



# Bright Lea 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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk) or contact the Woodland Trust ([wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto: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.

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## 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](http://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.

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## 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

<b>Site name:</b>	Bright Lea Wood
<b>Location:</b>	Ouston
<b>Grid reference:</b>	NZ263550, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 88
<b>Area:</b>	23.00 hectares (56.83 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Community Forest

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

Together St Bede's and Bright Lea make 22.71ha of native broadleaf woodland, predominantly oak and ash. A network of paths provide free roaming of the wood, and wild flowers are abundant on the ground.

## 2.2 Extended Description

St Bede's (cpt 1) & Bright Lea (cpt 2) Woods consist of 22.71ha of native broadleaved woodland planted in December 1998 on former arable land situated between Birtley and Ouston in Co Durham (OS ref: NZ 263 554). Sub-cpt 2a was planted as part of the Trust's Woods on Your Doorstep (WOYD) campaign to celebrate the millennium. Both woods occupy gently sloping ground inclined to the east and northeast, except sub-cpt 1a that is situated level ground. The land to the south and west of the woods is still predominantly arable whilst to the north and east the adjacent land consists of active and reclaimed brickwork sites and industrial units.

Both woods form part of the Great North Forest and are well used by local people for informal recreation. Public footpaths run along the eastern edge of sub-cpts 1b and 2a as far south as Blue Barns from where a third path crosses sub-cpt 2a to run southwards along the outside of the wood's boundary to join another public footpath that runs between sub-cpt 2a and 2b. From these paths an extensive network of permissive rides provide access to all parts of the woods, allowing visitors to roam freely, helping to achieve the Trust's corporate objective of increasing people's enjoyment and understanding of woodland. The creation St Bede's & Bright Lea Woods also helps fulfil another of the Trust's corporate objectives, that of increasing the amount new native woodland nationally. Because the woods were planted on land previously used for arable farming, their creation also helps increase local biodiversity.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

For those wishing to reach the wood by public transport, bus stops are located on Station Lane in Birtley from where the woods can be reached within a few minutes by walking down Station Lane and over the railway line. A squeeze stile entrance is located next to the field gate at the top of the unadopted road leading down to Westline Industrial Estate giving access to Bright Lea Wood to the south of Station Lane and a simple gap entrance next to the metal boom gate provide a means of access to St Bede's Wood to the north of the road. For visitors arriving by car, a lay-by off Station Lane at the northern end of Bright Lea Wood provides space to park several cars.

Access to both woods is available off Station Lane, which runs westwards out of Birtley and up the hill to Ouston, separating the two woods. From the lay-by, Bright Lea Wood can be entered on foot by walking a few yards along the road leading to the Westline Industrial Estate (public footpath No 2a) then entering the wood through the squeeze stile next to the field gate. The wood can also be accessed on foot at its southern end from the east and west via public footpath No 8 that runs between sub-cpts 2a and 2b.

Across the road from the lay-by, St Bede's Wood can be entered directly off Station Lane at its southeast corner where a metal boom gate is located, or at several points off the track that runs along the eastern boundary of the wood (public footpath Ouston No 1) between sub-cpts 1a and 1b. This footpath also provides access to the wood from the north off the public road near to Urpeth Bridge.

Once in the woods, easy walking is provided by a network of grass rides that are cut three times a year to keep them open. The ground does slope very gently eastwards but overall, the site is relatively flat, though the ground can be soft and wet in places, particularly during winter time.

For those needing public conveniences whilst visiting the wood, public toilets can be found on Harraton Terrace off the west side of Durham Road (A6127) just south of the traffic lights where Station Road joins the A6127 about 10 to 15 minutes walk from the woods. A RADAR toilet is also located at the conveniences at Harraton Terrace.

### 3.2 Access / Walks

## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

To establish vigorous, native broadleaf high forest woodland across both woods and to realise Bright Lea Wood's potential as a Woods on Your Doorstep site. To achieve this, and to realise the Trust's corporate objectives of increasing the area of new native woodland and increasing understanding and enjoyment of woodland, management practices will primarily be aimed at ensuring the existence of high forest woodland in perpetuity and providing unobstructed public access. This will be achieved by utilising appropriate silvicultural practices to maintain the health and character of the woods and by regular mowing of rides to provide visitors with free access throughout the woods. Where natural regeneration of native species occurs, this will be encouraged to help diversify the age structure and ensure the future regeneration of the woods. The current ratio of 80% tree cover and 20% open space will be maintained to ensure that the site always remains primarily a woodland habitat.

14/10/08

## 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

St Bede's & Bright Lea Woods provide a total area of 22.71 ha of land open to free public access on foot for quiet enjoyment. A number of public footpaths offer easy access to the woods from several directions and an extensive network of maintained rides and open spaces on site allow walkers to roam freely.

#### Significance

Providing public access to woods is a cornerstone of the Trust's management approach to its properties and is encapsulated in its corporate objective of increasing enjoyment and understanding of woodland. Both these woods are located close to large urban and industrial areas that offer little opportunity for people to roam freely in green spaces. Consequently, St Bede's & Bright Lea Woods have the potential to fulfil an important function as a local amenity for the residents of Birtley, Ouston and the surrounding area. Being in the Great North Forest, they also contribute to the creation of the community forest in north Durham.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

Fly tipping is an ongoing problem at both woods. The road down to Westline Industrial Estate alongside Bright Lea and the track running between sub-cpts 1a and 1b of St Bede's have provided easy access for vehicles to tip on site. Besides being unsightly, these items could represent a danger to visitors and consequently, gates were installed at the management entrances to both woods during 2004.

#### Factors Causing Change

Fly Tipping, Vandalism of information boards

#### Long term Objective (50 years+)

To create woods in which people can roam freely on foot, without constraint, in order to enjoy quiet recreation and experience nature.

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

Woodland Trust welcome signs will be erected and maintained at all formal entrances to the woods and rides and other open spaces will be mown up to three times a year to ensure that the grass sward is maintained at a height which will allow unobstructed access for walkers. Litter will be collected at least once a year and a site risk assessment of all known hazards within the woods will also be maintained and any necessary work carried out in order to minimise the dangers associated with these.

## 5.2 Secondary Woodland

### Description

Two new native broadleaved woods were established in December 1998 on 22.71 ha of former arable land by planting 42,660 trees and shrubs on approximately 80% of the site, whilst retaining 20% as open ground consisting of rides, glades and other open spaces.

### Significance

Native broadleaved woodland is a vital habitat for many plants and animals found in the UK. Over the centuries, our countryside has lost most of its natural tree cover, with a consequent loss of biodiversity. By planting new native woodland we are helping to reverse this depletion and fragmentation of the countryside. Planting on former farmland provides a net gain in biodiversity that will increase as the woods develop. Consequently, increasing the area of new native woodland is one of the Trust's four key corporate objectives that the creation of St Bede's & Bright Lea Woods helps to fulfil. Being located next to industrial areas and land that has suffered considerable disturbance through clay extraction and landfill, these woods will also play a significant role in enhancing the aesthetic value of the local landscape.

### Opportunities & Constraints

The site suffers from motorbike access but overall vandalism has been low. With farmland adjoining the woods along their east boundary, the opportunity for future expansion through further land acquisition and new planting remains a possibility.

### Factors Causing Change

Vandalism/fire

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

To ensure that biologically and structurally diverse native high forest broadleaved woodland is successfully established across both woods and to ensure this remains healthy and vigorous so that, over the long-term, the woods become self-perpetuating through natural regeneration, ensuring their existence in perpetuity.

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

The trees and shrubs are now well established and no longer require weeding or beating-up and can be largely left alone to grow onto canopy closure, with observations limited to woodland condition observations once per plan period. By around 2020, the plantings should have formed into dense thickets of young trees whose canopy has closed, creating the early stages of a woodland environment.

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## 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	4.35	Ash	1998	High forest		Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	Community Forest
<p>Sub-cpt 1a of St Bede's Wood occupies an area of 4.35 ha on almost level ground projecting northeastwards from the main body of St Bede's Wood and separated from it by a track along which runs public footpath Ouston No 1. An unnamed watercourse defines its northern boundary and is the subject of a proposed habitat improvement scheme as part of the River Team Revival Project that seeks to improve channel morphology and remove the artificial liner from the watercourse. This watercourse is a tributary of Rowletch Burn that forms the northeast boundary of 1a. To the north and east of the sub-cpt lies the Ibstock brickworks site and to the south another former clay pit site, which is now reinstated and separated from sub-cpt 1a by a high concrete post and wire fence running along the boundary. A 20kV overhead electric powerline runs along the northern edge of 1a and a combined surface and foul water sewer runs parallel to this within the sub-cpt. Most of sub-cpt 1a was planted with native broadleaved trees and shrubs as one solid block along with the rest of the wood in December 1998 with only a 15 to 20m strip of open ground left along the northern edge of the sub-cpt where the sewer runs through it. Access for management is taken off the track that separates sub-cpt 1a from 1b, which can be accessed either from Station Lane to the south or from the minor road at Urpeth Bridge to the north. However, Durham County Council has blocked the entrance off Station Lane with large stones and so access now has to be taken from sub-cpt 1b.</p>							
1b	9.75	Ash	1998	High forest		Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	Community Forest
<p>Sub-cpt 1b of St Bede's Wood occupies an area of 9.75 ha on ground gently sloping down to the northeast where public footpath Ouston No 1 runs along the outside edge of the wood. The southern edge of 1b is formed by Station Lane, which separates St Bede's from Bright Lea Wood and has an overgrown hedge running along the boundary. Beyond the southwest-facing boundary, which is marked by a post and wire fence, lays arable farmland, whilst to the northwest the sub-cpt boundary consists of the unnamed watercourse that also forms the northern boundary of sub-cpt 1a. The combined surface and foul water sewer that runs through sub-cpt 1a also continues south westwards through the northern end of 1b and low pressure gas mains also run along the inside of the southern and northeast-facing boundaries. Planting was carried out in December 1998 using native broadleaved trees and shrubs to create three large planting blocks separated by two broad rides and open ground around their edges. Management access is taken directly off Station Lane via the metal boom gate located at the southeast corner of the sub-cpt.</p>							

2a	8.01	Ash	1998	High forest	Services & wayleaves	Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	Community Forest
<p>Sub-cpt 2a of Bright Lea Wood covers 8.01 ha of which 6.4 ha were planted in December 1998 under the Trust's "Woods on Your Doorstep" (WOYD) programme with native broadleaved trees and shrubs. Planting began with 240 pupils from Ouston Junior School coming to site on the 4 of December to plant trees in block vi (see Management Proposals/WGS Map). The public were invited on the 5th to continue the planting and on both days the work was supervised by volunteers from the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) and by members of the local Ouston Conservation Volunteers. The remaining 1.61 hectares was left as open ground consisting of rides and small glades.</p> <p>Located on a gentle east-facing slope to the south of Station Lane, sub-cpt 2a is bound along its eastern side by the private road running down to Westline Industrial Estate, beyond which lies a former landfill site that has now been reclaimed and partly planted with broadleaves. To the west, the wood is separated from the adjacent arable land by a post and wire fence and to the south from sub-cpt 2b by public footpath Ouston No 8. The road down to Westline Industrial Estate as far as Blue Barns also functions as a public footpath (Ouston No 2a), at which point the footpath crosses sub-cpt 2a to continue down the outside of southern end of the western boundary to join public footpath Ouston No 8 at the southwest entrance to the wood. A large wooden sculpture, which was chosen by local people and installed in sub-cpt 2a in 2000, suffered increasing levels of vandalism over the years and in 2008 was removed from the site.</p> <p>Management access is taken off the road down to the industrial estate a few metres along from the lay-by off Station Lane, the entrance of which has recently been fenced and gated because of persistent fly tipping problems. However, the Trust's does have a legal right of access for management purposes along this road as far as Blue Barns if required. Many services affect sub-cpt 2a, both overhead powerlines and underground pipes and cables (see legal map).</p>							
2b	0.60	Ash	1998	High forest		Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	Community Forest
<p>Sub-cpt 2b covers only 0.6ha and is the non-WOYD part of Bright Lea Wood. It occupies a gentle east-facing slope and is separated from sub-cpt 2a to the north by public footpath Ouston No 8. A post and wire fence to the south separates 2b from the arable farmland beyond, whilst adjoining its eastern boundary is young plantation woodland consisting predominantly of conifers. The western end of 2b narrows to a point where Ouston No 8 joins two other public footpaths at the southwest entrance to the wood and it was at this end of 2b that children from Ouston Infants School, supervised by BTCV planted 125 trees and shrubs (25 each of oak, ash, hazel, rowan and alder) on the 3 March 1999. The remainder of the sub-cpt was planted along with the rest of the wood in December 1998. 2b can be reached on foot from the east and west via the public footpath along its northern boundary and is accessed for management purposes from sub-cpt 2a to the north.</p>							

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**Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)**

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2022	2a	Thin	7.90	9	70
2022	2b	Thin	0.80	6	5
2023	1a	Thin	4.30	9	40
2023	1b	Thin	9.90	9	90

## 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.