



Great Hill Wood

Management Plan 2016-2021

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Great Hill Wood
Location:	Chillington
Grid reference:	SX796423, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 202
Area:	4.67 hectares (11.54 acres)
Designations:	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Great Hill Wood lies 500m to the south of the village of Chillington in the South Hams area of Devon. It was planted in December 1998/9 with native broadleaved trees, as part of the Woodland Trust's Woods on Your Doorstep Project, on a grass field that rises to a small but prominent hill. The area is a mixed landscape, with the hill central to the site lying in a shallow valley surrounded by arable and pastureland. A number of other woodland creation projects on private land also exist in the area. Species rich hedges surround the site dividing it from the adjacent fields.

The woodland has a network of rides throughout and an open glade which provides a viewpoint near the hill top and is an important feature of the design developed with the community.

The main Millennium feature selected by the community was an orchard of local varieties of fruit tree which is situated in the north west of the site, nearest to the village and has been used for community apple pressing events. Additionally a small clump of pine was planted on top of the hill and a number of simple wooden benches installed along the main path leading to the viewpoint.

The site is well used by the local community and the paths are heavily used. There are many links into the local rights of way network from the site entrances. The closest parking is on the roadside in the housing estate around 200m from the wood.

2.2 Extended Description

Great Hill Wood lies 500m to the south of the village of Chillington in the South Hams area of Devon. It was planted in December 1998/9 with native broadleaved trees, as part of the Woodland Trust's Woods on Your Doorstep Project, on a grass field that rises to a small but prominent hill. The area is a mixed landscape, with the hill central to the site lying in a shallow valley surrounded by arable and pastureland. A number of other woodland creation projects on private land also exist in the area. Species rich hedges surround the site dividing it from the adjacent fields.

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3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Buses from Kingsbridge stop in Chillington Village; access to the wood is as described above. Further information about public transport is available from Traveline - www.traveline.org.uk or phone 0870 608 2 608

It is possible to park sensitively on streets off the A379. The wood can then be approached as described above.

The nearest maintained public car park and public toilets are at Torcross (SX823 424) which are a 3km drive on a busy rural road to the coast.

This information was collected from websites in July 2015.

3.2 Access / Walks

The wood is 500 metres south of the village of Chillington on the A379 road. It is reached by walking public footpaths with natural surfaces after leaving the urban pavements. These can be muddy in wet weather. The main access is approached along a Byway Open to All traffic and as such can be legally driven but this is not recommended as the surface is uneven and can be muddy and is really only suitable for 4x4 vehicles. The closest parking is on any of the roads off Fairfield Way. Visitors then need to walk around 200m on public footpaths across fields to get to the wood.

The site can be entered through various entrance points, all kissing gates apart from one stile at the western access point.

The paths around the site have a natural surface but are muddy during wet weather. The path to the viewpoint has been partially levelled to make it easier to cross the contours and three benches along its length make it easy to rest on the way up the hill.

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long-term vision for Great Hill Wood is attractive and mature native broadleaf woodland with a healthy canopy of trees and an under-storey of woodland shrubs. This will assist in fulfilling the Trust's Objectives of increasing new native woodland cover in the UK and improving woodland biodiversity.

This maturing wood will eventually be managed as high forest on a continuous cover basis.

Located in an attractive village where locals are the principal visitors, Great Hill Wood will be managed as an important open access area where the public are welcome. The signs, and well-kept paths will all encourage public interest and participation in the woodland; fulfilling the Trust's corporate objective of increasing people's understanding and enjoyment of woodland.

The rides and paths will be kept open and mowed as necessary to provide appropriate access and valuable ride-side habitats. There are many wood edge habitats, important for nesting birds, invertebrates and woodland / grassland flora. As the canopy closes, rough grass in the planted areas will gradually diminish as shade loving plants more typical of recent secondary woodland take over. Ride side trees and shrubs will be coppiced to vary light conditions, improving access and benefiting wildlife.

The orchard should mature to an attractive feature of the site with healthy trees providing a flowering and fruiting resource for people and wildlife. A programme of formative pruning will be employed to achieve this.

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

Approximately 80% of the wood was planted in 1998/9. Species are a combination of sessile oak, ash, cherry, sweet chestnut, hazel and other shrubs. The ground flora is variable but is slowly changing from a grassland sward through to a more woodland type habitat. The open glade area is mainly dominated by tall grass species and bramble is encroaching into it.

Significance

One of the Trust's corporate objectives is to see an increase in the area of new native woodland - this objective is adequately fulfilled in Great Hill Wood becoming well established

Opportunities & Constraints

Factors Causing Change

Ash Die back could be a significant factor.
Squirrel and deer damage could affect natural regeneration.
Open areas are being shaded out as the woodland achieves canopy closure.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Healthy, mature and attractive native broadleaf woodland of varying structure and habitats. A mixture of trees, woody shrubs, open space and ground flora fully integrating as part of the overall woodland habitat.

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

Operational Objective:

Maintain habitat diversity, and ensure opportunities for the development of woodland ground flora in recently established woodland are implemented.

1. Mow the open area at the same time as the orchard to ensure it remains as open habitat.
Ensure all tree shelters have been removed by the end of year 2 of this plan.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

Public access is available around the majority of the site. Four formal entrances exist from public rights of way providing access to passing walkers but the site is predominately used by the local community. Benches are positioned around the site. There is a circular walk around the site and the orchard has open access throughout. The higher ground provides good views of the local area.

Significance

As part of the WOYD (Woods on Your Doorstep Project) the local community was involved in acquisition, design and planting the site. Public access is core to the Trust's objectives and essential for on-going support of its work.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: some paths are quite uneven limiting access to the higher ground to the more mobile visitor.

Opportunity: Some paths could be levelled to improve access to the viewpoint if they become too muddy through use.

Factors Causing Change

Canopy closure over the paths causes loss of ground vegetation and leads to muddy surfaces

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The wood will remain open to the public and predominantly used by locals from the Chillington area. It will contain a network of well-maintained, attractive and safe paths with a viewpoint in the centre of the wood.

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

Operational Objective:

Easily accessible, attractive, well-maintained and safe Woodland (and Orchard) that a wide range of public frequently enjoy. Entrances, path network and facilities (benches + viewpoint) are appropriate for level and type of use and in line with access category B. Due to the age of the trees tree safety is not an issue for this plan period.

1. Cut paths and maintain facilities 2/3 times per year.
2. To improve ride surfaces and edge habitat by initially coppicing along edges of the central path to the open area to 2 tree widths to open it out in year 1 of this plan and then manage them on a 10 year rotation in future plans.
3. The old interpretation board will be removed.

5.3 Orchard

Description

28 Local variety fruit trees, planted at the lower end of the site in 1998.

Significance

Small South Devon orchards have declined in recent years but are significant, locally distinctive woodland components of the South Hams AONB. A number of species planted are locally rare. The feature was chosen by the local community during consultation as the Millennium Feature [as part of WOYD project] and was identified as a key element in the acquisition and design process.

Opportunities & Constraints

Factors Causing Change

Honey fungus/other pests killing trees

A lack of management of the trees would cause a reduction in productivity

Long term Objective (50 years+)

An orchard of locally distinctive fruit trees, providing fruit crop and recreational resource.

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

Operational Objective:

Ensure a healthy maturing fully stocked orchard.

1. Mow grass under orchard annually.
2. Undertake Pruning Programme annually to encourage appropriate growth and fruiting.

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	4.30	Ash	1998	High forest		Informal Public Access	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
A roughly rectangular block of woodland creation (planted 1998/9) with a distinct hill roughly in the centre. Species are a combination of sessile oak, ash, cherry, sweet chestnut, hazel and other shrubs. The ground flora is variable but is slowly changing from a grassland sward through to a more woodland type habitat. The open glade area is mainly dominated by tall grass species and bramble is encroaching into it. Species rich hedges exist on the boundaries of the compartment with the occasional standard mature tree.							
1b	0.30	Other		Min-intervention	Management factors (eg grazing etc)	Informal Public Access	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Wide spaced orchard planting (1998/9) of 28 local variety fruit trees. Grass sward is heavily improved and dominated by agrostis sp.							

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2018	1a	Thin	4.31	12	50

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 on 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.