



# Big Wood, Runcorn

## 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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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>	Big Wood, Runcorn
<b>Location:</b>	Runcorn
<b>Grid reference:</b>	SJ551830, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 108
<b>Area:</b>	9.24 hectares (22.83 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Community Forest, Local Wildlife Site, Scheduled Ancient Monument

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

Big Wood is predominately broadleaf woodland with sycamore, oak, Silver birch, ash, alder, rowan and cherry and pines on the higher ground to the east. It is home to a variety of wildlife including birds, grey squirrels and foxes. It was once part of the Norton Priory estate owned by the Brooke family who created a formal landscaped pleasure garden in the woodland with surfaced paths, pond and ditches, ha-ha wall and planted a variety of ornamental species including monkey puzzle, dawn redwood and sugar maple. Today, it's a tranquil haven where you can escape the hubbub of town, look out for wildlife, and enjoy the changing seasons. The wood becomes carpeted with bluebells in the spring.

### 2.2 Extended Description

Big Wood is a 9.24 hectares (22.8 acres) secondary woodland about 2 miles to the east of the Runcorn town centre. It is located in the Manor Park district adjacent to the historical site of Norton Priory. The wood is sandwiched between the Bridgewater Canal and Daresbury Expressway in an urban landscape although with other woodlands and green spaces nearby. There are several other Woodland Trust sites within 2 miles of Big Wood including Windmill Hill Wood, Fountains Wood, Haddocks Wood and woods in Sandymoor.

Big Wood was situated in medieval times in the manor of Norton. This was held by the Augustinian

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Monastery of Norton Priory from 1134 to 1536 and was closed by Henry VIII in the dissolution of the monasteries. From 1545 until 1921 the manor of Norton belonged to the Brooke family. It is not clear whether much woodland existed in the area between 1536 and 1757. In 1757 the first map of Big Wood was produced (on the old estate map of Norton). In the 18th century the Brooke family created a landscaped garden and woodland walk on the estate and during this time dramatic changes to Big Wood ensued with planting of ornamental tree species and the creation of footpath trails, ponds and drainage ditches.

The 20th century brought about more dramatic change not least due to the abandonment of the house and estate by the Brookes family in 1921. In the 1970's the construction of the A558 Runcorn Expressway cut the site in half and much of the surrounding land was developed for Manor Park business park estate and new housing estates across the canal at Windmill Hill.

In the 1980's and 1990's the Commission for New Towns managed the woodland and during this time significant improvements were carried to the footpath network, clearing the ditch network, installing new footbridges and culverts and carrying out tree work including new planting along the northern boundary by the Expressway. The wood was given to the Woodland Trust in 1995 along with a number of other woodlands in Runcorn.

It is secondary woodland with a mix of mature broadleaves (oak, alder, silver birch, cherry, sycamore) and some non-natives and exotic specimens (monkey puzzle, turkey oak, sugar maple). Species include pedunculate and turkey oak, sycamore, alder, silver birch, yew, large-leaved lime, willow species, poplar (hybrid black), Scots Pine, horse chestnut, beech, European larch, cherry, hornbeam. The understorey used to contain a large amount of rhododendron along with natural regeneration (oak, birch, sycamore, alder) and underplanting of mixed broadleaves from the 1980's. The ground flora is sparse in those areas where rhododendron was previously dominant, but in other areas there is a reasonably diverse ground flora including bluebells, lesser celandine, dogs mercury, herb robert, red campion, sorrel and bramble.

There are several interesting features in Big Wood including a remnant section of the sandstone ha-ha wall along the eastern boundary of the wood and a large pond located in the centre of the wood. The pond is linked to a ditch network that runs through the central area of the wood. A number of veteran trees in the wood provide interest for visitors as well as a valuable habitat for wildlife. There is also a standing dead tree carved with images of birds located near to the footpath. The western edge of the wood falls within the Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) of Norton Priory where there is the remains of a Tudor moat although this has been filled in and is indistinct on the ground

The wood is located next to Norton Priory museum and walled garden which are worth a visit and provide more information about the history of the area and other local places of interest. There is a car park, cafe and toilets at the museum and walled garden. Norton Priory is signposted from nearby roads.

The main entrance into Big Wood is from the car park at Norton Priory museum and there is an easy circular trail on a reasonably surfaced footpath around the wood including a section that goes alongside the Bridgewater canal providing lovely views of this quiet waterway. There is a second public entrance to the wood from the canal side on Sandymoor Lane.

A major restoration programme in Big Wood was undertaken in 2001 funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. This involved the de-silting of the pond, ditches, silt traps, weirs and culverts along with

clearing over 2 hectares of rhododendron by volunteers with Astmoor Day Services and The Conservation Volunteers. In 2010 a Visitor Improvement Project with funding from Ineos Chlor led to improvements in access and interest for people visiting the site. New kissing gates were installed and the footpaths resurfaced. Several sculptures and natural art pieces were created to act as interesting features for visitors.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

#### By bus:

The nearest bus stop is on the bus route adjacent to Windmill Hill Avenue West, near to the local centre. It is a 15 minute walk from the bus stop down steps into the northern end of Windmill Hill Wood, following a track north through a subway and on until it reaches a low stone wall and two large old stone gate posts. These form the boundary of Windmill Hill Wood. Go through here and a few moments later a small bridge should be visible over the canal. Go over this and look for the kissing gate entrance into Big Wood on the left, which is the south-eastern access point.

For information on bus routes and bus stop locations visit [traveline.org.uk](http://traveline.org.uk)

#### By train:

The nearest train stations are Runcorn (6.4km/4 miles) and Runcorn East (3.2km/2 miles).

For more information on public transport, visit [traveline.co.uk](http://traveline.co.uk).

#### By car:

From Runcorn, head east along the A533. Take the exit towards Windmill Hill, then at the roundabout take the second exit onto Tudor Road. Here you will find the Norton Priory Museum and Walled Garden car park, where you can park free of charge. This is adjacent to the north-west corner of the wood.

There is also limited parking on Sandymoor Lane near the canal.

### 3.2 Access / Walks

Big Wood is in the Manor Park area of Runcorn and the easiest access is via the car park for Norton Priory Museum at the end of Tudor Road, off Manor Park Avenue, around 200m away. The other main access point is by the canal bridge over the Bridgewater canal on Sandymoor Lane in the south-east corner, which leads from the Windmill Hill estate. Both of these entrances have metal disabled access (RADAR) kissing gates. There is a circular surfaced footpath of approximately 1.2km which provides a delightful route through the wood from Norton Priory to the Bridgewater canal.

## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term intention for Big Wood is to maintain the continuity of high forest of predominantly native broadleaves, with a diverse structure, species and age composition and sufficient natural regeneration to ensure the perpetuity of the woodland.

Non-native tree species will be retained as part of the historical planting of the wood by the Brooke family.

Where possible the woodland will be allowed to grow and develop naturally as a refuge for wildlife, with mature and veteran trees retained and deadwood left on site where safe to do so.

The main drivers for management intervention will be for tree safety, public access and to make the woodland more resilient to cope with future pressures from climate change, pests and tree diseases. Invasive rhododendron will be controlled and eradicated to encourage the development of a more varied and widespread understorey and ground layer which will benefit biodiversity as well improving sightlines in the wood.

Public access will be continue to be provided at current levels with four pedestrian access points, a surfaced footpath and appropriate signage and information being maintained for visitors and linking to Norton Priory Museum, the Bridgewater Canal and Windmill Hill.

The Scheduled Ancient Monument area and other historical features (boundary ha-ha wall, ponds and ditches, silt traps and weirs) will be conserved in accordance with guidance from English Heritage and Norton Priory Museum Trust.

## 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 Archaeological Feature

#### Description

A small section of the western side of the wood is part of the Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) of Norton Priory. It has the remains of a Tudor moat although this has been largely back filled and is indistinct on the ground.

Several other features of historical interest include a sandstone ha-ha wall and ditch along the eastern boundary, the south eastern entrance to the wood is defined by the old estate stone gate posts and the surfaced track follows the line of the estate coach track which runs parallel to the eastern boundary. There is also a large pond and network of drainage channels and silt traps running from the canal to the north western boundary where the water is taken by a sandstone culvert and silt trap which are all features from the period of the Brooke estate.

#### Significance

The SAM status is part of the wider designation for Norton Priory and was designated by English Heritage. The historical features are highlighted in a historical and archaeological report completed in 2001 by Norton Priory Museum.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

The SAM has a number of management constraints designed to limit further damage or degradation (refer to English Heritage for details).

Heavy vehicles must avoid using the coaching track to prevent damaging it.

The sandstone ha-ha and other historical features require appropriate management to prevent them being damaged or deteriorating.

#### Factors Causing Change

Vegetation and tree roots causing damage to historical features.

Vandalism and damage particularly to the ha-ha wall has been an issue in the past but is not currently a problem.

Siltation of ponds, ditches and culverts over time. It is estimated that in 30 years time the pond will require further de-silting work (2032).

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

The SAM will be conserved and protected in line with guidance from English Heritage and Norton Priory Museum Trust. The other features of historical interest (ha-ha, ditches, silt traps, gate posts and coaching track) will be maintained in a favourable condition. Appropriate information will be provided (working in partnership with Norton Priory) to make visitors aware of the significance of these features within the wood and the links to Norton Priory and the Brooke estate.

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

During the plan period:

The SAM area will be monitored to check it is not being damaged.

The condition of the ha-ha and other historical features will be inspected to identify if any work is required to maintain them.

The ditches and culverts will be inspected to check they are clear of blockages.

## 5.2 Secondary Woodland

### Description

Big Wood was planted in the late 1700's by the Brooke family as part of the wider local estate. It contains mixed broadleaves including oak (Pedunculate and Turkey), sycamore, yew, alder with poplar, rowan, birch, wild cherry, hazel, hawthorn. There are small groups of Scots Pine and a number of exotic specimens including Sugar Maple, Monkey Puzzle and Dawn Redwoods. The ground flora is reasonably diverse and includes bluebell particularly along the eastern fringes of the site. The under storey has been dominated by rhododendron ponticum and this has left a generational gap in the age class of the wood. In the late 1980's the Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation under planted the entire wood with group plantings of mixed broadleaves, some larch and other conifer species (including yew). These have been largely suppressed by the dense rhododendron and closed canopy in certain sections of the wood.

### Significance

The site forms part of a large area of secondary broadleaved woodlands and public green spaces in this part of Runcorn, including several other woods owned by the Woodland Trust at Windmill Hill Wood, St Berteline's Wood, Fountains Wood and Haddocks Wood. The western boundary of the site borders semi-natural grassland and secondary woodland owned by Norton Priory Museum and on the eastern boundary there is an area of semi-natural grassland owned by Halton BC. Big wood is designated a Local Wildlife Site as it is an important habitat for wildlife in this urban area. The wood contains many mature trees along with several veterans, good volumes of dead wood (standing and fallen) and contains a network of ditches & ponds (the ditch network has some interesting assemblages of liverworts and mosses).

### Opportunities & Constraints

Management access is only available via Norton Priory Car Park and Sandymoor Lane and vehicle access within the site is limited to the footpath. Parts of the wood still have a dense understorey of rhododendron which constrains establishment of a more diverse shrub and ground layer and restricts natural regeneration. There are a significant number of mature seed bearing trees which provide good opportunity for natural regeneration if suitable gaps are created in the canopy.

### Factors Causing Change

Invasive rhododendron spreading and regeneration of rhododendron which suppresses the ground flora and natural regeneration. Vandalism and fires from visitors causing damage to trees & ground flora, although this is not currently a significant issue.

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long term intention for Big Wood is a high forest of mixed broadleaved species with occasional pine, yews and non-native specimen trees to reflect the historic planting mix in the landscape. It should have a diverse structure in terms of species, age and size classification with standing and fallen dead wood retained where safe to do so. The woodland will be structurally diverse in terms of age and size classification with a mix of older trees, natural regeneration, well developed shrub layer and diverse ground flora enhancing the biodiversity value. Rhododendron will be controlled to encourage natural regeneration and the development of ground flora. Existing and future veteran trees will be retained and levels of deadwood will be increased where it is considered safe to do so.

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

During the plan period the main short term objectives are to control the spread of rhododendron and manage the woodland through minimal silvicultural intervention unless a need is identified through the condition assessment.

This will be achieved by:

1. Controlling rhododendron to reduce it so that all mature rhododendron is removed by the end of the plan period. Regeneration/ new growth will be assessed within the woodland condition assessment at year 5.
2. Carrying out a woodland condition assessment once during the plan period to monitor the health and resilience of the woodland and identify any threats from tree disease, pests, mammals or people to guide future management of the site.

## 5.3 Veteran Trees

### Description

The woodland contains a significant number of veteran or potential veteran trees. Veteran trees in this area need careful management and protection because there are so few of them generally. Species include oak (Turkey and Pedunculate), occasional horse chestnut and yew. The yew population is of particular note. These have been freed from competition with rhododendron in recent years and appear to have responded well. Other species of note include hybrid black poplar, a sugar maple, Monkey Puzzle and small group of Dawn Redwoods.

### Significance

Veteran trees are a scarce and important conservation resource and are more important when they occur in large numbers on semi natural habitat. This creates 'old growth' conditions and the opportunity of habitat continuity for scarce invertebrate, fungal and epiphytic plant communities to survive.

### Opportunities & Constraints

The main opportunity is to create a continuity of veteran trees and deadwood habitat into the future. There is a significant stock of potential trees that could become veterans in the future with careful management.  
Competition from dense rhododendron.

### Factors Causing Change

Over-shading and competition from rhododendron and younger more vigorous trees.  
Squirrel damage (bark stripping) leading to decline/ death of trees including natural regeneration, but not currently a problem with the veteran trees.  
Occasional vandalism to trees but it is not a significant problem.

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain existing veteran trees (mainly oak and sycamore) for as long as naturally possible and manage a sustainable succession of potential veterans into the future. Threats to the survival of veteran trees will be managed if this is practical, and any remedial tree surgery will only be carried out if there are risks to public safety.

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

During the plan period there will be minimal management intervention of veteran trees. The veteran trees will be monitored once during this period to check their health and for signs of any pests or diseases affecting them.

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## 5.4 Connecting People with woods & trees

### Description

This site is part of the Welcoming Sites Programme, which aims to improve the visitor experience to this site. The Welcoming Site Programme will lead to a series of lasting upgrades that will improve the visitor experience and will likely increase the number and range of visitors to the wood. An attractive and serviceable network of tracks and paths will further encourage the appreciation of the woodland both on the site and in the locality. The site will be managed to meet the required high standards of the Welcoming Site Programme and will provide a clear welcome: entrances, furniture, signs and other infrastructure as well as sustainable path and track surfaces across the variable ground conditions. Access will better facilitate use by a wider range of visitors. The site will be a truly valued resource in the local community and well respected.

Its position in the landscape:

Big Wood is located on the eastern edge of Runcorn, approximately 2.5 miles from the town centre. Bounded to the north by the A558, to the east by Windmill Hill Avenue, and to the south by the very attractive Bridgewater Canal. To the west is Norton Priory - a listed building - the remains of a historic Tudor Abbey complex dating from the 12th century, museum and visitor centre as well as a 2.5 acre Georgian walled garden

General description of the access

Big Wood offers informal public access with approximately 1200 metres of surfaced permissive footpath including a circular loop around the wood. The woodland is accessed via 2 main public access points from Norton Priory Museum car park or via a metal kissing gate on Sandymoor Lane next to the Bridgewater canal bridge which links the wood to the Windmill Hill estate. Parking is available for visitors at the Norton Priory car park. There are information panels installed in 2018 in the car park and at the canal bridge entrance with information about the wood and Norton Priory. Within the wood there are several features, including benches and cairns. There are two other pedestrian squeeze access points on the eastern boundary across the ha-ha wall and ditch from the council owned open space.

The visitor profile:

The majority of visitors to the woodlands are locals within easy walking or driving distance, offering easy access for local people to enjoy informal recreation and access to nature very close to where they live. Few visitors to Norton Priory venture into the woodlands.

Events, activities and volunteering:

There are currently no people engagement events planned for Big Wood and it does not have any formal volunteer group, although there is a volunteer and friends of group that operates at Norton Priory.

Nearby Woodland Trust sites:

Big Wood is directly adjacent to Windmill Hill, a continuation of secondary woodland on the southern side of the Bridgewater Canal, St Bertelines an establishing new native woodland, and several other Woodland Trust sites are located within 2 miles including Lodge Plantation, Green Wood, Haddocks Wood. Beyond this there is a complex of woodlands scattered through Runcorn, as well as North of the Mersey in Warrington and to the east close to Lymm. There is also relatively easy access about 5 miles to the south west of the wood to Frodsham Hill, Snidley Moor and Woodhouse Hill on the elevated Cheshire Sandstone ridge with views back across the River Mersey to Runcorn and Big Wood.

## Significance

Increasing public access to woodlands is one of the Woodland Trust's key outcomes. Big Wood is located in an urban location, close to the Windmill Hill estate which has a high level of social deprivation, and the wood is within easy access for local residents with little effort or cost. It is also next to Norton Priory and offers visitors to this attraction an opportunity to also visit the wood with its historical links to the priory and Brooke estate. With the links to Windmill Hill and St Bertelina's, it also offers a much larger accessible woodland and a range of habitat types.

### **Opportunities & Constraints**

Access to the woodland is good, both on foot, via public transport and car via the Norton Priory car park. Access to the car park is restricted by closure of the car park outside of normal office hours (although pedestrian access is available at all times), any increase visitor numbers in cars would impact on the available space for the Priory and would need careful negotiation. There is an opportunity to improve the welcome, with a revamp of the entire site signage, way marking and existing entrances. The short term upgrades in infrastructure, trails and on site interpretation would support the needs of the local visitor groups, as well as providing potential development opportunities for events, volunteering and community engagement. Given the size of the site and range of habitats and areas there is also potential for engagement with volunteers and community woodland groups, as well as the potential to develop areas dedicated to forest Schools without having any major impact on the site or other users. Woodland Trust Schools schemes (Green Tree Schools, DEFRA and People Postcode Lottery programmes) should be encouraged to make use of the wood, and there could be potential for developing an onsite education area and resources. Any increase in engagement and volunteering should be considered in conjunction with Norton Priory to ensure that both parties compliment each other rather than compete for the same visitors and volunteers.

### **Factors Causing Change**

The nearby Windmill Hill estate has a high level of social deprivation and there can be a high turnover of tenants in some of the properties adjacent to the woodland, anti-social problems, such as litter, fly-tipping, vandalism and illegal camp fires are relatively commonplace and difficult to tackle proactively. Increased numbers of visitors would require significantly improved infrastructure on the site and greater engagement capacity with visitors, volunteers, and community engagement. The wood does require a greater level of annual maintenance, with a periodic (maximum 10 year) refurbishment of the site welcome facilities, utilising robust infrastructure and interpretation.

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

The woodland will provide an extensive area of woodland, for quiet informal recreation to a wide range of users both from the local community and from further afield (visitors linking a visit to the woodland and Norton Priory). The use of the site will be promoted through positive relationships locally with neighbouring Norton Priory, with good signage and interpretation. Entrances and signage will have a welcoming appearance and there will be a well-maintained footpath providing a circular route suitable for walkers with viewpoints of features and habitats around the wood. Interpretation and way marking that is fully integrated with, or compliments existing routes and tourist opportunities will provide visitors with information on directions and points of interest. The use of the site for education will have increased, and linked with other Woodland Trust sites in the area, will have a sustainable events and schools programme established, including demonstrations and workshops, and as an educational and recreational resource. Volunteering would ideally be active and linked to or complement the activity at the Priory.

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

Access provision will be in keeping with WT access guidelines. Achieved by ensuring that:  
Entrances & signage are welcoming to visitors and well maintained (annually).

All managed paths are kept well-drained and free from encroaching vegetation by strimming, and that access features (e.g. bridges, steps, entrances, boundary features, etc. are kept in good order (annually).

All viewpoints (e.g. over the ponds) are maintained free of encroaching vegetation, where it is obscuring the view (annually).

The site is kept safe and welcoming by: repair of vandalism (when needed); clearing of fallen or dangerous trees where access is obstructed (as needed); and regular site safety surveys (as per site risk assessment).

The visitor welcome & experience will be further enhanced by the following infrastructure improvements by the end of the current plan period:

Significant improvement to the welcome signage, including replacement of the existing signs, way markers and interpretation at key locations through the woodland. Minor entrances will be formalised with a consistent access standard (e.g. named welcome and exit signs)

The network of paths will be maintained at least once per plan period, with a more regular maintenance of the surfaced routes by power brushing.

Furniture, including feature benches, information points will be maintained annually or as required.

New volunteer activity and volunteer roles will be developed and encouraged, where the opportunities arise, although these are unlikely to be proactively developed.

Identified areas of the woodland will be available for education, with forest schools and other local user groups suited to the aims and objectives of the Woodland Trust will be encouraged wherever possible.

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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	0.30	Field maple	1980	High forest	Archaeological features	Archaeological Feature, Connecting People with woods & trees, Secondary Woodland, Veteran Trees	Community Forest, Local Wildlife Site, Scheduled Ancient Monument
<p>Thin strip of mixed native broadleaves including oak, ash, wild cherry, field maple, silver birch, willow, dog rose planted in the 1980s. A surfaced footpath/ management access track (2.5 metres wide) runs through the sub-compartment. It abuts an area of open grassland and car park for Norton Priory to the west and south. A cycleway runs along the northern boundary adjacent to the Daresbury Expressway. Part of the sub-cpt falls under the Scheduled Ancient Monument agreement that Norton Priory have with English Heritage.</p>							
2a	1.98	Sycamore	1940	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site	Archaeological Feature, Connecting People with woods & trees, Secondary Woodland, Veteran Trees	Community Forest, Local Wildlife Site
<p>The main species within this sub-compartment are sycamore, oak, birch with some Scots pine on higher ground to the north east. Sparse understorey of thorn, bracken, bramble and rhododendron. Ground flora includes bluebell, grasses and bare ground. This sub-compartment forms the northern boundary of the site next to the Daresbury expressway and a sandstone ha-ha forms the eastern boundary adjacent to a small area of grassland owned by Halton council.</p>							
3a	1.43	Oak (pedunculate)	1940	High forest	Archaeological features, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Archaeological Feature, Connecting People with woods & trees, Secondary Woodland, Veteran Trees	Community Forest, Local Wildlife Site, Scheduled Ancient Monument

Southern and western boundaries comprise mature oak and sycamore with a grove of mature yew near the canal. Northern section contains mature sycamore with a grove of specimen yew. Central area is more recent planting of birch, ash, cherry and alder. Understorey dominated by bramble and elder with some small areas of rhododendron. Large areas of rhododendron were removed over the period 2005 to 2010. Some hazel/thorn on path edge. Significant numbers of veteran/potential veteran status trees (oak, yew) along with exotic specimen Sugar Maple. The Norton Priory Scheduled Ancient Monument partially falls within this sub-compartment along the western boundary.

3b	0.38	Oak (pedunculate)	1940	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Site structure, location, natural features & vegetation	Archaeological Feature, Connecting People with woods & trees, Secondary Woodland, Veteran Trees	Community Forest, Local Wildlife Site
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Narrow strip of broadleaves including oak (30%), birch, sycamore, lime with understorey of rhododendron, thorn, hazel and bramble. The Bridgewater canal lies to the south, open grassland to the north and Norton Priory Museum gardens to the west. There is no public access within the sub-compartment.

4a	1.35	Birch (downy/silver)	1940	High forest	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Archaeological Feature, Connecting People with woods & trees, Secondary Woodland, Veteran Trees	Community Forest, Local Wildlife Site
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Mainly regeneration of birch, sycamore, alder, willow with distinct groves of mature yew. Understorey comprising rhododendron, bramble with some bracken. Ditches form the boundary to north & east, a footpath forms the boundary to the west and south.

4b	3.14	Oak (pedunculate)	1940	High forest	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site	Archaeological Feature, Connecting People with woods & trees, Secondary Woodland, Veteran Trees	Community Forest, Local Wildlife Site
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North west to south west gradually gives way from mature oak with some sycamore to total coverage by sycamore. North eastern corner has a stand of pine and more abundant sycamore. Understorey contains some rhododendron, bramble although a considerable amount of rhododendron was removed between 2001 and 2007.

4c	0.65	Sycamore	1940	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site	Archaeological Feature, Connecting People with woods & trees, Secondary Woodland, Veteran Trees	Community Forest, Local Wildlife Site
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Located in the north eastern corner of compartment 4 this sub-compartment contains a moribund stand of decaying sycamore with occasional mature oak. The area was be cleared of rhododendron from 1999 to 2001. Following this a re-stocking of native species failed but there is now good natural regeneration of Silver birch.

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**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	0.01	200	2
2018	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.01	200	2
2020	1a	Coppice	0.03	40	1
2021	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.03	80	2
2026	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.03	80	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.