



# Beningfield Wood

## Management Plan 2018-2023

## MANAGEMENT PLAN - CONTENTS PAGE

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
Introduction	
Plan review and updating	
Woodland Management Approach	
Summary	
1.0 Site details	
2.0 Site description	
2.1 Summary Description	
2.2 Extended Description	
3.0 Public access information	
3.1 Getting there	
3.2 Access / Walks	
4.0 Long term policy	
5.0 Key Features	
5.1 Secondary Woodland	
5.2 Informal Public Access	
6.0 Work Programme	
Appendix 1: Compartment descriptions	
Glossary	
<b>MAPS</b>	
Access	
Conservation Features	
Management	

## 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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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.

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## 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>	Beningfield Wood
<b>Location:</b>	West Milton, Bridport
<b>Grid reference:</b>	SY504972, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 194
<b>Area:</b>	8.31 hectares (20.53 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

This wood lies in an area with small villages, characterised by lush pastures and deep valleys with wooded streams. Come for a woodland walk and enjoy its peaceful atmosphere and magnificent views over open country towards Bridport.

## 2.2 Extended Description

Beningfield Wood is a long narrow woodland on a steep south and west facing valley side, giving views over open country to the west towards Bridport just north of West Milton. Visitors to the wood are infrequent due to its secluded location, limited parking and challenging terrain. However those that do visit the wood are rewarded by a peaceful atmosphere and magnificent views. The wood adjoins a privately owned nature reserve to the east (owned by the Leggett Trust), managed as grassland, and is near to the Mapperton and Poorton Vales SSSI. The surrounding land is grazed.

Formerly three fields of improved grassland the site was planted in 1995 & 1996 predominantly with mixed native broadleaves. An area of Scot's Pine was planted on the crest of the ridge, to reflect traditional planting of hilltop pine in the surrounding area. The wood incorporates a circular ride system for access and two sheltered glades (approx 0.2 ha and 0.5ha respectively) to create more diverse habitat. In total open ground forms about 20% of the design. Mature hedges surround each of the old fields demarcating the boundaries, these are growing up now they are no longer required to be stock proof.

The wood is in the Dorset AONB, the Wessex Vales Natural Area, and the Marshwood and Powerstock Vales 139 National Character Area (NCA). Powerstock Vale is a rural area with small villages, characterised by deeply incised valleys on Upper Greensand, leading down to lush pastures and wooded stream valleys on the Jurassic clay vales below. Broadleaved woods in the area are typically small and either on the steep slopes or valley bottoms, Beningfield Wood fits this tradition.

The wood is named in honour of Gordon Beningfield, acclaimed wildlife painter who died in 1998.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

Beningfield Wood is located in a quiet rural area, approximately one km north of West Milton and is reached by rural lanes or public rights of way. The total population in the area is low and the total in the surrounding villages is less than 500. However, the wood is situated less than five miles from the towns of Beaminster and Bridport - combined population of over 10,500.

There is informal parking for one car in the gateway at the northern entrance on Ridgeback Lane (which runs north off the road between Mangerton and West Milton), but no other parking is available nearby. Ridgeback Lane is a single carriage rural lane with passing places but no pavements. The entrance off Ridgeback lane is a squeeze gap. Access from the south is available via two public rights of way. At the south eastern corner of the wood, there is a squeeze gap for pedestrian access. Midway along the south eastern boundary there is an open gap to access the bridleway. The wood is situated in an area of steep sided valleys, and consequently when walking in this area visitors will encounter steep slopes.

Within the wood paths have a natural grass surface and in places these are uneven, there are also unavoidable slopes which can make walking difficult particularly in wet conditions.

Nearest public toilet - thought to be at Bridport - East Street - open 24 hours, all year, with facilities for disabled people

Nearest bus stop: A very limited service locally stops at Leigh Gate, Ruscombe Lane, West Milton approximately 1/2 mile away or the School, School Hill, Powerstock approximately 1 1/4 miles away

For further information on transport see the Traveline website [www.traveline.com](http://www.traveline.com) or phone 0871 200 22 33

### 3.2 Access / Walks

## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long-term vision at Beningfield Wood is for the wood to develop naturally into an attractive, mature predominantly native broadleaf woodland. A healthy canopy of trees with an understorey of woodland shrubs and ground flora, integrating with other habitats such as the hedges, wide rides & glades.

The access provision, views and sense of tranquillity at the site will see it valued and enjoyed by locals.

The mixture of habitats within the site and on the neighbouring nature reserves will develop to create a mosaic of habitats which will have abundant wildlife.



## 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 Secondary Woodland

#### Description

Predominantly native woodland planted in 1996 and covering 8.31ha (comp 1a). The design incorporates a wide circular ride and two glades with 20% open space. The woodland is predominantly ash with oak, cherry and thorn. A small area of Scots pine was planted at the highest point of the site to reflect the local tradition of hill-top pines.

Formerly semi-improved pasture, the area now supports woodland and associated open ground habitats with links to mature hedgerows that surround the woodland and cross adjoining land. This network provides links to other mature hedges and small woodlands within the landscape.

#### Significance

The broadleaved woodland contributes to the habitat action plans at local, regional and national level and fulfils the Woodland Trust's objectives of creating new woodland and protecting native woodlands. The wood is adjacent to unimproved grassland to the east and adjacent to that and within 500m of the wood is one of the areas designated under the Mapperton & Poorton Vales SSSI and SAC. This is a mix of neutral grassland & non-intervention woodland. It therefore forms part of a local mosaic of diverse nature conservation interest.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

The opportunity is to establish an attractive, predominantly native broadleaved woodland with a varying structure, connected through a series of mature hedgerows to the wider landscape.

#### Factors Causing Change

- Ash die back (chalara) reducing the canopy cover and inhibiting Ash regeneration
- Browsing by deer, affecting regeneration
- Squirrel damage to establishing trees, such as oak
- Further canopy loss through other tree diseases

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

Mature and attractive native broadleaf woodland of varying structure and habitats. A mixture of trees, shrubs and open rides with a developing ground flora, providing a mosaic of associated semi-natural habitats.

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

In the anticipation that the presence of ash dieback will lead to a natural process of thinning through selective mortality over the management plan period, there will be no active interventions to open up the canopy to maintain optimal growth conditions for existing trees as well as promoting successive natural regeneration opportunities. Instead, with the impact on ash, the woodland will be allowed to develop naturally, supported through periodic monitoring through woodland condition assessments and monitoring chalara through tree safety inspections.

## 5.2 Informal Public Access

### Description

Beningfield Wood is in a quiet rural location between the villages of West Milton and South Poorton. Road access is via Ridgeback Lane or by public rights of way on both the east and west of the site. Parking is limited to a single vehicle in the gateway.

For those that do access the site the wide circular ride provides a route along the top of the ridge with a chance to enjoy the extensive views across the surrounding landscape, as well as secluded and peaceful glades and woodland, although the steep slopes within the site will limit access for some users.

### Significance

The Woodland Trust believes that everyone should recognise that trees and woods are an essential part of a healthy environment and that there should be a wood with open access close to everyone's home.

It provides a tranquil place for locals to walk and enjoy quiet recreation as well as linking to wider access routes in the area where accessible woodlands are limited.

### Opportunities & Constraints

To maintain the existing footpath network, allowing continued access and enjoyment for future years.

### Factors Causing Change

Ash die-back (chalara) affecting the safety of the woodland and its path network.

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

A woodland that contains well-maintained & attractive paths & entrances that will form part of the wider network of rights of way. The wood will remain open to the public for quiet informal recreation.

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

The site will remain inviting and welcoming to visitors, with entrances and path network will be maintained appropriately for the level of use. Tree safety schedules will take the progression of ash dieback into consideration and remedial work will be tailored accordingly.

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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	8.40	Ash	1996	High forest	Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Three fields planted in 1995/96 by volunteers and contractors on former improved pasture. The planting was predominantly with mixed native broadleaves (main species oak, ash and field maple). In addition an area of Scots Pine was planted on the crest of the ridge. The trees have grown well and would be reaching the stage of thinning but with the onset of chalara, the disease may thin out the Ash dominated woodland without intervention. This will help to relieve pressure from other species, such as Oak and Cherry, which are beginning to be suppressed by the Ash.

Mature hedges form an existing habitat around and through the planting. There are some large trees on the boundary, notably Ash along a hollow way on the western boundary, which show a history of past management as a laid hedge. These provide wildlife links from the surrounding land deep into the new woodland.

The land is steeply sloping to the west and a network of rides and glades have been created to fit the topography and preserve views out to the west, as well as providing diversity of habitat which will be of particular benefit to birds and invertebrates.

An old agricultural structure is located at the highest point of the site. Work has been carried out in recent years to maintain the integrity of this structure and public access is not encouraged and the access routes have been allowed to enclose with bramble.

## 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.