



Hermant Beech Wood

Management Plan 2019-2024

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Hermand Beech Wood
Location:	West Calder
Grid reference:	NT033625, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 65
Area:	2.69 hectares (6.65 acres)
Designations:	

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Woodland has existed on the site since the 18th century when the Hermand Estate was established. The woodland itself is small but has conservation interest because of its diverse range of habitats; including broadleaf woodland and birch coppice.

2.2 Extended Description

Hermand Beech Wood is located in West Lothian approximately 1.2km south east of West Calder on the B7008 to Harburn south of the A71. It is a predominantly flat site at 205m above sea-level. The underlying geology is composed of drifts derived from Carboniferous sandstones, shale and limestone's. This gives rise to non-calcareous gleys and some gleyed brown earth soils. There are also some areas of peaty soil. The MLURI Assessment of Climatic Conditions in Scotland classifies the area as fairly warm, moist lowland and foothill subject to moderate exposure and moderate winters.

Hermand Beech Wood is classified in the Ancient Woodland inventory as Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin and was originally planted in the late 18th century. Much of the original beech has since been removed leaving over-mature remnant trees, including some sessile oak and lime, mainly around the wood's edge. The beeches that have survived are entering senescence with some having sustained wind damage, particularly on the northern boundary. The mature trees within the interior of the wood post date the original felling and are likely to have self

seeded with a mix of species including silver birch, sycamore, rowan, common alder and ash. There are also occasional hornbeam and whitebeam present. Some more recent planting of gaps in the south-west corner was undertaken in the mid 90's although canopy closure above has suppressed their establishment.

A Scottish Power high voltage wayleave crosses through the middle of the site and contains mainly birch and willow coppice. The area is periodically coppiced by the service provider to avoid interference with the overhead power lines.

The under storey is predominantly birch, willow, rowan, beech and whitebeam. Fire damage and a long history of sheep grazing are factors that have limited natural regeneration in the past. The wood was made stock proof in the early 90's and this has allowed a 'pulse' of regeneration with rowan, birch, hawthorn and beech all slowly establishing where gaps in the canopy allow.

The ground flora is generally impoverished as a consequence of grazing and the historical dominance of beech. Where beech is still dominant a typically sparse ground flora exists. The meadow grass Yorkshire fog is common, indicating the history of grazing, as is bramble and broad buckler fern with some dogrose in less shaded areas. There are also patches of blaeberry in the north west of the wood. Honeysuckle, wood sorrel and occasional bluebells, often regarded as ancient woodland indicators as also present.

The woodland itself is small in size and conservation interest is mainly provided by the diversity of habitats included, rather than the quality of these habitats. These include broadleaved woodland, birch coppice and wetter marshy areas in the wayleave, which previously included a small pond area of water that is now overgrown. The broadleaved woodland is fragmented and provides a mainly woodland edge habitat in practice. An undated vegetation survey recorded only thirteen species of vascular plants in the ground layer, and whilst it is likely to be incomplete, does give an indication of the site quality. The site however, could be expected to help support a range of smaller mammals, birds and invertebrates and helps add limited local biodiversity interest to a more intensively managed agricultural landscape.

Woodland has existed on the site since the late 18th century when Hermand Estate was established and brought into management. The wood is shown on maps of around 1860 and classified as Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin. It was at this time that beech and oak were planted on the site, probably with Scots pine as a nurse species during early establishment. The estate was purchased by Midlothian County Council for various proposed developments. In 1975 it was transferred to Lothian Regional Council as a consequence of local government reorganisation. The estate was sold in 1982, the beechwood being retained by the council until its transfer to the Woodland Trust in 1986. Since 1986 the wood has been managed with minimum intervention with occasional safety felling of roadside trees, the construction of a section of boardwalk and some gap planting of native species with the help of the local high school.

Being within the Green Network Trust area, West Lothian is well provided for with accessible small woodland, of which Hermand Beechwood is one. The site offers only modest opportunities for recreation, limited by the distance from West Calder, small size of the wood and lack of any car parking facilities. The site is quiet with the bulk of the users being local dog owners. It also provides an opportunity to walk off the busy road as well as offering a destination for a return 'health' walk out of West Calder.

There are two entrances to the wood, the first off the B7008 enters at the west of the wood off the pavement and the second is off the unclassified road from Bellsquarry, which enters the wood from the east. A circular, un-surfaced footpath of approximately 500m follows the northern boundary of the wood with the possible return route back through the interior of the wood and links the two entrances.

There is no 'on site' car parking though cars are known to park on the grass verge at the south east entrance and along the roadside. There is informal space for one car by the western entrance off the B7008. Car parking is available at the nearby Hermand Birchwood (SSSI) Nature Reserve, managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust.

Management access is available straight off the public road from both entrances. Within the site vehicle access to the eastern boundary is effectively limited by the wet ground conditions.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Hermand Beech Wood is located east of the B7008 a mile southeast of West Calder. The wood is accessible from two entrances, one from the B7008 and the other from the unclassified road from Bellsquarry. Both are barrier-free. A circuit of beaten earth paths loops through the interior of the wood, crossing its most waterlogged area by 50m of timber boardwalk. The site is largely flat and other sections of the route can be very wet at times. There is access to all areas of the wood.

There is no on-site parking, and parking locally is along the road adjacent to the woodland edge. Informal space for one car is available by the western entrance on the B7008 and cars also park on the verge by the eastern entrance. Alternately car parking is available at the Hermand Birchwood Nature Reserve managed by Scottish Wildlife Trust approximately 0.5km away.

Nearest public toilet: Dickson Street, West Calder, approximately 1.5km away - toilets suitable for the disabled, not open 24 hours. Information from the West Lothian Council website www.westlothian.gov.uk

Nearest bus stop: Main Street, West Calder, approximately 1.5km away along the B7008. West Calder train station is also approximately 1.5km away.

Further information about public transport is available from Traveline Scotland - www.travelinescotland.com

3.2 Access / Walks

Within the wood there is approximately 5600m of beaten earth path linking the woods two entrances at the east and west corners by means of a circular path.

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long-term management of the site will further the Woodland Trust's corporate objectives by seeking to maintain and enhance opportunities for public enjoyment of woodland and to maintain and where possible enhance its value for wildlife.

Long Established Woodland Of Plantation Origin

Although the woodland is not large, the site does have heritage value as a long established feature in a predominantly agricultural landscape and as part of an old estate. Mature and semi mature sycamore and beech will be retained as they constitute a large proportion of the canopy, although the intention will be to increase the proportion of native species in the canopy. An increase in native tree species should help encourage and support healthy ground flora communities.

Woodland cover will be maintained by the recruitment of natural regeneration as and when it occurs as well as by planting of trees and shrubs in shelters where needed. The periodic clearance of the power-line is unavoidable, but this provides a habitat as coppiced birch and willow with a good volume of deadwood. Elsewhere, standing and fallen deadwood will be retained where it is safe to do so.

Connecting People With Woods and Trees

Existing on site access facilities will be maintained to suit the current local demand, which due to the site's isolated location is low to moderate. Facilities will be improved if demand increases. Where possible access barriers have been removed but much of the ground is wet and unsuitable for non-pedestrian traffic.

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 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

Hermand Beech Wood is fairly isolated, located around 1.2km south east of West Calder. A tarmac footpath along the road from West Calder provides an off road route to the wood along the side of the B7008. There is no on site car parking though cars are seen pulled up on the verge. Alternately car parking is available at the Hermand Birchwood Nature Reserve managed by Scottish Wildlife Trust approximately 0.5km to the south west of the site. The site can be accessed from 2 entrances. One entrance is off the B7008 to the east of the site and the second is at the west end of the site off the road taking you back to the Brucefield Industrial Estate in Bellsquarry. Within the wood there is approximately 560m of beaten earth path linking the woods two entrances by means of a circular path. The woodland is small in size made up of a mixture of mature trees including Beech, Oak and Ash as well younger trees including Rowen, White Beam and Birch. A wayleave crosses through the middle of the site with coppiced willow and birch below providing an interesting variation in habitat from other areas of the wood. Hermand Beech wood is a quiet place with only around five to ten people visiting most days. It is mainly used by local people taking a stroll or to walk their dogs. Due to the lack of parking facilities and the distance from the nearest urban communities the site does not lend itself to engagement with local schools.

Significance

The woodland path provides an attractive walk to the south east of West Calder. Areas of the woodland are well suited for picnics and provide opportunities to observe the local wildlife. The Hermand Birchwood Nature reserve 0.5km to the south west of the site provides further areas of interest in the nearby area. Providing public access to woods contributes to the Trust's objective of increasing peoples enjoyment and understanding of woodland.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities

Improved signage will ensure that all entrances are welcoming and that WT ownership is clear.

Constraints

Small isolated woodland with limited car parking along roadside. Areas of the woodland that the path goes through remain wet all year round.

Factors Causing Change

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The woodland will continue to provide local people with opportunities for quiet informal recreation. A small network of paths will provide safe and welcoming access within the woodland. Path surfaces will only be upgraded if a change in circumstances (e.g. local development) results in greater use and the beaten earth paths become unfit for purpose.

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

Access provision will remain in keeping with WT Access Guidelines and site access coding. New entrance and exit signs will be installed on the gate at the east entrance by June 2020. The wet section of path in compartment 1b will be redirected to avoid the wettest section of ground by June 2020. Entrances (x2) will be welcoming, paths (560m) will be kept safe, well-drained and clear of overhanging vegetation (annually). Access provision will be reviewed with the management plan every 5 years or if a significant change in local circumstances.

5.2 Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin

Description

The woodland's LEPO status is confirmed by its existence on the 1860 OS map. Although small, 2.7Ha the wood is fairly diverse in character. Much of the original beech has been felled leaving over-mature remnant trees mainly around the woodland edge, including sessile oak and lime. The mature trees within the interior post date the original felling and are likely to have self seeded with a mix of silver birch, sycamore, rowan, alder, ash and horse chestnut. There are also occasional hornbeam and whitebeam present. The wood was grazed prior to being made stock proof in the 1990s and since then there has been reasonable natural regeneration of birch, rowan, hazel and beech. Bramble, broad buckler fern and dogrose can be found in less shaded areas. Patches of heather and blaeberry are found in the northwest of the wood. Often regarded as ancient woodland indicators, honeysuckle, wood sorrel and occasional bluebells are also present. Levels of dead wood vary though are improving as timber from safety felling and windblow has been left in situ. Coppicing along the wayleave also contributes by creating habitat piles left within the wayleave. Grazing by deer and rabbit is likely to impact on the natural regeneration of the wood and limit the establishment of new trees and shrubs. Over time this could lead to an uneven age structure across the site. However there is good regeneration of beech, hazel and Rowean along the south east and south west boundaries of the site. Although beech regeneration is common, there are few areas where beech is causing widespread shading, and native ground flora coverage is good overall. A patch of periwinkle from fly-tipping has established at the south corner of the wood (1a). It's not yet clear if this will be constrained by the shade of adjacent trees.

Significance

The woodland is on the Ancient Woodland Inventory as LEPO and has existed since at least 1860, which indicates a relatively high biodiversity potential. The wood is important locally as an integral component of the surrounding landscape. The management of the woodland supports the Trust's corporate objectives of 'Preventing the loss of ancient woodland' and 'Improving the biodiversity of woods'.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities

To improve the biodiversity value of the woodland and ground flora by continuing to manipulate the canopy and species composition through safety felling and, if required, restocking.

Constraints

Small scale of woodland.
The OHP wayleave bisecting the wood.
Grazing by deer and rabbits.

Factors Causing Change

Senescence of old trees. Beech regeneration may threaten ground flora if it becomes established at high density.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To create and maintain a diverse, mixed age and mixed species woodland habitat in perpetuity. Species composition will be varied, being mostly native though a proportion of beech and sycamore will be accepted. Openings in the canopy due to safety felling, storm damage and senescence will allow for the regeneration or planting of native tree and shrub species to diversify the age structure of the woodland and encourage healthy ground flora communities.

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

Carry out a woodland condition assessment to assess natural tree regeneration and browsing within open areas every 5 years when management plan is reviewed (May 2024) to ensure that native species are dominant and successfully establishing. Monitor the spread of the Periwinkle in the south corner of the site (block 1a) during the next management plan review against the photos taken in June 2019 to determine if further control measures are necessary.

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	1.50	Birch (downy/silver)	1930	High forest		Connecting People with woods & trees, Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin	
<p>Birch predominates with mature beech largely confined to the roadside edge and along the field boundary. Sycamore is rare with the occasional mature oak and large leaved lime, ash and whitebeam. Also one or two mature hornbeam and Norway maple have been planted. The understorey consists of occasional birch, beech, ash and rowan regeneration. Creeping soft grass, male and broad buckler ferns with bramble, dogrose and honeysuckle dominate the ground flora. The soil is often very wet and mosses are common. Along the roadside boundaries there is a patchy hedgerow of hawthorn and beech requiring periodic trimming. Within the compartment there are good levels of standing and fallen deadwood. Notable flora includes a patch of lily of the valley and common wintergreen.</p>							
1b	0.51	Birch (downy/silver)	1980	Coppice	Services & wayleaves	Connecting People with woods & trees, Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin	
<p>A central strip of the site 30m in width is occupied by a Scottish Power wayleave, containing mainly birch, willow and rowan coppice, but is more open to the east. This was first coppiced in 2008 and is now coppiced periodically to maintain a safe distance from the overhead powerline. The wet area to the east once contained a pond that has now become largely infilled with soft rush and other vegetation. A boardwalk crosses through the rushes and elsewhere in the drier areas heath bedstraw, creeping soft grass and rhytidiadelphus squarrosus dominate with frequent broad buckler fern.</p>							

1c	0.70	Beech	1930	High forest		Connecting People with woods & trees, Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin	
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The ground level is higher and the compartment is drier than elsewhere. The soil is hummus rich and peaty with evidence of wide ridges and furrows to drain the site. The tree canopy is dominated by beech, oak and lime with abundant birch and rowan. Beech regeneration is also abundant with birch and rowan in the understorey. Beech is shading some areas of ground flora that otherwise is indicative of acid soil conditions with areas dominated by heather and bilberry, wavy hair grass, and heath bedstraw. Mosses are abundant and include *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*, *Polytrichum formosum*, and *Mnium hornum*.

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.