



Radley Plantation

Management Plan 2018-2023

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Radley Plantation
Location:	Warrington
Grid reference:	SJ616915, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 109
Area:	1.66 hectares (4.10 acres)
Designations:	Community Forest, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc)

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

A lovely quiet woodland with ponds around the edge, where the trees make it look like a petrified forest.

2.2 Extended Description

Radley Plantation is located in north Warrington just south of the M62 motorway and the town of Winwick. It is a mature broadleaved copse which was, prior to the development of the New Town, a farm woodland. To the south of the wood lies Radley Common which is owned and administered by Winwick Parish Council and was planted with broadleaves in 1994. The other three boundaries of the wood are abandoned agricultural land which is designated as development land. There is a possibility that the wood will become surrounded by housing in the not too distant future however as of 2018 this has not been the case. If development does take place the amenity and aesthetic importance of the site will increase significantly as will its value as a haven for wildlife.

The soil type is primarily clay and loam. There is an attractive permanent pond surrounded by mature Oaks and Scots pine on the north-eastern edge of the wood which occasionally becomes the focus for illegal fishing but is never-the-less an important wildlife habitat.

The mature farm woodland which forms the nucleus of the wood consists of Oak, Ash, Sycamore and Alder. These were subsequently underplanted with Alder, Wild Cherry, Sycamore, Field maple, Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Hazel in the 1980s. This has prospered where there are suitable light conditions provided by gaps in the canopy. However, in other less suitable locations the underplanting has been suppressed.

Drainage within the wood appears to have been a significant problem since the surrounding agricultural land was abandoned. In 2007 the developer who owns the adjacent land did carry out much needed ditch maintenance and this has substantially lowered the water table helping to resolve the issue. However, by nature of the site there still large areas, particularly in the north-west sector of the wood, which are very wet. In recent years we have seen himalayan balsam slowly creep in and establish in this area of the wood.

The woodland has two key features Informal Public Access and Secondary Woodland. 2 ponds can be found on the northern boundary of the site and these are a conservation feature.

The site is well used by local people who take advantage of the circular route which runs through the wood.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Radley Plantation is located in Winwick, north Warrington. The site can be accessed via Grasmere Avenue to the south, heading north on foot across Radley Common. A permissive path outside of WT ownership is located through a pedestrian gate. Turn left along side the hedgerow for approx 70 meters until you reach a second pedestrian gate. Turn right here and follow the permissive path for approx another 100 meters until you reach the main entrance of Radley Plantation. Public access identified by a circular footpath running through the site.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term intention for Radley Plantation is to maintain a high forest of mixed native broadleaves with oak, sycamore, beech, horse chestnut and willow. It will primarily be managed as a recreational and landscape feature providing an important woodland habitat for wildlife and people to enjoy.

Guided by the Woodland Trust's woodland management approach, conservation and access policies long term management will aim to seek a balance between conservation and public enjoyment. The wood will be managed to maintain a diverse structure and mix of species to ensure that it is as resilient as possible to future threats such as climate change, pests and tree disease. Mature trees will be retained for as long as safe to do so and natural regeneration will be encouraged. The key drivers for management operations will be for public access, safety and long term stand stability.

The Trust's duty of care to neighbours and visitors will continue to be addressed through on-going tree safety and site risk assessment inspections.

The woodland will be regularly monitored for threats from tree diseases, pests, non-native species, human impacts and the long term sustainability of the woodland.

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

A circular path runs within the woodland and with connections to external permissive footpaths. The main access to the wood for the public is along the eastern edge of the new planting undertaken by Winwick Parish Council. Parts of the northern section of the internal circular path can get very wet and muddy.

Significance

The wood receives fairly heavy usage and is quite well used by local people to walk. The surrounding landscape is currently fairly open with grassland, meadows and small old farm woodland copses (the area is locally known as Radley Common) although it is under threat from proposed development. The wood provides a valuable wildlife habitat and is an important landscape feature in the area.

Opportunities & Constraints

A major constraint to Informal Public Access is the wood's isolated nature and its connectivity. In the future it is probable that, as part of the housing development, there will be buffer structural planting which will surround the wood and the adjacent land owned by the parish council. The problem of flooding in the northern section of the wood was reduced in 2007 when the land to the north received ditch clearance work by a developer which significantly reduced the water levels in the ponds, this also helped alleviate the flooding issue. To date this developer has been unsuccessful in obtaining planning permission to build on the land to the north.

Factors Causing Change

Proposed housing development on adjacent land.
 Vandalism - the site suffers from regular damage to trees and site furniture (gates/ fences) most likely via illegal motor/quad bike users.
 Litter - frequent litter left by youths having camps/ parties in the wood.
 Motorbikes/ quad bikes damaging the paths.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The internal path network will be maintained to allow public access at the current level. If development takes place on the surrounding land this will be reviewed and improved as necessary to link in with the external network of footpaths.

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

During this plan period the short term objectives are to provide good quality access for visitors, which is safe and enjoyable. Any threats to the wood arising from public access and usage will be monitored and managed. This will be achieved by:

1. Carrying out annual maintenance of the 3 entrances and 400 metres of footpath to ensure they are easy and safe to use. Vegetation encroaching on the paths will be cut back. Signage will be clean and visible, and replaced if they deteriorate. Litter will be removed as part of the EMC.
2. Conducting regular safety inspections of trees in high risk zones (e.g. the edges of the roads, next to houses and along the footpath) and inspections of site hazards and access furniture to ensure the wood is as safe as possible for visitors, neighbours and road users.
3. Carrying out monitoring at least once during this plan period to assess whether the access provision is adequate and to determine if there are any threats to the wood from public usage. Appropriate measures to lessen any recorded threats will be undertaken.
4. Modify boundaries & entrances if possible to deter motor/quad bikes.

5.2 Natural Secondary Woodland

Description

This site represents the remnants of an old farm woodland which was extensively under planted in the 1980s. It has become a well-structured woodland with a diverse species mix and is capable of continuity with minimum intervention. It already makes an important contribution to the conservation, amenity and landscape value of the area. Although secondary woodland the ground flora is not well developed but there are the occasional patches of bluebells except in parts of the northern sector of the wood where the area is very wet and dominated by Himalayan balsam.

Significance

It is already an important component in the landscape but its importance to wildlife, public access and amenity will increase significantly if housing development takes place.

Opportunities & Constraints

It is a small and comparatively isolated site but its significance for wildlife and amenity would be considerably enhanced if further development takes place on adjacent land. However as of 2018 no development has occurred and the woodland remains relatively isolated, it is linked however to adjacent local authority owned planting by footpaths and is regularly walked through by local people. This new planting consisting of native species is developing extremely well and Radley Plantation with its mature trees will fit nicely into the new woodland belt giving some variation in habitat type, age class and structure. The woodland does suffer from vandalism with mini motorbikes and quads being an issue as are fires and gatherings of youngsters drinking and littering.

Factors Causing Change

Proposed housing development, Invasive Himalayan balsam, vandalism, fires, motorbikes/ quad bikes.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To promote the continuing development of a well structured broadleaved woodland through tree safety operations and natural processes such as die back and natural thinning. Where necessary efforts will be made to integrate Radley Plantation into the newly-planted woodland to the south and any buffer structural planting which takes place as a result of development. Invasive Himalayan balsam will be controlled to prevent it spreading in the wood.

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

During the plan period minimal management intervention will take place. Tree safety inspections will be undertaken on a regular basis to ensure the wood is safe for visitors. Assess Himalayan balsam levels as part of the WCA and consider feasibility/sustainability of controlling it given the scale of infestation on all of the surrounding land. A woodland condition assessment will be carried out once during the plan period to monitor natural regen. and ground flora, the health and resilience of the woodland and identify any threats from tree disease, pests or mammals.

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	1.66	Oak (pedunculate)	1880	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site	Informal Public Access, Natural Secondary Woodland	County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc)

There is considerable species and structural variation within the compartment of this former farm woodland. The nucleus consists of mature oak, ash, sycamore, alder and elm forming a discontinuous canopy. In the 1980's there was large scale under planting of oak, ash, wild cherry, alder, silver birch. Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Field maple, Hazel and Elder. In some areas these have now become canopy trees whilst in others they have become suppressed. There is good natural regeneration of ash, cherry, alder, sycamore and elm. The ground layer is not well developed, although there are localised patches of bluebell, ramson and other wildflowers. In the northern part of the wood the ground is wetter and dominated by Himalayan balsam.

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2018	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.20	10	2
2022	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.20	10	2
2026	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.20	10	2

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.