



# Towerhouse Wood

## Management Plan 2016-2021

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk) or contact the Woodland Trust ([wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto: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.

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## 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](http://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

<b>Site name:</b>	Towerhouse Wood
<b>Location:</b>	Wraxall
<b>Grid reference:</b>	ST475719, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 172
<b>Area:</b>	6.63 hectares (16.38 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Avon County Site of Wildlife Conservation Importance, Community Forest, Green Belt, Priority Landscape Conservation Area

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

Towerhouse Wood is a beautiful woodland of old oak pollards and large coppice stools of ash, sweet chestnut, hazel and small-leaved lime. The shrub layer includes hazel, hawthorn, spurge laurel and spindle. Bluebells, wood anemone, and early purple orchids grow on the woodland floor, and there are abundant ferns and mosses in the damper parts of the wood.

A stream flows through the wood into an unusual pond with gas continually bubbling through the water. A secret stone sculpture trail of woodland animals and animal footprints can be found along the network of woodland paths.

## 2.2 Extended Description

Towerhouse Wood is an attractive 16 acre woodland, part of a larger wood forming an important landscape feature on the lower slopes of the Tickenham Ridge above Nailsea in the village of Wraxall. There is woodland nearby to the west, and on the upper slopes of the ridge separated from Towerhouse Wood by fields and the houses either side of the B3130. It is 8 miles from Bristol and 5 miles from Clevedon accessible from the M5.

Gently sloping at the top, the wood steepness increases down to meadow land on the Levels. The wood overlies carboniferous limestone which outcrops on the steeper slopes within the wood. The canopy of mixed broadleaves includes; ash, oak, birch, and small leaved lime, with some yew present, which are all characteristic of the area. This overlies a mixed shrub layer rich in hazel that supports a population of dormice, and a rich ground flora including bluebell, wood anemone, dogs mercury and early purple orchid. The steeper slopes of the wood are Ancient Semi Natural Woodland and the top part is secondary woodland with ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW) characteristics.

Old pollards and large coppice stools of ash, oak, sweet chestnut and small-leaved lime show a history of coppice. The streamside boundary provides additional interest and creates a varied internal landscape, and otters are regularly spotted along the banks. There is an unusual pond on the stream in the south west corner in which carbon dioxide gas continuously bubbles up through the water.

The wood is bound by housing to the north and pasture to the south. It is well used by the public and supports a network of statutory and permissive paths. Unique woodland features in the wood include the bubbling pond that continuously bubbles with carbon dioxide, The Polo Oak - An old oak pollard which collapsed in 2000 which has been crafted into a seat with a view across the meadows towards Nailsea, old lime kilns, and The Ty Trail - a secret sculpture trail of hand carved stone animal sculptures which can be found along the network of woodland paths.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

### Overview

Main Entrance on Tower House Lane, but access can also be found from Jacklands Fishing Lakes off of the B3130 Clevedon Rd. For Towerhouse Lane - there are two routes from the town of Nailsea. Either follow the B3130 Bristol Rd and then turn north onto Tower House Lane towards Birdcombe Court Farm. Just north of there turn west onto a narrow lane towards the wood. OR follow the B3130 Clevedon Rd North through Nailsea until it meets the B3128 Tickenham Hill. Turn east towards along the B3128 and then turn south onto Tower House Lane towards Birdcombe Court farm. Lane to wood on the right.

### Parking

No parking is available within 1km of the wood, but parking can be found at Jacklands Fishing Lakes for customers of the Farm Shop, kindly provided by the owners.

### Public Transport

The nearest bus stop is 500m away at Stone Edge Batch, Tickenham Hill and can be reached by a footpath. The path crosses over a high stile.

The closest train station is Nailsea which lays 3km to the south.

## 3.2 Access / Walks

### Access

Main access is directly from Towerhouse Lane along the grass track owned by the Trust (through a squeeze gap), or from public footpaths from Jacklands Fishing Lakes up a steep slope (if parking at Jacklands visitors must use the shop). Alternatively public footpaths cross the land to the north and south through kissing gates.

### Walks

A series of circular walks, public and permissive paths can be found throughout the wood. The top path running west to east is relatively flat. All paths are unsurfaced and can be muddy when wet and are on fairly steep slopes. Of interest is the Ty Sculpture Trail - a series of stone sculptures hidden around the paths carved with woodland animals and animal footprints. There is a bubbling pond at the south of the site and a bench carved from an old fallen tree, both of which are linked in with the main circular path.

## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long-term vision at Towerhouse Wood is for attractive and mature native broadleaf woodland with a wide age, size, structure and species range with rich shrub and flora layers. A healthy canopy and understory of trees and shrubs, integrating with surrounding hedgerows and woodland. The whole woodland will be managed as ASNW with all parts of the woodland containing ASNW characteristic flora and fauna.

The wood is generally widely spaced on a steep slope and will be managed through natural processes with limited intervention undertaken only where necessary. The woodland will be managed as high forest on a continuous cover basis. Species include oak, ash, field maple, small leaved lime, hazel and mixed shrubs with the proportion of individual species varying over time. Oak pollards and small-leaved lime stools will be retained to form deadwood habitat.

The small proportion of turkey oak will be retained to its maximum lifespan; eradication of these species is not practical due to mature trees in the surrounding areas of woodland.

Where necessary selective trees will be coppiced in areas where the canopy is dense to improve the biodiversity and age structure of the woodland, and valuable ride-side edge habitats. This will improve the access and accessibility of the woodland, and increase the biodiversity of the woodland by allowing colonisation of woodland ground flora from ASNW to secondary woodland areas, as coppicing of ride side trees will allow woodland flora to develop in these areas through increased light availability to the woodland floor.

Towerhouse Wood has well used footpaths and will be managed as an important open access area where the public are welcome. The signs, well-kept paths, and the woods interesting features - the bubbling pond, the Polo Oak, the lime kiln, and The Sculpture Trail will have access maintained to them and will encourage public use of the woodland; fulfilling the Trust's aim of inspiring everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees.



## 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

Part of a more extensive ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW), with species characteristic of NVC type W8 including ash, small leaved lime, field maple, hazel, and some scattered yew. Most of the site shows a history of coppice. Some large old stools of lime, ash and sweet chestnut. Two large old oak pollards and oak stubs. Shrub layer includes hazel, hawthorn, spurge laurel and spindle. Ground flora includes wood spurge, wood anemone, and other ancient woodland indicators. There are abundant ferns in parts of the wood. There is beech, sweet chestnut, and turkey oak tree species scattered throughout the wood, but these make up less than 15% of the canopy. A population of the dormice have been recorded in the woodland. The dormice population are monitored regularly by volunteers as part of the National Dormice Monitoring Project (NDMP).

#### Significance

The wood is part of a more extensive ASNW along the Tickenham Ridge which fits into a network of ASNW/AWS/secondary woodland and other semi natural habitats, including extensive areas of grazing marshes on the levels. Some of these areas are designated as SSSI.

The wood is part of a more extensive ASNW in multiple ownerships. Some smaller blocks have been annexed as gardens. There is adjacent secondary woodland, part of which is in WT ownership which could develop characteristics of ancient woodland in time

Dormice are a protected species in Britain and regarded as a priority for conservation action.

The Woodland Trust's aim is to protect ancient woodland and the ownership of Towerhouse Wood contributes to this.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunity for Towerhouse Wood to engage local community through active volunteer wardens, wildlife monitoring, the sculpture trail, and as a training resource for The Woodland Trust.

Management access to the wood with vehicles is only possible along the main ride and poor elsewhere due to the steepness of the site.

#### Factors Causing Change

Uncontrolled grazing by deer.

Non-native turkey oak scattered throughout which may spread and begin to dominate the native species, currently acceptable 5% cover.

Non-native shrub species present in the wood including box honeysuckle, cherry laurel which may begin to spread currently controlled to 5%.

### **Long term Objective (50 years+)**

Healthy, mature and attractive native broadleaf woodland of varying structure and habitats, with frequent natural regeneration. There will be many wood edge habitats, important for nesting birds, invertebrates and woodland / grassland flora. A healthy ground flora and ancient woodland characteristics evident throughout the wood. Old pollards and stubs are retained and allowed to collapse in the wood. Deadwood will increase in abundance providing an additional habitat.

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

To ensure continued existence of the mature wood in its current condition with mature trees, a rich shrub layer and small amounts of regeneration and extensive ASNW ground flora. There are no interventions planned for the mature broadleaf woodland in this plan period, other than small scale ride-side coppicing, and work for tree safety in the plan period.

The rides and paths will be managed via selective rotational coppicing in winter to create a varied successional shrub edge habitat, and to improve public access and openness of the woodland paths. The rides and dense hazel coppice will be managed by ride side coppicing of main rides up to 20% to 5m width from path by contractors, to ensure it allows light along the paths to benefit wildlife, increase and allow the spread of ground flora from ASNW to secondary woodland areas. Dense hazel coppice areas or particularly dense areas of ash with little ground flora will be preferred and coppiced to ground level.

Monitor regeneration and damage by squirrel and/or deer.

Invasive non-native shade-bearing under storey shrub species will be observed and controlled if they are detrimentally affecting the ancient woodland ground flora. Check in 2016 and 2019.

## 5.2 Informal Public Access

### Description

The wood is open for quiet informal recreation. Two public footpaths cross the site from which runs a network of small permissive paths. Routes throughout the wood are well used.

Of interest is the bubbling pond at the south west corner of the site that continuously bubbles with carbon dioxide, a bench carved from an old fallen tree known as The Polo Oak on the southern boundary, both of which are linked in with the main circular path, an old lime kiln, and The Ty Trail - a secret sculpture trail of hand carved stone animal sculptures which can be found all along the network of woodland paths.

### Significance

Informal Public Access fulfils the Trust's aim to inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees. The site fits into a network of well used footpaths that link to the surrounding housing and the town of Nailsea, providing the only open access woodland in the locality.

The Woodland Trust's aim is that people have access to open woodland within reach of their homes, leading to the wood forming part of a health environment and community. The ownership of Towerhouse helps contribute to this.

Unique woodland features for visitors to the wood include the bubbling pond that continuously bubbles with carbon dioxide, and The Ty Trail - a secret sculpture trail which can be found along the network of woodland paths. The Ty Sculpture Trail is a collection of 14 stone carvings of animals that live in and around this ancient woodland and celebrates the life of Ty Partridge who grew up in a house on the corner of the wood. Ty, who spent much of his free time playing, exploring and making dens here died from Leukaemia, aged 21 and the Trail is the inspiration of his Dad Piers Partridge who is the volunteer warden for the wood.

### Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunity to engage local community through active volunteering, training and community events. Through visits to the bubbling pond, The Polo Oak and The Ty Sculpture Trail.

### Factors Causing Change

Anti-social behaviour - Fly-tipping and litter.

History of sporadic use of the site by local children and young adults, with campfires and camping. Illegal use of woodland paths by mountain and motorbikes, and horse riding causing erosion of the paths.

Canopy closure of trees making paths wet/muddy/slippery.

Loss of the woodland through pests/diseases E.g. Ash die-back

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

The wood will be well-used and valued by the surrounding community. It will be known for the variety of walks, abundance of spring flowers, interesting unique features and links with the wider footpath network.

It will be welcoming and easily accessible woodland. The footpath network will be maintained to keep the wood as an attractive and pleasant place for visitors. The involvement of the local community will be encouraged.

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

Easily accessible, attractive, well-maintained and safe woodland that a wide range of public frequently enjoy. Entrances, facilities and path network are appropriate for level and type of use and in line with access category B.

To achieve this paths will be maintained and cut back twice yearly to provide appropriate access, with entrances, signage, benches and access to interesting features including the pond, bench and sculpture trail maintained.

Particularly muddy areas on steep slopes will have steps and revetment to improve and maintain informal public access. Small access improvements when current infrastructure needs replacing can be carried out when needed by contractors.

Litter clearance as necessary.

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## 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	5.40	Mixed broadleaves		High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/ mine shafts/sink holes etc	Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Community Forest, Green Belt
<p>South facing ASNW of mixed age and structure. Ash, oak, small leaved lime, sweet chestnut, and yew, hazel and field maple mostly coppiced in the past. Some stools are large with numerous stems forming impressive features. Scattered standards of oak, ash and beech. Patches of even aged ash of maiden origin. Two small coupes of densely coppiced hazel near main footpath. Shrub layer and good ground flora throughout with ASNW indicator species - bluebells, wood anemone, wild garlic, lesser celandine and early purple orchid. Old oak pollards and patch of oak 'stubs' exist on or near the southern boundary.</p>							
1b	1.40	Mixed broadleaves	1900	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Informal Public Access	Community Forest, Green Belt
<p>Secondary woodland of oak and ash with elements of beech, larch and turkey oak with a patchy understory. Some invasive non-natives are present including laurel and rhododendron although these have been controlled by volunteers to date. Similar ASNW ground flora to compartment 1a.</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.