



Saxten's & Cage's

Management Plan 2012-2017

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Saxten's & Cage's, Wilmay Copse
Location:	Fawkham Green, Fawkham Green
Grid reference:	TQ586649, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 177 TQ582654, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 177
Area:	22.96 hectares (56.74 acres) 4.71 hectares (11.64 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc) Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Once managed as two woods but now treated as a single entity with two distinctive characters, this site has Class II status for nature conservation and is particularly important for its dormice. A valued and well loved piece of the Kent landscape.

2.2 Extended Description

This Management Plan covers 2 separate sites Saxten's and Cage's Wood and Willmay Copse which are approximately 0.5km apart.

Saxten's and Cage's and Willmay Copse are predominately ancient semi natural woodlands situated adjacent to the small village of Fawkham Green on the plateau and sides of a dry valley within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). These woods are set within a mixed landscape of grazed fields (mainly horses), arable farming and other woodlands but are also within 0.5km approximately of Brands Hatch motor racing circuit. Both woods are classified as Local Wildlife Sites (formerly known as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest).

Willmay Copse was acquired in 1986 and Saxten's and Cage's in 1993. Financial assistance to purchase these sites was received from the Countryside Commission, Kent County Council, Sevenoaks District Council and a substantial amount from a local fundraising appeal.

Saxten's Wood and Cage's Wood were probably once managed as separate woods, but they are continuous with each other and have little obvious distinction between them. During the Second World War almost 4.5ha of Saxten's and Cage's Wood on the eastern edge was grubbed out and farmed. This was returned back to woodland when the Woodland Trust planted it in 1993 with site native broadleaved trees. The remainder of this wood was managed for its hazel and ash coppice products with beech and oak standards, but active coppice management had ceased by the early 1950's.

The 1987 storm caused considerable damage throughout Saxten's and Cage's Wood, (but little damage to Willmay Copse). The fallen timber was not cleared and many are still alive, or, if dead are providing valuable dead wood habitats. The areas opened up by the 1987 storm have now been restocked with natural regeneration which has contributed greatly its structural diversity. This wood also contains a number of over mature beech trees which are now beginning to collapse, and stumps of those which have already died, which are important habitats in their own right. Dormice are present within this wood.

Willmay Copse contains over mature coppice of beech, hornbeam, and ash and field maple having not been cut since the Second World War. A former paddock in the south-west of the property was planted by the Woodland Trust in 1986, with a mixture of native broadleaved trees. Historically this paddock had been wooded.

Both woods have a rich ground flora throughout, dominated by bluebell, wood anemone and dog's mercury.

The soils are formed of clay with flints over the underlying chalk and vary from being slightly acid on the plateau, to calcareous on the valley sides or slopes. This has encouraged a wide diversity of woodland species.

Public access is maintained throughout these woods with access off the adjacent public highways and Rights of Way, although visitor numbers are low.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Saxten's & Cage's Wood is located within one mile of the village of Fawkham Green in NW Kent. To get to the wood from the centre of the village walk along Fawkham Green Road, a narrow lane with no pavement, to the northern entrance which is on the right. Additional to the northern entrance there are several entry points to the south of the wood along Rogers Wood Road. The entrances are generally through squeeze gaps between fencing. There is also one other entrance over a stile off Fawkham Green Road. There is a network of footpaths around the wood, none of which are surfaced. One official public footpath (SD261) runs north-south across the wood. There is no formal car-parking at the wood, but there is very limited roadside parking in the wider passing places along Rogers Wood Lane.

There is no bus-stop close to the wood. The nearest places to get buses to are New Ash Green and West Kingsdown, both of which are several miles away. The nearest public toilets are on Upper Street at New Ash Green, and there is a designated toilet for disabled people (using a RADAR key).

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

In the long term, our ancient semi-natural woods will be allowed to develop naturally, unless there is a need to maintain habitat continuity for species that are wholly reliant on it, where they survive.

There are no other areas of coppice nearby that are being actively worked and most of the coppice at Saxten's and Cage's and Wilmay Copse is now 50-60 years old and showing deadwood characteristics. The wooded areas of both woodlands will be managed through a non-intervention regime that will allow natural regeneration to infill once the over mature coppice and standard trees collapse. These will be left in-situ as deadwood.

The wide ride habitat established in Saxten's and Cage's will continue to be managed on a short rotation (8-10 years) that will create a woodland edge habitat to increase the range of biodiversity at the site. Some trees and over mature coppice will be selectively thinned (by felling) along the permissive paths for tree safety reasons as and when is necessary.

The Woodland Trust will ensure that the public can enjoy appropriate open access to Saxten's and Cage's and Wilmay Copse. The Trust's regular inspections, including routine tree safety inspections will continue.

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

Saxten's and Cage's:

This is classified as ancient woodland. This wood can best be described as a lowland beech-ash wood, which can be classified further into 3 NVC stand types: W14 beech - bramble woodland, W12 beech - wood anemone woodland, and W8 ash - field maple - wood anemone woodland.

Historically managed by coppicing, its species composition is predominately ash with hazel, with some elder, wild cherry, field maple, birch (silver and downy), whitebeam, small leaved lime, common and midland hawthorn, yew and beech coppice - an unusual feature which also occurs in Wilmay Copse. Holly is more common on the plateau area, while buckthorn, spindle and elder occur in the lower sections.

There are large pedunculate and sessile oaks and mature beech forming standards throughout the wood.

Tree regeneration after the 1987 storm has been prolific with ash, oak, birch, hazel, yew, beech, wild cherry, field maple and whitebeam.

Deadwood from windblown trees and collapsed standards are rotting in large masses and this plus the dense undergrowth makes access difficult in places. This is good habitat for fungi and coleoptera.

The ground flora throughout is dominated by bramble, with bluebell, wood anemone and wood spurge in the plateau areas. Where the soils are more calcareous, spurge laurel, stinking iris, and sweet woodruff occur. Primrose and moschatel are common on the damper rides, and dog's mercury dominates the lower ground. At least 22 ancient woodland indicator plant species are present.

The wood holds a reasonably good bryophyte flora, including both acid-loving and lime-loving species.

Archaeological features associated with ancient woodland are present and include a hollow track between flinty banks through the centre of compartment 2a and a wood bank along the north and western boundaries of compartment 2a.

A survey in 1998 indicates that there is a dormouse population resident in the wood although no follow up surveys have been carried out since.

The eastern flank of the woodland (compartment 1a) is a woodland creation area planted in 1993 with a mixture of native broadleaves which is now well established.

Wilmay Copse:

This is very similar to Saxten's and Cage's being ancient woodland and a mixture of 2 NVC classifications: W12 and W8. The structure of the wood is mainly over mature coppice of beech, hornbeam, field maple and ash. The ancient beech coppice stools are especially large and contain interesting deadwood habitats. There is also a stand of almost pure hornbeam coppice.

Significance

Saxten's and Cage's and Wilmay Copse are important because they are ancient woodland. This long history of existence means that the woodland habitat is very rich in wildlife. Some examples of this include the presence of dormice, ancient beech trees and specialist woodland plants including bluebell and wood anemone.

The amount of ASNW left in Britain has been drastically reduced over the last century. Approximately 40% of England's ASNW is found in the South East. ASNW is very important due to the continuity of woodland cover over hundreds of years which allows for a diverse range of wildlife and vegetation to develop over time that cannot be found in new woodland creation sites. In a heavily wooded area where woodland has become fragmented larger areas of woodland are able to withstand external pressures such as climate change much better. Ancient woodland is irreplaceable and the prevention of its loss is one of the main aims of the Trust.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints

- no active management of these woodlands through coppicing is now possible as they are not part of a coppiced landscape, and also due to the age of the coppice being over 30 years old, (one of the thresholds for determining whether the Woodland Trust coppices or not).

Opportunities

- good example to showcase of an ancient woodland where coppicing has ceased and now has a developing deadwood element with the benefits to wildlife this entails

Factors Causing Change

Rabbit browsing on coppice cut within the wide ride habitats.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Through minimum intervention this semi-natural ancient woodland will be left to senesce and naturally regenerate to form semi natural habitat by natural processes. Some canopy collapse is likely followed by natural regeneration. There should be an increasing amount of deadwood both standing and fallen to add to the biodiversity of this habitat.

The wide ride habitat totalling approximately 1.7km through Saxten's and Cage's Wood will be maintained under a 2 zone cutting regime for the benefit of invertebrates and ground nesting birds, with some thinning/singling of coppice either side of the rides to create stable and balanced crowns. The woodland creation in cpt. 1a and 3a will develop into mature secondary woodland and through natural processes will become a semi natural habitat.

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

Manage the main body of the ancient woodland through minimum intervention during this plan period.

The management of ride side coppicing/widening will continue along some of the key rides in Saxten's and Cage's wood. This will be achieved through a mixture of volunteer and contractor work and will result in at least 300m of ride edges being cut and scalloped on both sides each year. Over mature coppice stools beside Rogers Wood Lane and Sun Hill will continue to be monitored and stems singled/thinned to create balanced crowns as appropriate.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

Saxten's and Cage's and Wilmay Copse are classified by the Woodland Trust as category B and C woodlands respectively. This implies that at Saxten's and Cage's there is regular usage, 5 - 15 people using one entrance per day, whereas at Wilmay Copse public useage of the site is less. At both woodlands there are a good variety of paths and tracks. This combined with the diverse woodland structure, wildlife and views over the surrounding landscape offer an interesting experience for walkers. Access is purely for pedestrians. These woods are mainly enjoyed by people living in and around Fawkham Green, as car-parking is limited.

Significance

Public access to this woodland helps fulfil one of the Woodland Trust's corporate objectives, "Inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees". It is important because it is a place where the local people close to Fawkham Green can enjoy the natural environment close to where they live.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:

- These woods offer a good display of spring flowers which could be promoted more.

Constraints:

- There is limited car-parking for a few cars only along Rogers Wood Lane and Sun Hill. Local transport links are poor. These factors mean that the woodland is unlikely to be visited by many people further away than Fawkham Green itself.
- The boundary along Rogers Wood road, suffers occasional abuse from flytipping and vandalism which might spoil people's enjoyment of the wood.
- The proximity of the woods to Brands Hatch racing circuit means that the noise pollution does spoil quiet enjoyment of the wood during race days.

Factors Causing Change

Horse encroachment, motorbikes.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Pedestrian access for visitors will continue to be offered at the current level at Saxten's & Cage's and Wilmay Copse. A good network of paths will be kept open with clear and welcoming signage at all entrances.

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

Permissive routes and entrances are maintained in good and safe condition. How this will be achieved:

To monitor the access by quads and motorbikes and if it occurs to liaise with Kent Police to try and prevent this from occurring at this site.

Paths will be kept open by mowing twice a year at Saxten's and Cage's and once a year at Wilmay Copse. The standard of these cuts will be monitored by an annual inspection.

Tree safety inspections to be carried out at least once every 18 months on Zone A - to include one autumn and one summer inspection in every 3 year period. Zone B inspections to be carried out every 36 months. Arboriculture work to be carried out as appropriate.

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	4.45	Ash	1993	Min-intervention		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
<p>Formerly woodland (part of Cages Wood) prior to the Second World War when it was grubbed out and farmed for arable crops. It was planted in December 1993 with 35% ash, 20% oak, 10% wild cherry, 10% beech 10% field maple, 5% whitebeam and 10% woody shrubs - hawthorn, dogwood, wayfaring tree, hazel, purging buckthorn and spindle. The planting matrix is now well supplemented by natural regeneration of ash, goat willow, birch and hawthorn. Open spaces are provided by very wide ride edges. Tall grasses and herb communities (hogweed, wild carrot, bramble, with some rose) grow in these ride edges. There is also occasional native down land species such as pyramidal orchid. A gas wayleave runs across the northern part of 1a.</p>							
2a	19.43	Mixed native broadleaves	1940	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access within the site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc)
<p>This is formed of a mixture of over mature coppice, as well as a small area felled in the north east corner in 2004 which has re-coppiced; regenerating areas following the 1987 storm; collapsed over mature standards (mainly beech); and living standard trees (mainly oak and beech). There are some dramatic large beeches with blown out tops with fine wildlife niches and displaying fungal infections. Extremely tall ash of the same age, dominates the areas that suffered wind blow during the 1987 storm. Ash dieback is affecting the trees. An historic woodbank exists along the western and northern boundary. A gas wayleave runs NW to E across the northern tip.</p>							
3a	0.74	Mixed native broadleaves	1986	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access within the site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Prior to 1986 this sub-compartment within Wilmay Copse was grazed, although it is designated as ancient woodland. It was replanted with site native trees in 1986. The main species are: wild cherry, oak, ash, hornbeam and beech in roughly equal proportions. The planting matrix is now well supplemented by natural regeneration of elder, ash, oak, yew, guelder rose, wayfaring tree and hazel. There are a few mature oaks along the northern boundary. A sprinkling of bluebells can be found throughout as well as occasional primroses.

4a	2.54	Mixed native broadleaves	1950	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access within the site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, County Wildlife Site (includes SINC, SINC etc)
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This area forms the majority of Wilmay Copse and is a mixture of over mature coppice. There are areas of pure hornbeam in the north west of this sub compartment with field maple, ash and wild cherry. On the south west side are some outstanding ancient beech coppice stools, together with field maple and ash. The remainder is composed of hornbeam, ash and wild cherry with a minor component of beech. The ground flora contains several specialist woodland plants, indicative of ancient woodland, including bluebell, dog's mercury and spurge laurel.

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.