



Priory Wood

Management Plan 2017-2022

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Priory Wood
Location:	Burwell
Grid reference:	TL582665, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 154
Area:	8.73 hectares (21.57 acres)
Designations:	

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

A small mixed wood with a variety of different areas of habitat. There are many different species of plants, animals, birds and fungi to catch sight of. The paths are easy to follow and spread out through the wood. Parking is in the village or on the verge near one of the entrances to the wood. Many of the paths look liable to get muddy in the winter.

2.2 Extended Description

Priory Wood is an 8.97ha broadleaf plantation woodland, planted in November 1998. It was purchased, designed and planted with the assistance of the Burwell Woodland Group, which came together at the inception of the project. The woodland is one of 200 planted by the Woodland Trust to mark the Millennium under their Woods On Your Doorstep initiative. A pond has been created as a Millennium Feature, but has been slow in developing.

The name serves as a reminder of the Priory of St John that once occupied the site of Parsonage Farm, immediately NE of the wood. The wood lies on the very edge of the old Cambridgeshire Fens region, so although there is much flat arable farmland in the vicinity, there is also existing wildlife interest in the old hedgerows, spring fed streams and small clumps of trees locally.

The woodland has been planted using locally native broadleaf tree species, with the aim of becoming native, high forest woodland. Oak, ash, silver birch and field maple make up 80% of the trees with willow, alder, Bird cherry and woody shrubs being the remainder. Alder and willow have been planted into the wetter areas and to suit the soil type as it changes within the site, ranging as it does from being peat based in the west to being a chalkier, mineral soil nearer the village to the east. Establishment has been good overall, with the site exhibiting a closed canopy and an average top height of 6m.

The site includes three unplanted areas. Two areas at the eastern edge are retained due to the suspected archaeological interest adjacent to the ancient Hall and Parsonage Farm. To prevent scrub encroachment, these areas are grazed by horses belonging to a neighbour or part of annual mowing. Three overhead power lines run generally north - south through the center of the site and converge at the north to give the third area of open ground. A natural stream with a dense hedgerow containing large mature ash and oak trees divides the site again generally north - south, previously dividing the site into two fields. This has been bridged in two places to allow easier public access around the wood. A further watercourse, an intensively managed IDB drain, forms the western boundary. This feeds the created pond via an underground pipe. A public footpath (Green Lane) runs along the inside of the southern boundary and is a conservation feature in its own right, having remained largely unchanged for decades. The main entrance is via Parish Council land to the east. Management access is directly from a highway to the west.

Key Features area:

- New native woodland
- Informal Public access

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Priory Wood is accessible via a path approx 100m long across Parish Council ground from the centre of Burwell village to the east, parking also available in the village. A public footpath between the villages of Burwell and Reach also follows inside the southern boundary, providing additional access from either the east or west. Both public and management access is also available over a culvert from the western side directly off the highway - Weirs Drove. Access and internal paths are level but unsurfaced and so can become muddy in wet weather

Public toilets located on the 'Causeway' in the centre of the village. Dawn to dusk, no disabled facilities

Bus stop in centre of the village approx 250m from wood entrance, for routes and times visit www.traveline.org.uk or call the Traveline on 08712002233.

No gates or other restrictions at public entrances

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Natural processes will be encouraged to allow Priory wood to become a native broadleaf high forest, rich in wildlife. Intervention will be undertaken to ensure a range of species, age classes and maintain the matrix of robust habitats, including open areas and wet flushes, which will be enjoyed regularly by the local population via a network of rides and footpaths which will be kept open and inviting.

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 main access is from Burwell village via Parish Council land to the east. Open access is available over the whole of the site. A public footpath runs along the inside of the southern boundary, being the main path between the villages of Burwell and Reach, passing by the ancient Hall. There is a network of internal paths which link existing rights of way. Two bridges cross the central ditch providing access between the sub-compartments.

Significance

Locally low levels of accessible woodland, particularly within easy walking distance from a sizable populace such as Burwell.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints

- The wet nature of the ground and the high usage of the site will mean that the paths can become very muddy in winter.
- Relatively poor public transport combined with limited parking within the village and close to the wood.

Opportunities

- An opportunity exists to interpret the archaeology further, adding extra purpose to the woodland name.
- No competing facilities in local vicinity.

Factors Causing Change

- Excessive poaching of paths due to wet ground conditions.
- Scrub encroachment
- safety implications of tree disease.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

A well used and valued community asset, bringing people closer to woods and trees, both physically and spiritually.

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

Maintain paths, signs and infrastructure to appropriate to Woodland Trust specification/standards, cutting back encroaching vegetation as necessary following biennial inspection. Paths should be open, inviting and easy to follow at all times, achieved through regular path mowing to WT standard specs at least 3 times during the growing season. Risk to public from falling timber arising from increased tree disease will be managed through the site risk assessment process (see site risk assessment Tree safety zone B). With appropriate action undertaken as required to meet our duty of care. This may include reducing the number of ash trees in pedestrianized areas of the site.

5.2 New Native Woodland

Description

The new woodland incorporates a number of wayleaves, boundaries and archaeological remains within the site. Species have been selected to reflect the ground conditions, willow and alder being used in the wetter spots. Native broadleaf trees have been used throughout, which mirror the makeup of the surrounding hedgerows and copses. There is a proportionately large element of open ground within the wood (due to wayleaves and archaeology) adding to the potential habitat diversity within the wood. Various ancillary wildlife habitats are well established within the new wood including two water courses (one unmanaged and the other intensively so) old scrub and hedgerows, mature trees with standing and fallen dead wood.

Significance

The woodland constitutes a significant feature within the landscape and is contributing, ever increasingly, to local biodiversity. Cambridgeshire is the least wooded county in England and so any area of native broadleaf woodland is locally special in its own right.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

The wayleaves and archaeology restrict the planting on the site.

Opportunities:

- Possibility to enhancement of the water habitats - both stream and pond.
- opportunity to increase the diversity of the grass and introduce wild flowers to the open areas. (nutrient levels permitting?)

Factors Causing Change

Disease (Chalara dieback of ash)

Long term Objective (50 years+)

A diverse native broadleaf high forest, rich in wildlife and home to patchwork of habitats to maximise biodiversity and resilience.

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

Allow natural process to take place wherever possible and conducive to the long term vision. Monitor the health of the trees & shrubs annually and continue to graze/ mow open areas as appropriate to keep scrub encroachment below 10% of the designated open area, to be inspected biennially. Consider intervention where appropriate to ensure diversity and resilience in achieved in the longer term. Specifically encouraging natural regeneration and establishment of a shrub layer. Action planned and undertaken following biennial inspection.

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	5.40	Alder species	1998	Min-intervention		Informal Public Access, New Native Woodland	
<p>The site has been divided into two sub-compartments, Cpt 1A lying west of the stream running generally north-south, dividing the site. It comprises of mainly peaty soils which are prone to becoming water-logged for much of the year. Therefore Alder and Willow are the dominant species planted here along with some Ash. Weeds have been a problem in the past, but have since been shaded out now the canopy has closed, however has resulted in the poor establishment of sown grass. A bench commemorating John Spence is located within a glade on the central ride. A natural regeneration plot has failed here and is now to be left as open ground, mainly due to the power lines above. There is also a pond which was created as a feature to celebrate the millennium and is still establishing. The southern boundary comprises of a water course managed by the IDB. There is some natural regeneration, mainly of ash, occurring within this area.</p>							
1b	3.50	Ash	1998	Min-intervention		Informal Public Access, New Native Woodland	
<p>Cpt 1B lays east of the stream running generally north-south, dividing the site. It comprises of mainly mineral, chalky soils which are more free draining than those found in Cpt 1A. More of the oak, ash and silver birch have therefore been planted here. Two areas remain unplanted where archaeological remains are thought to exist. These areas are grazed by horses belonging to a neighbour. There is also a green lane bordered by gappy hedgerows with mature trees which forms the southern boundary..</p>							

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.