



Whittaker Wood

Management Plan 2015-2020

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THE WOODLAND TRUST

INTRODUCTION

The Trust's corporate aims and management approach guide the management of all the Trust's properties, and are described on Page 4. These determine basic management policies and methods, which apply to all sites unless specifically stated otherwise. Such policies include free public access; keeping local people informed of major proposed work; the retention of old trees and dead wood; and a desire for management to be as unobtrusive as possible. The Trust also has available Policy Statements covering a variety of woodland management issues.

The Trust's management plans are based on the identification of Key Features for the site and setting objectives for their management. A monitoring programme (not included in this plan) ensures that these objectives are met and any necessary management works are carried out.

Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATING

The information presented in this Management plan is held in a database which is continuously being amended and updated on our website. Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations. Please either consult The Woodland Trust website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk or contact the Woodland Trust (wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk) to confirm details of the current management programme.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and a summary of monitoring results can be obtained on request.

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The management of our woods is based on our charitable purposes, and is therefore focused on improving woodland biodiversity and increasing peoples' understanding and enjoyment of woodland. Our strategic aims are to:

- Protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future
- Work with others to create more native woodlands and places rich in trees
- Inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees

All our sites have a management plan which is freely accessible via our website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk. Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) under licence FSC-C009406 and through independent audit.

In addition to the guidelines below we have specific guidance and policies on issues of woodland management which we review and update from time to time.

We recognise that all woods are different and that the management of our sites should also reflect their local landscape and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives. Guidelines like these provide a necessary overarching framework to guide the management of our sites but such management also requires decisions based on local circumstances and our Site Manager's intimate knowledge of each site.

The following guidelines help to direct our woodland management:

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.
2. We establish new native woodland using both natural regeneration and tree planting, but largely the latter, particularly when there are opportunities for involving people.
3. We provide free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe.
4. The long term vision for our non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites is to restore them to predominantly native species composition and semi-natural structure, a vision that equally applies to our secondary woods.
5. Existing semi-natural open-ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained and new open ground habitats created where appropriate.
6. The heritage and cultural value of sites is taken into account in our management and, in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.
7. Woods can offer the potential to generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We will therefore consider the potential to generate income from our estate to help support our aims.
8. We work with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders in developing the management of our woods. We recognise the benefits of local community woodland ownership and management. Where appropriate we allow our woods to be used to support local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.
9. We use and offer the estate where appropriate, for the purpose of demonstration, evidence gathering and research associated with the conservation, recreational and sustainable management of woodlands. In particular we will develop and maintain a network of long-term monitoring sites across the estate.
- 10 Any activities we undertake will conform to sustainable forest management principles, be appropriate for the site and will be balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

SUMMARY

This public management plan briefly describes the site, specifically mentions information on public access, sets out the long term policy and lists the Key Features which drive management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site - their significance is outlined together with their long (50 year+) and short (5 year) term objectives. The short term objectives are complemented by a detailed Work Programme for the period of this management plan. Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. A short glossary of technical terms is at the end. The Key Features and general woodland condition of this site are subject to a formal monitoring programme which is maintained in a central database. A summary of monitoring results is available on request.

1.0 SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Whittaker Wood
Location:	Littleborough
Grid reference:	SD946154, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 109
Area:	1.88 hectares (4.65 acres)
Designations:	Area of Landscape Value, Community Forest, Green Belt

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Whittaker Wood can be found in Greater Manchester about 4 miles east of Rochdale, close to the town of Littleborough. This broadleaf woodland consists of oak with some sycamore and beech, the woodland contains little under storey, however some excellent patches of regeneration in the form of oak and beech can be found. The ground flora is predominantly grass due to a combination of previous grazing and a relatively sparse canopy. The wood is located on a relatively steep hillside; all the surrounding land is used for livestock grazing. The site was stock fenced in 1998 on three sides to help protect natural regeneration from stray livestock. A feeder stream which eventually joins the Rochdale canal runs adjacent with the public footpath through the site. Vehicular access both to, and within the site is poor; this is due to the steep nature of the site, vehicular access points are also very narrow due to developments which have occurred in the past (a cess pit) Whittaker Woods first key feature is informal public access. The woodland is close to Hollingworth Lake Country Park and two public rights of way pass through the site, this path links into the surrounding countryside and path network. None of the paths within the wood are surfaced. The sites second key feature is that it is secondary woodland. Much of the surrounding countryside is rough grazing pasture for sheep, therefore it adds value to the area both as a landscape feature and as a habitat.

2.2 Extended Description

Whittaker Wood can be found in Greater Manchester about 4 miles east of Rochdale, close to the town of Littleborough. The woodland is surrounded on all sides by pasture land which is used for grazing. Hollingworth Lake Country Park is located approximately 0.5km to the south west; it is a popular destination for local people and run by Rochdale Borough Council.

The wood is located on a relatively steep hillside which slopes down from east to west, a feeder stream which eventually joins the Rochdale canal runs through the centre of the site. Whittaker Wood is located on very acid loamy upland soils with a wet peaty surface.

This broadleaf woodland consists of oak with some sycamore and beech, the woodland contains little under storey; however some excellent patches of regeneration in the form of oak and beech can be found. The ground flora is predominantly grass due to a combination of previous grazing and a relatively sparse canopy although some bluebells can now be found in the wood. The site was acquired by The Woodland Trust in 1994 and little is known about its history before that point. The site was stock fenced in 1998 on three sides to help protect natural regeneration from stray livestock. Secondary Woodland is a Key Feature of the site.

Vehicular access both to, and within the site is poor; this is due to the steep nature of the site, vehicular access points are also very narrow due to developments which have occurred in the past (a cess pit).

Two public rights of way pass through the site, these paths link into the surrounding countryside and path network. None of the paths within the wood are surfaced but the site is well used for informal recreational purposes.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Whittaker Wood can be found in Greater Manchester about 4 miles east of Rochdale, close to the town of Littleborough. The site has two pedestrian access points, both of which are kissing gates. The site is best accessed from the small hamlet of Whittaker, which is located at the end of Whittaker Lane. From Whittaker pedestrians can follow a public right of way which enters the site on its N.E. boundary. The path heads down an incline in a southerly direction to the sites southern entrance. Another public right of way then heads in a northerly direction to the sites northern entrance. Visitors should note that none of the paths are surfaced within the woodland.

Parking is available in the small Hamlet of Whittaker but may be limited.

Nearest public toilet: Located at Asda Superstores, The Old Cricket Ground, Rochdale, OL12 6XT. Toilets are suitable for disabled users.

Nearest bus stop: Located at Blackstone Edge Old Road which is approximately 2 miles away from the wood. Information from Traveline Website.

Further information about public transport is available from Traveline www.traveline.org.uk or phone 0870 608 2 608

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Whittaker Wood will be managed as mixed broadleaved, predominantly native high forest with a non intervention management regime. Regeneration of both native and non-native species will be accepted. It is expected that as trees gradually senesce or need to be felled for safety reasons natural regeneration will fill gaps in the canopy. Therefore the woodland should require little active management, apart from ensuring that natural regeneration is adequate. Throughout the wood, older trees of any species will be retained as long as safety allows. Currently non natives in the form of sycamore and beech account for 40% of total tree cover, it is anticipated that non natives will continue to make up a significant proportion of the canopy.

Public access should be maintained at its current level of 3 access points with Woodland Trust welcome signs, and approximately 500m of paths. These will need regular maintenance and if necessary upgrading to provide defined, safe, all year access for pedestrians.

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 Informal Public Access

Description

The woodland has three main public access points, a permissive path enters the site on its northern boundary and runs in a southerly direction alongside the canal drain and leaves the site on its southern boundary. A public right of way enters the site on its north eastern boundary and heads in a southerly direction, also leaving the site at the southern access point. The paths within the wood are not surfaced. The woodland is close to a small area of housing, and also links into the public footpath network and the wider countryside, therefore the level of usage of the wood is fairly high.

Significance

Although the woodland is in a semi rural location, large towns and cities such as Littleborough, Rochdale, Manchester and Halifax are within easy reach. The woodland provides an open space for people to visit and walk in. The woodland is also part of wider network of recreational opportunities such as the Rochdale Way.

Opportunities & Constraints

Due to the steep nature of the site, the type of access that can be created is limited. However the woodland is in a semi rural area which is well served by a network of PROW, and other visitor attractions such as Hollingworth Lake. A circular walk leaflet which includes the wood as part of its route is also available from Hollingworth Lake Country Park. The Rochdale Way also runs through the site.

Factors Causing Change

The site suffers from occasional vandalism and litter.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The existing level/quality of access will be monitored and maintained. The Trust will be flexible and adapt to increases in recreational use.

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

Some repairs have been carried out to the main entrances and signage refreshed as part of the Welcoming Sites Project (WSP). Vegetation encroaching onto paths will be cut back annually and maintenance of all woodland fixtures, including, signs, gates, entrances, fences and litter control will be a part of an annual estate maintenance contract.

5.2 Natural Secondary Woodland

Description

The wood is 1.88 hectares in size and is a narrow elongated in shape. It is located on a steep hillside and is surrounded on all sides by farmland which is grazed by livestock. The mature trees are even aged and the predominant species are oak, beech and sycamore. There is little under storey and regeneration is patchy due to the fact that the woodland was grazed by livestock before the Trust acquired it. However small patches of regeneration mainly in the form of oak have thrived since the Trust began managing the site. Ground flora is again sparse and consists mainly of common grass species.

Significance

The wood is important as a landscape and conservation feature, and is used as a minor refuge for common woodland species.

Opportunities & Constraints

The wood is small and almost entirely surrounded by farmland, which limits its conservation value to robust, common, or mobile species. There appear to be very few opportunities to alter this, as the surrounding land is likely to be farmed for the foreseeable future.

Factors Causing Change

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Mature, stable broadleaved high forest, with a continuous canopy composed of a mixture of broadleaved species, with diverse age range and succession by natural regeneration. As trees gradually reach senescence or are removed for tree safety purposes the gaps left in the canopy will be colonised by natural regeneration of oak, ash, birch etc.

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

Tree safety inspections will be undertaken on a regular basis and work carried out if necessary for public safety. The site will be checked once during this plan period to assess whether there is sufficient regeneration to ensure the long term future of the canopy.

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	1.88	other oak spp	1900	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site	Informal Public Access, Natural Secondary Woodland	Area of Landscape Value, Green Belt

1.8 Hectares (4.6 acres) of well established broadleaved secondary woodland, it is roughly rectangular in shape and stands on a fairly steep west facing slope. Located approximately 1 mile from the town of Littleborough the compartment has a public right of way and a permissive path running through it in a north-south direction. A ditch which is actually a feeder stream to the Rochdale canal runs through the centre of the compartment. To the north, west and south the woodland is bordered by grazed rough pasture, the south east of the woodland is bordered by broadleaved woodland. The woodland canopy is dominated by oak, sycamore and beech and an understory of holly, hazel, blackthorn and hawthorn can be found. The compartment was grazed prior to the Woodland Trusts ownership, however since the boundary was secured woodland flora including bluebell has begun to establish itself again.

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.