel lane

TRAVEL INFORMATION

For train and bus information and timetables please access the traveline web link www.traveline.org.uk or phone 0870 608 2 608

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long-term intention is to maintain this ancient mixed broadleaved woodland through minimum intervention, allowing natural regeneration of all broadleaved tree species on site. Given time, the wood should naturally develop a more diverse age structure including an ongoing supply of decaying wood to increase and safeguard the continuity of the deadwood habitat. Open public access will be maintained and encouraged along the 300m public footpath which runs through the 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 Informal Public Access

Description

The site lies a mere six kilometres from the Sheffield city centre, the nearest suburb of which is Stannington 300m along one of several footpaths to the east. Where these paths emerge on Rowel Lane they link in with the site's main public access point, in the south eastern extremity of the wood. From here a public right of way continues into the site, ascends a flight of steps and follows a wide break in slope at the top of the escarpment. It heads in a northwesterly direction to the sites northern entrance where welcome signage has been installed.

The public footpath passing through Beacon Wood provides a key linkage within an intricate network of footpaths extending throughout this picturesque river valley; the network comprises an interesting and varied mix of environments allowing innumerable variation of routes for walkers. The site is readily accessible for a large population lying within close proximity and proves popular with runners, dog walkers and hikers heading into the National Park. The valley of the river Loxley is extremely popular for recreation and visitors to Beacon Wood have been estimated to exceed 2000 per year.

Significance

This is a very well used wood having excellent links with a large population of people from a city environment. It provides the Trust with an excellent opportunity to increase people's awareness and enjoyment of woodland. It is an integrated part of a picturesque river valley riddled with footpaths and provides a key linkage between this population centre and an interestingly varied range of countryside habitats

Opportunities & Constraints

Beacon Wood is well integrated with surrounding woodland some of which is also ancient in origin, this masks its small size and together with neighbouring pastureland could provide potential opportunities for expansion. The Waterwheel Trail, easy access routes managed by the local authority follows the opposite river bank and could potentially provide a popular short circuit used by locals.

Factors Causing Change

Path becoming braided due to extensive use, and due to becoming wet and boggy during heavy rain. Vandalism of roadside entrance and welcome signage

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To have a well-maintained footpath (300m) through the wood that enables good access all the year round from the 2 access points. To limit footpath erosion wherever practically possible.

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

Entrance signs at the two access points to be maintained at least once annually, together with one seat in the centre of the wood. The condition of the path surface and steps will be assessed and maintained on at least one occasion during the plan period.

5.2 Ancient Woodland Site

Description

This ancient woodland site is dominated by a canopy of well spaced oak and sycamore, with occasional beech. Sparse understorey consists of rowan with holly, hawthorn, whitebeam, elder and hazel scattered thinly. Regeneration is generally confined to sycamore on the escarpment slope. Bracken is present throughout, bramble dominates the upper slopes, with open carpets of bluebells and woodrush on the lower escarpments. Other ancient woodland indicator species include wood sorrel, wood anemone and yellow archangel.

Significance

The site provides the Trust with an opportunity to secure the care and management of an ancient woodland habitat. Beacon Wood links directly into another similar sized area of ancient woodland to the south that lies alongside the road to Storrs. A larger ancient woodland site lies approximately 0.5 miles away to the east alongside Stannington. Beacon Wood therefore compliments the woodland sites within the Loxley Valley.

Opportunities & Constraints

The site incorporates a rich deadwood habitat, which is likely to continue through minimum intervention. The site is dominated by mature to over mature native trees with limited natural regeneration. A few saplings, mainly sycamore are present along the escarpment, with oak being limited to a few isolated saplings. Natural regeneration will therefore need to be assessed in the future to ensure it is sufficient for the continuity of the woodland. Beacon Wood is well integrated with surrounding woodland some of which is also ancient in origin, this masks its small size and together with neighbouring pastureland could provide potential opportunities for expansion. The wood occupies a steep slope, which restricts vehicular access, and the site is boggy in the region of a central spring located below the footpath

Factors Causing Change

Invasive sycamore into pure oak stands, lack of native oak regeneration.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long-term intention is to maintain this ancient mixed broadleaved woodland through natural regeneration, including both tree and shrub species. Given time, the wood will hopefully naturally develop a more diverse age structure including an ongoing supply of decaying wood to increase and safeguard the continuity of the deadwood habitat.

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

To maintain as high forest mature woodland of mixed broadleaved trees of an uneven age structure, through minimum intervention which will mean no work is carried out on the woodland structure in the current plan period. Boundaries will be inspected and maintained on at least one occasion during the year. Regular tree safety inspections and work will be carried out in public areas and other high risk areas however standing deadwood will be retained as long as it does not present unacceptable risks.

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	2.79	Oak (sessile)	1910	Min-intervention	Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Woodland Site, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Tree Preservation Order

This steeply sloping riverside site is dominated by a canopy of well-spaced (~20m apart), tall, mature trees that appear to have been managed in the past for timber production. The oldest specimen trees are found congregated alongside the footpath. Mature sessile oak represents 75% of the canopy with two distinct age classes present; approximately p1910 (60%) and approximately p1870 (15%) found deeper into the wood. Sycamores become prevalent on the escarpment slope below the footpath (20%) with most age classes represented but predominantly p1945 with the odd p1870 specimen near the path. A few old beech (p1870) can also be found in the northwest of the wood (5%) scattered amongst the younger oak. The understorey is sparse and consists of the odd old rowan with holly, hawthorn, whitebeam, elder and hazel scattered thinly. Regeneration is confined to sycamore on the escarpment slope elsewhere little can be found later than p1940. A few elm suckers sprout from the rotting hulks of old trees that have succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease and it is this dead wood that forms an important component of this wood's structure. The site has an interesting groundflora. The top of the wood is dominated by a high mat of bramble whereas elsewhere open carpets of bluebells and woodrush can be found. Other ancient woodland indicator species include wood sorrel, wood anemone and yellow archangel. Bracken is present throughout as well as other common species like bistort, dock, nettle, stitchwort, creeping buttercup, rosebay willowherb, broadbuckler fern, male fern and cleavers. Bounded to the north by River Loxley and scattered woodland, pasture to the south and east with ancient woodland & new planting and with disused quarries to the west.

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.