



Throne 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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Throne Wood
Location:	North Belfast
Grid reference:	J332805, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 15
Area:	5.47 hectares (13.52 acres)
Designations:	

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

This lovely mature woodland offers an oasis of beauty and tranquillity close to the northern edge of Belfast's suburbia. It has a wonderful mix of wildlife, including seven types of bat, as well as spring flowers, ponds and open glades.

2.2 Extended Description

Throne is a mature wood in a suburban area, and a Wood on Your Doorstep, on the east slope of Cavehill, just below the Zoo and private houses on the busy Antrim Road into North Belfast. It was probably planted as part of the Throne House (a rest home) in the early 1800s and consists mainly of mature beech, ash, sycamore and common lime, with several large elms. The elms were dead and were taken down over 2000-2001 and the trunks lay in the west part of the wood, below the road, it was not possible to remove them due to the poor track access. As a result a good amount of fungi and bird life has developed and the wood also now has a number of species of bat.

The mature wood slopes down from the main road to the old hospital site near the M2 and in the wood there are two small ponds, a small hill, open glades and with pockets of planting to the south. The planting is to the main entrance, southern hill and the eastern sides-forming just 0.6 ha within 2ha of Cpt. 1a only.

Much of the wood was covered in ground ivy and laurels in 1999, and this has mainly been cut out and sprayed to allow for native flora. There is a good cover of lesser celandine, enchanters nightshade, wood anemone and some bluebells. Also there are occasional garden plants of fuchsia, daffodil and holme oak.

Throne fulfils the WT key outcomes in its provision for public enjoyment by access, conserving/increasing native woodland and in its biodiversity by increasing the habitat diversity, with deadwood, ponds and planting.

The access paths were developed from the existing Throne House and hospital paths, with a new access track from the Antrim road making a loop of the wood possible. The access gate is to the west of Antrim road. The wood is well used by dog walkers and runners from the nearby housing estates. The surrounding land is all housing although large gardens to the north and south merge the edges of the wood into Cave hill and the zoo parks.

The paths and access were further improved in 2009 with funding from Alpha Programme, a landfill tax.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

By bus:

The adjacent Antrim Road is served by several bus routes, including 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E, 1G, 1H, 553, 571 and 573.

By train:

The nearest railway service is Belfast Central Train Station via the A20 heading west into Belfast city centre or Yorkgate Train Station, closer to the North of Belfast.

For further information on public transport, contact Traveline on 0871 200 2233 or visit traveline.org.uk

By car:

Throne Wood can be accessed from the A6 Antrim Road, and is located 1.2km ($\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile) south of the turning for Belfast Zoo. The entrance to Throne Wood is just 90 metres (300ft) south of the Kincaig Park stop.

3.2 Access / Walks

The access paths were developed from the existing Throne House and hospital paths, with a new access track from the Antrim Road making a loop of the wood possible. The access gate is to the west of Antrim Road near the old entrance to Bellevue Zoo

The public have access from the Snakey path on the Whitewell Road (boundary A-I) and from the Antrim Road above the wood. This path drops from the public highway along the northern boundary and is constructed of a snaking stone wall and concrete path. However it lies outside the boundaries of the site so caution is advised when crossing this route.

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term intention is to conserve the existing secondary woodland, involve the community with access and to incorporate the present deadwood, new planting and natural regeneration areas within the woodland.

Much of the woodland was mature to over-mature, so it was necessary to improve the age structure within the woodland. This has been done by restructuring of the mature stands, by felling the dead elms to create deadwood and leaving the deadwood in situ.

Throne requires further removal of invasive laurel and pheasant ear regeneration with the aim of opening the ground layer for native flora and natural regeneration by ash, beech and lime.

The long term aim is to restore the broadleaf cover of ash and lime whilst retaining some mature beech and sycamore; these being the historic cover whilst the ash and lime are the native cover on the lower hills. The old beech and sycamore are good for high canopy cover whilst the ash and lime will grow in to the gaps.

This broadleaf cover will be achieved through minimal intervention, although some areas will need weed clearance and underplanting with saplings.

Access: the aim was to develop a robust path network, which is now maintained, but in the long term we should not need to maintain this input due to the created paths then being well used creating desire lines.

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

Throne Wood located on the Antrim Road in Belfast. It is mature woodland offering an oasis of tranquillity with a wonderful mix of wildlife, including several species of bat, as well as spring flowers, small ponds and open glades.

Throne Wood was once part of the Throne House Estate where the renowned poet Sir Samuel Ferguson lived during the 1820s. Some of the mature trees date from the early 1800s while around 2,000 trees were newly planted in 1999. There is a good cover of lesser celandine, wood anemone and bluebell which light up the woodland floor in spring.

Despite being so close to Belfast, Throne Wood is a haven for wildlife and home to a number of native animal species. A small pond provides habitat for frogs and insect life and there is a wide variety of bird species including goldcrest, tree creeper and sparrowhawk.

New interpretation panels have been installed plus a sculpture of a heron which was developed in partnership with local schools. There are also stone bridges which act as perch points.

Pupils from Hazelwood Integrated Primary and Nursery Schools are regular visitors and have their own dedicated site for Forest Schools at the bottom of the wood.

Community Management was created in Jan 19 to oversee the design, management works under the contract and allow residents feedback during operations.

Significance

A key WT objective is to increase enjoyment and awareness of woodland. This wood is on an interface and is important because of the cross community interplay over time.

The wood is close to the large urban populations of both Belfast and Newtownabbey. The number of households in BT36 is 18,749 which is large audience to attract to the site and future events.

The wood has close links with Belfast Zoo and the surrounding community especially Hazelwood Integrated Primary School.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraint:

Cross community liaison comments on access issues.
A local interface constraint with the political undertones.

Opportunity:

The local school, Hazelwood Integrated Primary School, use the wood for Forest Schools, their aim is to get each class into the wood for an outdoor classroom once a week. This is now being rolled out to Hazelwood Secondary School

Site is located on the main arterial route into Belfast with high visibility for WT signs

Improve link with Belfast Zoo to create an add on visitor experience to that offered by the Zoo

Potential to develop new volunteering roles including wood wardens to help support the management plan

Continue the excellent partnership working opportunities with Belfast Hills and their volunteers

Factors Causing Change

As an urban wood vandalism will influence frequency of maintenance on the pathways. Vandalism is an issue with the sculpture also.

Damage to paths from increased use by Forest School, visitors.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The access will be maintained by retaining paths at least 1m wide. Access features will prevent unauthorised vehicles entering the site. Safety works may be required on the odd mature tree.

To promote the site as a visitor attraction, applying learning from the Visitor Experience Tool kit and increase membership,volunteering and supporters.

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

Quarterly -The paths clearance is carried out regularly. Management visits take place.

Annual - Check of access features will be carried out & repaired as required.

As Throne Wood has just completed its site upgrade in 2017 there will be no events in 2018 but we will continue to develop volunteering opportunities / work parties and promote the site through the bluebell Spring moment.

5.2 Natural Secondary Woodland

Description

Secondary trees, of +200yrs old, dominate this wood, with ash, beech, lime and sycamore the major species; making this mature wood a close canopy linking into the Cavehill woods. A significant mass of the trees were planted in the late 1700s and early 1800s on the Belfast Castle Estate & at Throne House.

Significance

These are significant trees on the edge of the city and fulfill a high landscape and amenity function. Recognized as a major feature on the edge of Belfast City & the Councils Cavehill Country Park and included in the Belfast Hills plan & BMAP. Providing a link between communities and amenity on the urban fringe.

Opportunities & Constraints

Access to the site by vehicle is a problem, thus little machine management work can be done, leaving large amounts of fallen elm & beech trees as deadwood
 Opportunity arises to feature the older trees by removal of undergrowth of laurel and sycamore. A constraint is the sporadic vandalism of the mature trees, youths burning them.

Factors Causing Change

vandalism to trunks, Fire, Invasive species - knotweed, laurel, pheasant berry, snowberry, winter heliotrope. Fly Tipping

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Retain 5.5 ha of broadleaf woodland. Monitor safety & health of old trees. Retain the old trees beech and lime especially, with natural regeration to ash and lime. Aim for 50% canopy of ash /lime in 50yrs. Understorey species will not contain laurels and non native shade casting species.

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

In Cpt 1b, removal of invasives will be carried out as required by cutting all growth in winter and spraying regrowth in late spring. Once all invasives have been removed, 1B will be managed as minimal intervention. Thinning of 1ha, in Cmpt 1B near the houses, shouldn't be required, as there is a good mix of species which should allow self thinning, this will be monitored. Regen. of 10% is estimated.

5.3 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

Throne Wood lies between the Antrim Road and the Whitewell Road. There are 4 entrances, three with kissing gates off the Antrim Road and one off the "snakey path, two of these entrances have steps." One with a management gate, there is no adjacent accessible parking, the nearest being the "Throne shops." There are approx. 1.5km of mostly wide, stoney paths with three small stone bridges and some steep sections. Information panels are installed at three of the entrances, the one at the main entrance includes a half-roof shelter. The site also has a heron sculpture, a medium sized pond, forest school area and an orienteering trail (both public and for Hazelwood Integrated PS) as additional features.

Significance

Throne wood is historically significant in the area connected to the Old Throne House, then later Hospital.

A number of notable veteran sycamore, lime and chestnut trees with a history of veteran elms (some regen still evident)

Shiela the Elephant from Belfast Zoo was walked home by her keeper every evening during the Belfast Blitz. Both the Whitewell and Antrim Road are main arterial routes to and from Belfast city and beyond.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities;

- To form a "friends of group" as part of the Belfast Hills - "Our Bright Future" and "Wildlife Connections."
- Future brand moments e.g. bluebell trails.
- To improve or add to the additional features e.g. siting of more nest/bat boxes
- Partnership events with Forest Schools/Belfast Hills/Cavehill Conservation Group
- Woodland management
- To continue engagement / relationship with Hazelwood Integrated Primary and Nursery

Constraints;

- Funding
- some sections of site are steep and not completely accessible to all users
- anti-social behaviour on site
- parking
- no entrance to serve Whitewell /Pineview residents

Factors Causing Change

Climate change, some burning on site and anti-social behaviour, tree disease, health veteran/mature trees, community relations

Long term Objective (50 years+)

A wildlife rich and structurally diverse woodland with open rides and glades alongside managed pathways leading you through the site to various feature points. A connecting urban wildlife corridor through the wider Belfast Hills landscape. A growing local volunteer base/ and or friends of group to help manage the woodland for people and wildlife. Yearly brand moments, public awareness and engagement events around the importance and connection of woodland to local residents. People of North Belfast and Newtownabbey and beyond know the site and feel confident and assured to protect and stand up for the area as an essential natural asset.

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

To survey site access based on the "paths for all" guidelines to determine any improvements that can be made to increase user ability and variety and complete welcome program for site by 2019 end. To work alongside Belfast Hills and local community associations to increase volunteer opportunities for the area. To continue to support the local primary schools in the area around their forest schools initiative, tree packs, events and green tree schools award.

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	2.00	Ash	1999	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/ mine shafts/sink holes etc		
<p>Mixed scrub and semi mature trees & regeneration in a flatter band to E and S of the mature wood; including the planting of 0.6 ha. and small open (grass /herbs) hill to S edge. Most of the regen is ash with a thick briar, nettle, herbs and scrub layer underneath</p>							
1b	3.50	Beech	1800	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/ mine shafts/sink holes etc		
<p>Mature veteran trees in close canopy broadleaf wood (150-200 y.o.) once part of a larger estate. With understorey of nettle, briar, willowherbs & invasives of laurel and ivy mainly. Natural regeneration of ash, sycamore and beech; sycamore and ash are dominant</p>							

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2020	1a	Thin	1.00	0	0

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.