



# Penstave Copse

## 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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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>	Penstave Copse
<b>Location:</b>	Aish, South Brent
<b>Grid reference:</b>	SX691611, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 202
<b>Area:</b>	8.56 hectares (21.15 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc), National Park

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

Penstave Copse is located on the southern edge of Dartmoor, within the upper reaches of the Avon Valley, to the north of the town of South Brent and the nearby hamlet of Aish. The site is enjoyed by many local people, as it is close to South Brent, and connected to the town by a public footpath. On acquisition, in partnership with Dartmoor National Park Authority, a short permissive link was negotiated with a neighbouring landowner. A circular walk is now provided and encounters all aspects of the site. There are fine views towards Dartmoor and the nearby Brent Hill and there is car parking for two cars by one of the entrances in a lay-by.

The area is an intricate landscape of woodland, improved and unimproved pasture extending up to the moor (1.5 km north). The site is a similar mixture of habitats, formed from a series of grassland fields and woodland of ancient and secondary origin. Old boundary banks with occasional mature standards separate most of these areas. The site slopes downhill, quite steeply in parts, from a minor rural lane to the river Avon.

## 2.2 Extended Description

Penstave Copse is located on the southern edge of Dartmoor, within the upper reaches of the Avon Valley, to the north of the town of South Brent and the nearby hamlet of Aish. The site is enjoyed by many local people, as it is close to South Brent, and connected to the town by a public footpath. On acquisition, in partnership with Dartmoor National Park Authority, a short permissive link was negotiated with a neighbouring landowner. A circular walk is now provided and encounters all aspects of the site. There are fine views towards Dartmoor and the nearby Brent Hill and there is car parking for two cars by one of the entrances in a lay-by.

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Mature Oak, Ash, Hazel and Alder High Forest woodland occurs along the river's edge and accounts for approximately 40% of the site and is notably rich in lower plant growth. Coppice Hazel is often dominant in the sub canopy. Dormice occur throughout the site.

Approximately 2ha of pasture was planted at the top of the site in 1995, the main tree species being oak and ash, and has now reached canopy closure. Bluebells are widespread in the spring.

There are four areas of unimproved grassland, which have remnants of a diverse flora and in the spring show a fine display of bluebells and primroses. Later in the summer bracken dominates much of these areas. Himalayan balsam, while present across the site, is much reduced.

There are paths throughout the wood, accessed through stone stiles from the fields to the south and from the road to the west, giving great views across the valley, and along the river. Given the nature of the area many are steep and while grassy, some are very slippery during wet weather. The path along the river requires a little climbing over a 6 foot boulder.

Penstave Copse is well supported by local volunteers who have undertaken many hours work on the site.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

Penstave Copse is located on the southern edge of Dartmoor within the upper reaches of the Avon Valley, near the hamlet of Aish and less than a mile north of the town of South Brent. It is reached via steep and narrow country lanes. There are fine views towards Dartmoor and the nearby Brent Hill. The wood is enjoyed by many local people due to its proximity to South Brent to which it is connected by a public footpath.

Walking from the centre of South Brent, a public footpath leads off the road just north of Wellington Square for about 1 km along the river crossing it at Lydia Bridge, and continuing on the footpath past the old Mill, until you reach the wood via a stile. There is a free public car park in the centre of South Brent at the old station yard.

There is parking for 2 cars on the road side next to the wood and there are two pedestrian entrances via stone squeeze gaps. The wood slopes down to the river and many of the paths quite steep, or follow the contours along the slopes. There is a short permissive link across neighbouring land, connecting back to the public right of way, to create a circular loop. There are paths throughout the wood, most of which are steep and grassy, but give rewarding views across the valley and through the grasslands, particularly in late spring when the primroses and bluebells are out. The path along the river has some large boulders in it which visitors have to climb over to continue along the path.

Nearest bus stop: There are a number of bus stops in South Brent, including one in Stockbridge Lane and Station Road. Further information about public transport is available from Traveline - [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk).

### 3.2 Access / Walks

## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Penstave Copse is located on the southern edge of Dartmoor, within the upper reaches of the Avon Valley, to the north of the town of South Brent and the nearby hamlet of Aish. The site is enjoyed by many local people, as it is close to South Brent, and connected to the town by a public footpath. On acquisition, in partnership with Dartmoor National Park Authority, a short permissive link was negotiated with a neighbouring landowner. A circular walk is now provided and encounters all aspects of the site. There are fine views towards Dartmoor and the nearby Brent Hill and there is car parking for two cars by one of the entrances in a lay-by.

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Approximately 2ha of pasture was planted at the top of the site in 1995, the main tree species being oak and ash, and has now reached canopy closure. Bluebells are widespread in the spring.

There are four areas of unimproved grassland, which have remnants of a diverse flora and in the spring show a fine display of bluebells and primroses. Later in the summer bracken dominates much of these areas. Himalayan balsam, while present across the site, is much reduced.

There are paths throughout the wood, accessed through stone stiles from the fields to the south and from the road to the west, giving great views across the valley, and along the river. Given the nature of the area many are steep and while grassy, some are very slippery during wet weather. The path along the river requires a little climbing over a 6 foot boulder.

Penstave Copse is well supported by local volunteers who have undertaken many hours work on the site.



## 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

The ancient woodland is a belt of woodland that runs alongside the river Avon on steeply sloping ground. The woodland is varied with areas of bare rock and spring lines running down into the river. The woodland is predominately Western Oak woodland but also Ash and Wet woodland types, ranging from Natural Vegetation Classification (NVC) type W10, - W6. The site is locally important for lichens and liverworts with 93 species being recorded. The management of the area has been chequered through time and some of the structure reflects this.

#### Significance

Western Oak Woods are internationally important and are recognised in National and Local BAPs. Management of this area of ASNW helps assist the Trust in meeting its core aim of no further loss of Ancient Woodland and to extend and buffer adjacent habitats to enhance biodiversity.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

#### Factors Causing Change

An increase in holly, sycamore saplings and ivy will all threaten the bryophyte, lichen and liverwort communities, as they will affect light levels. Tree disease may also affect certain species and cause potential sudden changes in the canopy. Squirrel and deer damage, while currently not an issue, could become so in the future. Himalayan balsam, although under control in this area, may become a problem again.

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

A multi-aged, regenerating Oak woodland with an open structure suitable for lichens etc. where there are no large holly trees or ivy affecting light levels to the trees and bark. The river corridor will be a varied structure of light and shade improving conditions for wildlife. It is expected that this will be provided by natural processes such as wind blow.

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

The ancient woodland will be left to develop naturally with a review of the threats from holly and ivy in year 4 of the plan. Himalayan Balsam will be controlled.

## 5.2 Secondary Woodland

### Description

Broadleaf Woodland, planted in 1996 having now reach canopy closure. It comprises of trees and Shrubs representative of adjacent Ancient Woodland (Oak and Ash Dominated). Some areas have good bluebell cover in the spring. Himalayan balsam has been an issue in the past but with canopy closure and management is now much less of an issue.

### Significance

Increasing new native woodland is a WT management aim, linking and buffering existing habitats is also important.

### Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: If the canopy is reopened it may cause in further flush of Himalayan balsam.  
 Opportunities: Sustainable South Brent are interested in managing part of the wood as a sustainable fire wood source for local people. This would enable a diverse coppice with standards structure to develop adding to the structural diversity of the whole site.

### Factors Causing Change

Ash die back and other tree diseases could alter the structure and composition of the woodland. Deer and squirrel damage could also affect any regeneration, particularly if sycamore is a significant component. Himalayan Balsam may affect the ground flora and tree regeneration through decreased light levels.

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

A diverse structured, mixed species continuous cover woodland with some mature trees to enable colonisation by lichens etc, adjacent to boundary hedges, Ancient Woodland and open grassland.

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

To explore the potential management of the area with Sustainable South Brent, looking at developing a 15 year coppice with standards cycle across the compartment adjacent to the road, otherwise the area will be managed with limited intervention other than Himalayan balsam control.

### 5.3 Informal Public Access

#### Description

Informal public access via public footpath and permissive circular paths that lead through the site. There is limited parking along the road edge (enough for 2 cars), but the site is well used by the local public generally accessing it from South Brent.

#### Significance

Increasing public understanding and enjoyment is a fundamental Woodland Trust aim access to wooded valley sites and is identified within the Dartmoor National Park management plan. It is also important here at a very local level, for residents. One of the paths is a public right of way.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

Constraint: The wood is on steep ground and along the riverside path there are a number of natural obstacles, including large boulders, limiting access to some.

#### Factors Causing Change

Canopy closure of the new woodland is causing the path vegetation to die off and therefore creating muddy surface on fairly steep slopes during the winter. Bankside erosion along the river may cause parts of the footpath to require re-routing after times of spate.

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

A site that is pleasant, and safe to visit with features and facilities providing an informal, low key experience for local visitors, and walkers, with significant views from points around the site.

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

Drier and more easily assessable and safe network of paths that visitors can enjoy by:-

1. Improving light levels along wetter tracks to enable surface drying abilities.
2. Entrance maintenance and path mowing.
3. Managing roadside woodland and hedges to comply with highways requirements/legal obligations.
4. Carrying out tree safety works as required.

## 5.4 Mixed Habitat Mosaic

### Description

An area of neutral grassland (Predominately NVC type MG5) with scrub communities (W24 *Rubus fruticosus*-*Holcus lanatus*) around the edges. In the spring the grassland has violets, primroses and bluebells in it, before bracken later dominates large areas. Lesser butterfly orchids have been recorded regularly, but habitat conditions are becoming unsuitable due to a lack of management.

### Significance

The area is identified as a Local wildlife site: grassland of regional importance. This meets the Trust's aim of improving biodiversity in woodlands.

### Opportunities & Constraints

Constraint: The area is currently unfenced and has no water supply in the grassland areas. Graziers can be hard to find. Opportunity: Bringing in a grazier at the beginning of fencing etc. generally ensures that the grazier has a greater 'buy in' and long term commitment to the site.

### Factors Causing Change

Lack of appropriate management and therefore natural succession to woodland and a decrease in overall biodiversity on the site

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

A regionally important, mixed community of neutral grassland sustainably managed through grazing.

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

To manage the grassland to improve its botanical diversity and structure for invertebrates, while also controlling bracken and Himalayan balsam

1. Assuming a grazier and funding can be found install fencing and water to the open areas to enable the sustainable management of the grassland through grazing during the late summer..
2. If grazing is not a practical solution at this time then mow all open areas in late July / early August.

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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	3.39	Oak (sessile)	1800	High forest	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc), National Park
<p>Predominately a high forest mixed broadleaf stand; the dominant species are oak and ash. Other tree species are present include alder, beech and sycamore; alder dominates in a small area towards the river. Areas have been previously worked as coppice and a varied structure exists, cutting has occurred since 1950s but older areas occur (p1800). The more mature specimens are located along or close to the old hedge boundaries and on the steep ground towards the middle of the stand. Those near the river are rich in lichens and mosses.</p>							
1b	2.20	Ash	1996	Coppice		Informal Public Access	National Park
<p>New native woodland planting of mixed broadleaves with a core of Oak and Ash (P1996), over MG1 (Arrhenatherum) improved pasture of low conservation value, dominated by grasses, predominately Yorkshire fog and rough meadow grass. A field layer of bracken and bramble dominates much of the sub compartment as does Himalayan balsam. Although under the trees towards the centre of the sub compartment grass species dominate. A mature hedge dominated by hazel borders the lane whilst open grassland border to the east.</p>							
1c	2.95	NULL		Non-wood habitat		Informal Public Access	National Park
<p>This compartment covers all the areas of open grassland, some scrub edge and a hazel dominated hedge bank. The grassland was historically diverse MG5 <i>Cynosurus cristatus</i> -<i>Centaurea nigra</i> sward, which contained good displays of bluebells and primroses as well as the normal grassland species. There is also a population of Greater Butterfly Orchid on the south-western edge of the northern block. Some areas have become bracken dominated and have had large areas of Himalayan balsam. The area also includes some woodland planting on the lower slopes.</p>							

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**Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)**

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2016	1b	Coppice	2.20	2	5
2017	1b	Coppice	2.20	2	5.3
2018	1b	Coppice	2.20	5	10
2019	1b	Coppice	2.20	5	10
2020	1b	Coppice	2.20	5	10
2022	1b	Thin	0.87	0	0
2022	1c	Thin	1.18	0	0

## 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.