WOODLAND TRUST

Sleaford Wood

Management Plan 2014-2019

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Sleaford Wood
Location:	Sleaford
Grid reference:	TF070469, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 130
Area:	10.68 hectares (26.39 acres)
Designations:	Tree Preservation Order

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Thought to have existed since the mid 18th century, Sleaford Wood now comprises of broadleaf native woodland with dead wood left in place for conservation resources. A popular wood with the local community.

2.2 Extended Description

Sleaford Wood lies on the north side of Sleaford adjacent to large areas of housing and sandwiched between this, intensive farmland and an area of industrial development and is covered by a Tree Preservation Order (NKDC 1989) . The surrounding landscape contains few woods and as such Sleaford Wood is of greater interest in landscape and conservation terms than it would be in relation to its size or composition.
The origins of the wood are obscure, but the study of old maps seems to indicate that the wood was planted as part of the Earl of Bristol's estate sometime between 1766 (doesn't appear on old estate maps) and 1881(when it appears on the first edition OS maps). However, The area then known as Sandy Furlong , did not appear on the enclosure act of 1794 and therefore, is likely to have been planted by then.

The wood is flat and bounded on three sides by drainage ditches, as a result ground conditions are fairly moist throughout, even through the summer months. The wood is broadleaved and is potentially a fine example of long established secondary woodland with a varied and interesting ground flora. Remnants of the original planting can be seen in the scatter of large mature oaks which represent approximately 20% of the wood. The remainder of the wood is dominated by ash and sycamore with smaller numbers of hazel, hawthorn, birch and wild cherry. Many of the older ash and sycamore are multi-stemmed which indicates a past history of coppicing. There are also a surprising number of disease-free elms. Given that a mature tree canopy exists over much of the site and light levels are restricted, many of the younger recruits to the canopy are severely etiolated. Most of the regeneration is restricted to canopy gaps caused by fallen trees. Many trees came down in a storm in 2000 and this has led, together with subsequent casualties to a reasonable amount of fallen dead wood, unusual for a wood in this situation. Although this will look untidy to some eyes, and unmanaged, the amount of dead wood will prove to be an important conservation resource. Apart from the ivy dominated areas the ground flora is dominated by dogs mercury, wild privet, guelder rose and ferns with a high presence of mosses, and all the commoner elements of NVC W8 ash- elm-sycamore woodland. There are one or two small areas dominated by the introduced snowberry but this does not appear to be spreading at any great rate and poses no immediate threat.
Although it is thankfully robust, the main threat to the woodland comes from the high level of human disturbance. There have been periodic phases of vandalism, motorbike use and other types of misuse in the past but these appear to have declined recently as a result of the ditching and boundary fencing. There is in contrast, a high level of local interest in the wood and many people care for the wood by reporting incidents and removing litter etc. and a pleasing number of people use the wood for their daily walk. The main paths are in the shape of a cross, with a narrower perimeter rote, and several desire lines throughout the site. These are all accessible from the single formal access pint from the housing estate to the south of the wood, as well as an informal access point from the industrial estate to the north.
The proximity of housing and industrial estate recently built adjacent to the wood, will present tree safety issues in future years on several boundaries.

The Key Features for this site are:
Secondary Woodland
Informal Public Access

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Sleaford Wood lies on the north side of the town adjacent to the public playing field off Beech Rise and Sommerfield Court. There are no public rights of way within the wood. However there is an extensive network of informal paths in the wood, leading from the main entrance off the playing field. Access can be made through a squeeze stile only, due to the need to keep out motorbikes. Other entrances to the north have been blocked by adjoining residents due to fears for the safety of property and persons. Footpaths within the wood are well defined unsurfaced tracks that have been made through heavy use from visitors. The ground conditions remain moist throughout the winter and summer months. The terrain is flat and bound by ditches.

Locally parking is available on the concrete standing by the playing field or in adjacent streets.

The nearest bus stop is situated on Northgate (B1518). For the nearest railway station, this can be found situated on south gate off station road. For train and bus information and timetables please access the traveline web link for further information. www.travelline.org.uk or contact 0871 200 22 33.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

In 50 years' time, Sleaford Wood will be a structurally diverse and species rich native high forest. As a long established secondary woodland it will have developed a robust ecosystem that broadly resembles NVC W8 ash-elm-sycamore type of native woodland. Tree regeneration of all species will be present throughout the wood in canopy gaps, and the wood will be self-sustaining into the long term without undue interference. There will be a significant amount of deadwood retained as dying and dead wood is a valuable resource for a large proportion of the plant and animal species in forest ecosystems.

The wood will be regularly enjoyed and valued by local people through the quiet informal recreation on the network of paths and rides. This will be achieved through maintenance of signage and the path network, as well as working closely with local individuals, agencies and companies wherever appropriate to foster a greater sense of ownership.

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

Secondary woodland planted between 1766 and 1888. Probably towards the older end of the spectrum (pre1794) given the size of the old oaks within the wood, which have to be at least 150 years old. The site is located in an area of intensive agriculture on the edge of Sleaford: a large town. Although not native woodland, the site contains a well developed structure and flora that approximates to NVC W8 and most of the commoner W8 species such as dogs mercury have been well established for some time. The flora has never been investigated or surveyed in detail. Storm damage over recent years together with previous neglect has seen the production of a large deadwood resource which is likely to be of importance for invertebrates and consequently, woodland birds. Fauna within the wood is currently depleted due to the level of antisocial behaviour, vandalism and unauthorised motorbike activity that goes on, however since the erection of the anti bike fencing people have been seeing deer and foxes in the wood on a more regular basis.
It is known that the wood previously harboured deer and woodpeckers together with a wide range of woodland birds before the current level of disturbance built up.

Significance

The wood is sandwiched between an intensively farmed arable landscape, major housing developments on the edge of Sleaford and a light industrial redevelopment site. It is the largest wood in the immediate locality and certainly the only one with official public access. Although the wood is not ancient woodland, it is long established and has many characteristics of a natural woodland type: given its location, it would be important in conservation terms if it were far inferior.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities exist for the establishment of a valuable and also attractive wildlife resource right on the edge of the town, which would be appreciated by local people for informal recreation. There is no vehicular access to the site until the new industrial estate development is concluded, which will provide the Trust with a new access route from the eastern end of the wood. The wood will continue to be managed on a care and maintenance basis only with an emphasis on tree safety work. As the wood has a lot of ancient woodland characteristics, although being and old established broadleaved plantation, it will be treated as such with management by minimum intervention.
The other major constraints on the site are the wet rooting conditions which make the mature canopy relatively unstable after interference, and the close proximity of housing in several areas. Because of this tree safety issues will need careful monitoring in future years. The lack of decent parking in the vicinity restricts usage to local people only.

Factors Causing Change

-Vandalism and fires reducing biodiversity
-Windblow (very susceptible site) instantly reducing canopy cover/ affecting light levels.
-Tree senescence with limited range of natural regeneration species
-Climate change/ pests and disease.
-Increasing isolation as a consequence of surrounding housing and industrial development.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

A stable and robust woodland ecosystem, similar to NVC W8, including high levels of deadwood, and the effective regeneration of the wood through natural processes, such as: windblow and natural seeding of tree species into resultant canopy gaps.

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

Maintain existing woodland cover for the plan period through natural regeneration. Abundance, vigour and species diversity of regeneration will be monitored by 3 yearly inspections, actions (such as under-planting, protection from browsing damage, etc.) will be considered and implemented as appropriate.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

The wood is open to the public for informal recreation at all times and being so close to major areas of housing it fulfils a well-recognised need. There is an extensive network of internal woodland paths that have been long established. The wood is very well used but this has declined in the past when there were problems of vandalism and motorbike use. Considerable time and resources were spent from 2002-2007 to try and prevent motor bike access and lessen the effect of vandalism in the wood. This has had a significant effect on the level of antisocial use, however vandalism and fire raising still occur on a more random basis. The work was carried out in partnership with North Kesteven District Council, Sleaford Town Council, and the local Police to try and deal with issues on a more neighbourhood-wide basis.
There is no local car parking which means that the wood is effectively accessed by the local population only and it is not thought that this will change once the new industrial site is complete and we have a new eastern access.

Significance

Given its location on the edge of a large town the wood is ideally placed to provide informal woodland recreation for a large number of local residents in an area with a very poor level of tree cover. However anti-social behaviour in the area reduces its attractiveness to local people.

Opportunities & Constraints

There exists a great opportunity to develop the wood as an attractive and ecologically important community resource for the enjoyment of the people on the north side of Sleaford. Lack of decent parking in the vicinity restricts usage to local people only.

Factors Causing Change

changes in levels of visitor useage, vandalism, motorbike usage

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain the existing level of visitor provision and extend this through interpretation, seating, etc. once vandalism and antisocial behaviour is no longer a significant barrier to preferred use. Establish a welcoming new entrance, incorporating management access (currently unavailable (2014)) at the south of the woodland.

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

Maintain the current level of visitor provision throughout the plan period as far as restricted management access permits. The annual work programme will include trimming back overhanging vegetation where required and identified through biennial inspections and clearance of litter at least twice per year to maintain a welcoming feel. Negotiate management access with third party landowners within this plan period and install a well designed and robust access point conforming to the Woodland Trusts best practice guidelines (Everything Speaks), to prevent unauthorised access, but encourage pedestrian use.

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	10.65	Mixed native broadleaves	1790	Min-intervention	Archaeological features, Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site, No/poor vehicular access to the site, People issues (+tve & -tve), Site structure, location, natural features & vegetation	Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	Tree Preservation Order

The origins of the wood are obscure, but the study of old maps seems to indicate that the wood was planted as part of the Earl of Bristol's estate sometime between 1766(doesn't appear on old estate map) and 1881(when it appears on the first edition OS maps). The area then known as Sandy Furlong however did not appear on the enclosure act of 1794 and therefore is likely to have been planted by then.

The wood is flat and bounded on three sides by drainage ditches, as a result ground conditions are fairly moist throughout, even through the summer months. The wood is broadleaved and is potentially a nice example of long established secondary woodland with a varied and interesting ground flora. Remnants of the original planting can be seen in the scatter of large mature oaks which represent approximately 20% of the wood. The north and west of the wood is dominated by sycamore which through either regeneration or planting has produced a fairly dense cover of large trees with little understorey and a ground layer dominated by ivy. The majority of the wood however is composed of ash, many of which are multi-stemmed which indicates a past history of coppicing. Silver birch, hazel, wild cherry, hawthorn and wych elm form a sub-canopy in many parts of the wood. There are a surprising number of disease-free elms within the wod. A recent survey gives the compartment breakdown as; oak 20%, ash 40%, sycamore 30%, hazel 2%, hawthorn 2%, cherry 1%, birch 1% and elm 4% by basal area. Given that a mature tree canopy exists over much of the site, there is a surprising amount of natural regeneration of all species and the future health of the wood appears assured. Most of the regeneration is occurring in canopy gaps caused by fallen trees. Many trees came down in a storm in 2000 and this has led, together with subsequent casualties to a reasonable amount of fallen dead wood unusual for a wood in this situation. Although this will look untidy to some eyes, and unmanaged, the amount of dead wood will prove to be an important conservation resource. Apart from the ivy dominated areas the ground flora is dominated by dog's mercury, wild privet, guelder rose and ferns with a high presence of mosses, and all the commoner elements of NVC W8 ash- elm-sycamore woodland. There are one or two small areas dominated by the introduced snowberry but this does not appear to be spreading at any great rate and poses no immediate threat.

The main threat to the woodland has come from the high level of human disturbance, through unauthorised motorbike use, firelighting and higher than average levels of vandalism in the past. However the recent management regime appears to have been effective in minimising its occurrence. The proximity of housing and industrial estate recently built adjacent to the wood will present tree safety issues in future years. The whole wood is protected under a Tree Preservation Order (NKDC 1989)

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.