WOODLAND TRUST

William's Wood

Management Plan 2017-2022

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MAPS

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	William's Wood
Location:	Warninglid, Horsham
Grid reference:	TQ240262, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 198
Area:	4.76 hectares (11.76 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

This is part of a much larger area of woodland and is well served by a network of footpaths. The surrounding area is typical of the High Weald being a mixture of woodland, mixed farming and parkland. This particular part of the wider wood is small but interesting and there is still evidence of the damage done by the storms of 1987. Large areas of bluebells and wood anemones make this well worth a visit in the spring.

2.2 Extended Description

William's Wood is a small (4.7Ha) area of ancient woodland in the High Weald AONB in West Sussex, about three quarters of a mile from the village of Warninglid. It was left to the Woodland Trust in 1993 by Jane Louisa Knapman and was named after Mrs Knapman's husband, William. The wood was is part of the neighbouring Harvey's Wood and originally formed part of the grounds of the adjoining property, Stonewick.

The wood forms the northern extent of a larger swathe of mixed woodland extending to the south, and is more loosely connected to the expansive treescape of the High Weald to the north. The wider landscape consists of extensive woodland, farmland and parkland interspersed with occasional housing, waterbodies, and the large towns of Horsham, Haywards Heath and Burgess Hill. A network of paths allows access around the whole wood, and to the wider woodland surrounding the site.

Although small, the site is diverse, containing gill woodland around two deeply incised streams (a feature of the High Weald), hazel coppice, two species-rich meadows, and a larch stand. Rhododendron had previously out-competed much of the native shrub layer of the wood, and bracken was dominating the meadows. However, since acquiring the land, the trust has cleared much of the rhododendron and the meadow areas have been regularly mown, giving rise to a greater diversity of native flora including extensive primroses, wood anemones and bluebells in spring and occasional colonies of twayblades. There are ferns in the valleys and some wet areas supporting soft rush, sphagnum and other mosses.

Severe wind damage occurred in the storm of 16th October 1987 and although some of the trees were cleared, there are still large, rotting trunks scattered about, providing valuable dead wood habitat.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

General location:
Take the B2115, Warninglid Lane, approx ¾ mile west from Warninglid village centre and turn south into the tarmac drive down to Stonewick. This road has no pavements but after approximately 100m a public footpath branches off of the drive on the right-hand side. Continue south along the public footpath through Stonewick Wood for approximately 450m at which point take the path to the left and continue downhill for a further 100m. You will then see another path to the left which goes into the wood, and is marked with a welcome sign.

General overview of paths & entrances:
The entrance has no gate or stile. The paths within the wood are unsurfaced and have some moderate to steep gradients with occasional sets of steps and a narrow footbridge. The paths can be muddy after wet weather.

Parking:
There is no car park at the site or nearby.

Public Transport:
Nearest train station: Horsham, approx 6 miles from the wood via the A281, B2110 and B2115.
Nearest bus stop: Warninglid Lane, approx ½ mile from the site via the public footpath. Further information on public transport can be obtained from Traveline: www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk or tel: 0870 608 2 608.

Public Toilets:
Nearest public toilets: Pease Pottage Services, approx 5 miles north, off Junction 11, M23/A23. Disabled and baby-changing facilities available. Information obtained from website: www.moto-way.com.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Protecting, enhancing and restoring the integrity of ancient semi-natural woodland, and thus William's Wood, are key objectives of the Trust. Although in this context William's Wood is one very small component of a much larger whole (the High Weald AONB), the Trust's management of the woods and meadows may be of significance in contrast to the intensive management of the majority of open space in the locality. Therefore, the balance of native woodland and open ground within the site will be maintained on a low intervention basis.

The high forest woodland will continue to thrive with a diversity of species and structure through natural processes, as the small scale of the site and poor accessibility does not lend itself to silvicultural intervention. Species will fluctuate according to natural conditions, with notable tree diseases (e.g. ash dieback) altering the canopy composition. While certain species may diminish, other species are likely to thrive in the changing conditions, such as increasing light levels created by the loss of trees in the canopy.

Dead or dying trees will only be felled if they pose a safety risk, and the resulting wood will be stacked within the wood to increase dead wood habitat. Where dead trees do not pose a safety risk they will be left to provide valuable standing deadwood habitat.

The invasive rhododendron has mainly been removed from the wood; however, ongoing control will be necessary to deal with any seedlings arising from the neighbouring privately owned woodland.

The two meadow areas will have a rich diversity of ground flora following continued mowing in autumn, after flowering species set seed. The level of bracken cover will be monitored to ensure that it does not significantly suppress flower and grass species through shading, and other invasive species such as Japanese knotweed will be removed. Areas of trees and scrub surrounding and within the meadows may be cut back when necessary to prevent excessive shading of the open ground.

The existing network of permissive paths will be kept open with annual management, and infrastructure (gates, stiles, fences etc) will be maintained to allow access into the wood.

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

William's Wood is a typical High Weald gill woodland, modified in recent history by the planting and subsequent invasion of Rhododendron ponticum, which was exacerbated by storm damage in 1987. The rhododendron has since been managed and is currently under control. Pedunculate oak is the most common canopy tree, however, there is also a notable area of planted larch, and the occasional ash and beech. The understorey is predominantly hazel, and bluebells are the dominant ground flora species in spring.

Significance

Ancient woodland occupies only 2% of land in the UK. It is an important habitat for many rare and endangered species.
Gill woodlands have a high nature conservation value. They provide a stable, moist micro-climate which favours a rich growth of ferns and bryophytes. In south-east England they can represent relicts from the Atlantic period over 5000 years ago and are of worldwide importance.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: steep slopes and streams limit silvicultural management.

Factors Causing Change

Rhododendron, which is currently under control, but will quickly re-colonise the wood if not kept under control.
Deer may have a detrimental effect on tree and ground flora regeneration, and need to be monitored.
Ash Dieback will affect the ash present within the wood and surrounding landscape. This will have a minor effect on the structure of this wood, creating open areas where ash diminishes, giving opportunity for other species to establish in their place. There is likely to be a slight increase in dead wood as a result of the disease and this will be retained on site where possible, in places where it does not present a hazard to neighbours or visitors to the wood.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The wooded areas will have developed more natural characteristics with large veteran trees and plentiful standing and fallen deadwood. Hazel will be thriving as the dominant component of the understorey supplemented with a diversity of other native species such as holly, hawthorn, elder, goat willow, rowan and cherry. Some planted larch will remain to provide diversity of habitat.
Invasive non-native species such as Rhododendron ponticum will be controlled and will not threaten native understorey, ground flora and tree regeneration.

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

To maintain or improve the current condition of the wood, the following will be carried out in this plan period:
•Rhododendron will be removed annually by pulling seedlings and spraying regrowth with herbicide if necessary. The level of rhododendron will also be monitored in 2020, and during the woodland condition assessment in 2022.
•A deer impact assessment will be carried out in 2020.
•Ash Dieback will be assessed as part of the annual site tree inspections in line with the Trust's Tree Risk Management Policy.
•A woodland condition assessment will be carried out in 2022 to determine the effectiveness of management throughout this plan period and whether any adjustments need to be made.

5.2 Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat

Description

There are two meadow areas of acid to neutral grassland totalling just under one hectare, which slope downhill to the south. The upper meadow (0.70ha) is central to the site, with a smaller meadow (0.24ha) to the west. Both meadows hold a wide variety of species, with woodland wildflowers and ancient woodland indicator species evident in early spring and most prevalent on the periphery, along with an abundance of grassland species and tree seedlings on open ground. Bracken emerges later in the year, and some coarse grasses, tall herbs and bramble are present, particularly at the north end of the upper meadow. A few maturing trees are also present within the meadows from natural regeneration. The most notable species are the colonies of orchids (including heath spotted and twayblades) in the lower meadow, alongside fine grasses, small sedges and rushes at the eastern end.
Japanese knotweed has also been introduced into the upper meadow along with other garden plants such as mombretia, although these have been contained with past management.

Significance

Neutral and acid grasslands are a rare and decreasing habitat. Nationally less than 3% of grasslands remain unimproved. The High Weald is a stronghold for this habitat, albeit in small fragmented parcels. With the surrounding ancient semi-natural woodland the combination and interaction of these two rare habitats together is valuable for hosting scarce or rare species.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: The small area and sloping ground limit access by machinery. Mowing with small scale machinery in dry periods is the only practical option for management, and to prevent significant ground damage.

Factors Causing Change

Invasive Japanese knotweed, mombretia, bracken and other coarse vegetation, along with natural succession to broadleaved woodland.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Open ground will remain species-rich with no loss of area or key species. Bracken and tree seedlings will be controlled by appropriate management.

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

To maintain open ground, the following will be carried out in this plan period:
•An open area of a minimum of 0.94ha will be mown annually in September/October.
•Invasive species such as Japanese knotweed will be pulled or sprayed with herbicide as required.
•The diversity of species present and bracken, tree and scrub levels will be assessed in 2020 and as part of the condition assessment of the site in 2022.

5.3 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

William's Wood is a small (4.7ha) area of ancient woodland in the High Weald AONB in West Sussex, near Warninglid, a small village five and half miles west of Haywards Heath. It was left to the Woodland Trust in 1993 and is part of the neighbouring Harvey's Wood and previously formed part of the grounds of the adjoining property, Stonewick.

The wood is difficult to find and we strongly recommend looking up the route to the wood before setting off to find it, and taking an OS map with you. It is well worth the effort because when you find it, Williams Wood is a hidden treasure; an ideal place to picnic or sit for a quiet getaway. It's highly likely that you will have the wood to yourself (excluding the abundance of wildlife of course), with the chance of an occasional local resident passing through on a walk. If you time you visit to coincide with the bluebell carpet in spring, or the meadow flowers of summer, then so much the better.

There are no formal entrances to the wood, but there are small wooden Woodland Trust welcome signs at each entry and exit point. The woodland paths offer a circular route of approximately one 1.3 kilometres, exiting back out of the same entrance and heading north back to the drive past Stonewick.

A visit to the wood offers the chance to experience a classic example of the High Weald, characterised by rich woodland surrounding deep gorge-like streams known as gills, lined with ferns and mosses. The path takes you past two meadows which offer an ideal picnic spot on the adjacent bench or clear patches of open space, where you can admire the great diversity of native flowers including extensive primroses, wood anemones and bluebells and occasional colonies of orchids in spring.

Continuing on, multi-stemmed hazel coppice begins to flank both sides of the path, and taking the bridge across the gill into the heart of the wood you'll see towering oaks and larches overhead and large, rotting trunks, relics of the storm of October 1987 scattered about in places, providing valuable dead wood habitat.

There is a small circular path with a few steps to follow at this point which circles back onto the main path and returns back to the meadows, to the exit that you came in on. Other sections of path allow short walks through and around the meadows with the occasional views across the gills to the woodland beyond.

Significance

It has been proven that access to woodland provides an improved quality of life with benefits to both mental and physical health. William's Wood provides local people with free access to woodland in an area with much privately-owned woodland. It also offers visitors from further afield a rare opportunity to experience tranquility in a wooded environment in the busy southeast of England.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: The wood is some distance from the nearest village and there is no parking nearby.

Factors Causing Change

Long term Objective (50 years+)
To continue to provide a tranquil experience with safe access to all areas of the wood.
Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)
To continue to provide a tranquil experience with access to all areas of the wood, the following will be carried out in this plan period: •Annual strimming of paths, including paths through the meadows. •Annual inspection of infrastructure (steps, footbridge etc) and any remedial works required. •Annual tree inspections and any remedial tree works required in line with the WT Tree Risk Management policy. •An assessment of access and infrastructure provision as part of the woodland condition assessment in 2022.

6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By

APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	4.00	Oak (pedunculate)	1900	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/ mine shafts/sink holes etc	Connecting People with woods & trees	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Ancient semi-natural woodland (NVC type: W10a). Approx P1900 oak, ash, beech over hazel.							
1b	0.94	Open ground	1900	Non-wood habitat	Site structure, location, natural features & vegetation	Connecting People with woods & trees	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Two areas of semi-natural open ground: neutral to acid grassland meadows. In the upper, largest meadow, to the north, primroses and violets give way to carpets of wood anemones in spring. Near to woodland edges bluebells become more frequent. Also present are dog's mercury, bugle, yellow archangel, ground elder, narrow leaved dock, germander speedwell, hedge woundwort, figwort, wild strawberries, knapweed, devil's bit scabious, germander speedwell, ladies bedstraw, and Solomon's Seal. A few garden escapees or introductions, such as mombretia and cultivated daffodils are present. Rank grass, tall herbs and bramble are more abundant to the north. The meadow slopes south to the stream and gives good views to the surrounding woodland. The lower, smaller, meadow is of even greater conservation value with a broad range of native species present. In addition to those species listed for the upper meadow there is also a large colony of twayblades, containing hundreds of spikes, tormentil, ladies smock, spear thistle, and heath spotted orchids. Within the meadow is a stand of silver birches with ivy and rowan. There are many fine leaved grasses (fescues and sweet vernal grass) and many small sedges and rushes at the eastern end. Both meadows have bracken later in the year and many tree seedlings. Japanese Knotweed is alos present on the northernmost meadow.							

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.