WOODLAND TRUST

Durfold Wood

Management Plan 2017-2022

MANAGEMENT PLAN - CONTENTS PAGE

ITEM **Page No.**

MAPS

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Durfold Wood
Location:	Dunsfold
Grid reference:	SU987326, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 186
Area:	17.56 hectares (43.39 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Landscape Value, Site of Special Scientific Interest

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

War games were once played among the oak trees of Durfold Wood but today it is a peaceful part of the Surrey countryside. Set well away from main roads, it is a light and airy site within the much larger Chiddingfold Forest.

2.2 Extended Description

Durfold Wood is situated between the villages of Chiddingfold and Plaistow, in the Surrey Low Weald, 12 miles south of Guildford. The wood was purchased in 1989 with a major donation from Johnson Wax. The wood is part of the greater Chiddingfold Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest; designated as the largest oak woodland found on Weald Clay and for its significant butterfly and moth populations, including the wood white butterfly. This mature forest borders three quarters of Durfold Wood boundary with the remaining quarter neighbouring improved grassland and 20th century farm outbuildings near the car park. Chiddingfold Forest was once part of the Shillinglee Estate but is now sub-divided and under various ownerships, predominantly the Forestry Commission. Adjoining this area of woodland is the Surrey Hills Area of Great Landscape Value, designated by Surrey County Council for its scenic value, nestled between the South Downs National Park and the Surrey Hills Area Of Natural Beauty.

Durfold Wood is an ancient woodland site with acid oak and sweet chestnut woodland, of great wildlife interest. Only a few mature trees remain in the wood with most of the oak and chestnut dating back to around the 1950's. Many of oaks are now suffering from chronic oak decline, the effect of which is significant across the wood and the wider Chiddingfold Forest. Parts of the wood have been coppiced in the past while other areas have been clear-felled and now have the appearance of secondary woodland. There was also a small area of conifer (0.5ha) which has been gradually restored to secure broadleaf woodland.

The acid soil restricts the number of typical woodland wildflowers expected with bramble and bracken dominating open ground with patches of heather and bilberry. In the woodland glades and path edges, cow wheat, toad rush, fox gloves, wood sage, various ferns and St John’s wort spp. can be found. The woodland habitats support populations of dormice and tawny owls.

Situated on clay and having flat terrain, Durfold Wood has poor drainage and is usually wet throughout the winter months which can make access difficult. A narrow access strip leads to the wood from the car park. Footpaths run throughout the site and link with other paths on the southern boundary, including the Sussex Border Path. There is also a small segment of public bridleway that runs along the southern boundary of the site.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

General location:
Durfold Wood is located between the villages of Plaistow and Chiddingfold, 12 miles south of Guildford, Surrey. The wood is approx. 250m from the west along Fisher Lane from the Plaistow and Dunsfold road junction. Nearest postcode to car park is GU8 4TF, grid reference SU992330.

Parking:
There is a small car park off Fisher Lane, 250m from the Plaistow and Dunsfold road junction.

Public Transport:
There is a bus stop close by, at the junction of the road called 'Durfold Wood' and Dunsfold Road. From here follow Dunsfold Road north on to Plaistow Road and take the first left for Fisher Lane. The car park entrance is down Fisher Lane on the left hand side. For further information about public transport please contact Traveline - www.traveline.org.uk Tel: 0871 200 22 33

3.2 Access / Walks

General overview of paths and entrances:
The main entrance to the wood is at the northernmost point off Fisher Lane, where there is a small car park for visitors. There are two other public entrances at the southern edge of the wood, via a public bridleway (No. 509) which crosses the wood east-west. There are many other managed permissive paths around the wood, but all paths are unsurfaced and can become very muddy in places after wet weather, especially the south end of the wood. Please note that the track next to the eastern boundary of the wood is private and should not be used by visitors to our wood.

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

In fifty years' time, Durfold Wood will be a mixed broadleaf high forest, with a canopy diverse in species and age.

Natural processes will continue to shape the wood. The effect of tree disease will lead to a decline in the abundance of oak and sweet chestnut, contributing to important deadwood habitat both standing and fallen, of particular benefit for invertebrate and fungal communities. Regenerating species including silver birch, rowan, holly and hazel, will thrive in the newly formed canopy gaps and will become more prevalent. Saplings from the few remaining feature conifers will be monitored to ensure they continue to pose no threat to the native broadleaf species.

On-going monitoring will ensure access remains easy and safe. This will be achieved through a managed path and entrance network and regular safety inspections of site infrastructure and of higher risk tree zones.

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

Durfold Wood is an established, previously actively managed, mixed broadleaf woodland on the Weald Clay. Numerous water courses were built to divert water offsite and almost all paths through the wood were laid straight. The greatest period of activity probably occurred during the First and Second World Wars. Various management techniques were applied throughout this time to the different compartments. There are areas of former hazel coppice with oak standards, areas where standards (mainly oak and sweet chestnut) have been selectively felled, areas of sweet chestnut and oak coppice, and areas of regenerated broadleaves following clear felling. The last period of significant activity was during the 1950s/60s when the most recently established oaks and sweet chestnut were planted and the existing oaks and sweet chestnut were coppiced. Recent management by the Trust has been to remove non-native species such as Turkey oak, various conifers including Norway spruce, western hemlock and European larch, and invasive rhododendron. The Trust has also widened rides into large scallops in some places to enhance the diversity of the woodland ground flora. Following years of PAWS restoration, selected conifers have been retained as feature trees for visual and historical interest. The wood is homogeneous with the surrounding woodland blocks, apart from a Scots pine plantation along the southerly eastern ride. Overall, the structure and species composition of the wood is fairly diverse.

The presence of wild service trees in the southern part of the wood suggests the site has been consistently wooded for centuries and as such it supports rich biodiversity. Many oaks and sweet chestnuts are in continued decline and as a result the amount of standing and fallen deadwood has increased since the last plan period, a trend likely to continue. Combined with the past PAWS restoration and ride widening works, many areas of the canopy have opened up, changing the light levels reaching the woodland floor, these areas are mostly dominated by bracken and bramble, with patches of bilberry abundant in the south east of the site, and bryophytes in damper areas along the western edge. Woodland ground flora includes, cow wheat, wood avens, fox gloves, St John’s wort spp., wood sage, hard fern, wood sage and toad rush. Understory tree species include hazel, hawthorn, birch, rowan, elder and increasingly holly in small thickets in the central northern area of the wood. Holly has the potential to become dominant and invasive in the wood.

The wood has a fluctuating population of dormice and the 50 dormouse boxes throughout the wood are surveyed regularly by local volunteers.

Significance

Durfold Wood is within a SSSI covering Chiddingfold Forest which constitutes the largest virtually continuous block of oak woodland in Britain on Weald Clay. Although the wood has few trees older than 80-100 years, it harbours healthy wildlife populations with a mix of woodland habitats – high forest, woodland glades, open rides, holly thickets, and sweet chestnut and hazel coppice. In the wider forest, there are important Lepidoptera populations including wood white, grizzled skipper, forester and drab looper (to name a few), all of which are UK BAP priority species, now only found in localised areas of the south east. Although Durfold Wood is unlikely to become a permanent stronghold of these populations due to its poor drainage making it unsuitable for most butterfly food plants, it could provide a stepping stone, linking populations to other more suitable areas.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: wet conditions in the winter restrict access
Opportunities: liaise with the FC and FR over chronic oak dieback and how best to manage its effect across the forest block – current FC management is to maintain the woodland as high forest, reinstate sweet chestnut and hazel coppice

Factors Causing Change

Invasive species (rhododendron and holly)
Dieback of oaks and sweet chestnut
Increased deer and rabbit browsing preventing the development of regenerating species

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Durfold Wood will be maintained and enhanced by encouraging the continuation of the existing mixed-age, mixed species broadleaved woodland. Active management of rides and glades within the wood will encourage diversity in the ground flora, with a graded woodland edge benefiting the local Lepidoptera populations. Other broadleaf species such as rowan, silver birch, hazel, holly will become more frequent as the current dominant oak and sweet chestnut succumb to disease creating gaps in the canopy and significant dead-wood habitats. In some areas where the oak and sweet chestnut dieback is concentrated, small areas of semi-permanent open ground may develop, dominated by bracken and bramble. The wood will be free from damaging effects of invasive exotics such as western hemlock, Sitka spruce and rhododendron. A few conifers may be retained for visual and historical interest.

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

During the plan period management will be undertaken to improve drainage, control and monitor invasive species and improve the structural diversity of the wood.

- Four blocked culverts and associated ditches along the western ride will be cleared and guarded to improve drainage (2017).

- Rhododendron scattered over 0.7ha in the north-west corner of the site will be eradicated by uprooting and cutting repeatedly starting in March 2018.

- A ride management programme will be implemented across the site. Scrub in previously opened areas will be cut biennially and bracken controlled through whipping and mowing annually to enhance ground flora and encourage suitable Lepidoptera habitat. Total area to be kept open will be 0.92ha. Glades should have a minimum canopy gap of 20m. The western ride (650m) is to be widened 2017 in conjunction with the drainage works.

- The ancient woodland components of the site will be not be threatened by the presence of the remaining semi–mature conifers or any regeneration from them, particularly western hemlock. Monitor as part of the woodland condition assessment (next due 2022).

- The dieback of oak and sweet chestnut will be monitored annually as part of tree safety inspection to ensure that canopy gaps do not exceed 20% of the total woodland area

- The impact of deer and rabbit browsing on tree regeneration will be monitored every 5 years to ensure that canopy gaps do not exceed 20% of the total woodland area

5.2 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

Durfold Wood has an access category B (low usage site where paths are maintained). Informal public access is managed by the Woodland Trust through notices in the car park off of Fisher Lane, the information board in the north-east main block and by the two small Woodland Trust signs at either end of the public bridleway in the extreme south of Durfold Wood. The network of rides gives easy access to most parts of the wood. Most of the rides are straight but scalloping and widening has added visual interest. Routes through the wood are well defined and link in well with the local footpath and bridleway network. The main north-south ride near the western boundary and the southern public bridleway connect to the Sussex Border Path. Note the track on the running the length of the site's eastern boundary is private and not PRoW; however, there have been issues in the past with the public using the track.

The majority of ditches and streams are culverted under the rides but there are also two sleeper bridges, one in the north and one at the extreme south western corner.

Significance

Durfold Wood is part of a larger tract of oak woodland known as Chiddingfold Forest. People can walk and enjoy nature in Durfold Wood, away from roads and linking in to a long distance footpath (the Sussex Border Path). The site is a regular destination for local dog walkers and nature enthusiasts. The population of dormice and installed boxes also draws in volunteer recorders from the Surrey Dormouse Group.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: Wet areas on paths are leading to path creep; some east to west paths lead to a dead end as the Woodland Trust does not own or have access rights to the neighbouring access track along the eastern boundary that once connected these rides; seclusion of the site invites occasional fly tipping within the car park.
Opportunities: volunteer involvement in scrub and bracken clearance as part of Butterfly Conservation Trust's Wood White Project

Factors Causing Change

Flooding of paths resulting in path creep, fly tipping

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To have a network of paths through the whole site with areas of light and shade dictated by the varied ride side coppicing regime. The site will continue to have regular daily visitors with minimum infrastructure and maintenance required.

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

Low key public access will be maintained over the plan period by regular maintenance and safety inspections, appropriate for the numbers of visitors.

- Approx 2500m of paths and rides will be maintained annually to allow continued access across the whole site. This will include strimming/flailing ride edges and appropriate tree safety work, identified by Zone B safety inspections every 2 years.

- Infrastructure such as gates, signs, information boards, culverts and footbridges will be inspected annually and maintained or replaced as necessary.

- The car park will be maintained annually by controlling vegetation to maintain visibility from the lane to discourage fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour.

6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By

APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	16.26	Oak (pedunculate)	1960	High forest	Diseases, Mostly wet ground/exposed site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Connecting People with woods & trees	Area of Landscape Value, Site of Special Scientific Interest

An established, previously managed, mixed broadleaf woodland on Wealden Clay.

Main canopy species is pedunculate oak over a predominantly sweet chestnut and hazel understory. Other understorey tree and shrub species include birch, hawthorn, rowan, blackthorn, aspen and holly. The ground flora is dominated by bracken, bramble and grass spp. Infrequent species, dotted across the site, include, aspen, wild service, crab apple and beech. Deadwood is frequent and increasing throughout the wood, both standing and fallen. Dormice boxes are spread across the site.

Within the woodland block there are a few notably distinct areas.
The northern part of the wood includes the long hard core access strip from the car park. The hedgerow on the west of the access track was laid in 2003. Oak still dominates the thin canopy with young broadleaves (rowan, hawthorn, birch, sweet chestnut, beech and hornbeam) forming the understorey. The ground flora is dominated by bramble and grass spp., the odd patch of open ground remains. There are notable amounts of western hemlock seedlings. In the north west corner of the wood there are clumps of Rhododendron ponticum.

To the south of this block and sub-compartment 1b, is an area of open ground caused by fires, dominated by bracken with a small birch thicket, clumps of holly, remnant sweet chestnut and oak coppice and a stand-alone aspen. A water course runs through the southern corner. Across this eastern stretch of the wood, the ground flora is dominated by bramble and bracken with patches of bilberry.

Along the western ride, damper conditions allow the bryophytes to become more frequent in “moss lawns” along the water courses along with hard fern.

Following the west-east rides, scallops have created new open areas along the rides giving an open feel to the wood. These areas are mostly are dominated by bracken and bramble. In the northern central part of the wood there is an area; approx. 1ha is size, which is dominated by a holly understorey. Bryophytes and ferns form the majority of the suppressed ground flora.

Towards the most southerly end of the site, the wood has a more unmanaged feel and here is where the wild service trees are found. Here is where the bridleway crosses the site.

1b	1.02	Sweet chestnut	1980	Coppice		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Connecting People with woods & trees	
Coppice of predominately sweet chestnut, last coppiced in the 1980s. Stools being to collapse and crowns are thin with noticeable dieback. Smaller block of hazel in the northern part of the sub-compartment which has been worked more recently. Planted in greater density compared to sweet chestnut. A few oak standards have been retained. Sparse ground flora.							
1c	0.28	Birch (downy/silver)	2012	Non-wood habitat		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Connecting People with woods & trees	
This PAWS area has been restored through a thinning operation in 2012. Conifers included 30 year old larch, Norway and Sitka spruce, western hemlock and Douglas fir. A few remnant conifers remain for historical and visual interest – a single western hemlock, a few Norway spruce and a small patch of a dozen stunted sitka spruce. Birch, rowan and holly saplings are recolonising the cleared ground. Bramble and bracken dominate the ground flora.							

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.