



# Mill Field 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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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](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>	Mill Field Wood
<b>Location:</b>	Fleckney
<b>Grid reference:</b>	SP657935, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 141
<b>Area:</b>	7.76 hectares (19.18 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	No designations for this site, Site of Special Scientific Interest

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

Mill Field Wood is one of The Woodland Trust's 'Woods on Your Doorstep' woodlands, created to commemorate the Millennium. As well as a mix of broadleaf trees, the site features a wildflower meadow, which is home to the yellow meadow ant.

## 2.2 Extended Description

Mill Field Wood lies on the rising ground on the east side of the Grand Union Canal and is 1 kilometer from the village of Fleckney and two kilometers from Kibworth. The woodland was acquired in 2000 and established as part of the Woodland Trust's 'Woods on your Doorstep' project, which was supported by the Millennium Commission, Forestry Commission and the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trust.

The site is on west-facing gently-rising former agricultural land bounded by mature hedgerows containing a number mature ash trees. The origin design for Mill Field Wood sought to enhance the local landscape by creating new native woodland in an area that is easily accessible by people from nearby towns and villages and which is otherwise predominantly agricultural land. The site is connected to well-used footpaths and bridleway along the canal and between Fleckney and Kibworth.

Species choice was a balance between native broadleaf species growing in the vicinity and also a reflection of the lower portion of the site's rather wet soil conditions. In this area of stagno-gley soils a higher proportion of species such as alder and willow have been added to the mix.

All trees were planted at a density of 2250 trees per hectare at 2 metre by 2.2 metre spacing, allowing easier access for inter-row mowing operations and band spraying. All the planting had established and grown well over the first 15 years.

An area of approximately 1 hectare at the lower end of sub-compartment 1a, and known as "Wedwood" sponsored and planted by a local couple for their Wedding Anniversary when the property was first planted.

The spur land situated at the southern end of the site which was created by spoil from the construction of the Grand Union Canal in the 18th century has been designated as part of the Grand Union Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest and consequently retained as meadow. This area is floristically rich and in addition contains a number of ant-hills of the yellow meadow ant (*Iasius flavus*) species.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

The site lies approximately 500 metres NE of the village of Fleckney. There is a small municipal car park off the High Street in the centre of the village. On foot, turn left out of the car park, take the next left onto Kibworth Road then make a third left turn onto the unadopted section of Kibworth Road which ends at a field gate. A public footpath/bridleway then crosses a field of ridge and furrow to the canal bridge and access to Mill Field Wood. This footpath is very uneven because of the ridge and furrow and often muddy and consequently is not suitable for wheelchairs.

This footpath/bridleway continues eastwards across the site and thereafter offsite along the route of the management access until it reaches Fleckney Road which is approximately 0.5 mile to the east. A branch of this footpath also leaves the site through the north eastern boundary and goes to Kibworth.

There is an informal pull-off on the main Kibworth Road where the Grand Union Canal follows a tunnel (SP661931). It is possible to gain access to the site by following the canal horse-track northwards. It should be noted that although there is a well-established footpath at the southern end of the site this does not represent a recognised public right of way.

There are approximately 1.7 km of permissive footpaths/rides within the site itself. These are predominately grassed and often muddy in winter.

There are buses from Leicester, St Margaret's, Bus station to Fleckney High Street. This service also connects to South Wigston where there is a railway station, Wigston Magna and Kibworth Beauchamp.

There are no public toilets with a 5 mile radius.

### 3.2 Access / Walks

## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long-term intention at Mill Field Wood will be to increase the structural and habitat diversity over the whole 7.76ha. This will in turn advance three out of the four corporate objectives of the Trust; by increasing new native woodland, increasing enjoyment of woodland and restoring and improving biodiversity of woodlands.

The main intention over the next 10 years will be to break up the even-agedness of the planting and to counter the effects of ash dieback, the suppression of oaks and the attack by squirrels. During this plan period a programme of the selective thinning of medium-sized coupes will be adopted. Diseased ash will be felled in favour of oak and other broadleaved species and the location of these thinning coupes will be selected in such a way that the whole wood will be progressively thinned over a period of four years.

After this period of fairly intense activity the resultant structure should enable the wood to progress with minimal silvicultural intervention.

The open area of grassland, which is designated as an SSSI will continue to be partially mown and arisings removed where possible in an effort to increase the floristic diversity of the area.

The Trust's corporate objective of increasing enjoyment of woodlands will be achieved by maintaining and encouraging community involvement at the site, maintaining the rides paths and entrances for public access.



## 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 site contains a net work of permissive path ways and a bridle path connects Mill Field to Kibworth and a well used footpath to nearby Fleckney.

The site sits adjacent to the Grand Union Canal and there is easy access into the property from the tow path.

#### Significance

Created as part of the Woods on your Doorstep project, the local community were involved in the design and planting of the site, the property is well used locally being a significant area of publicly accessible green space for local people in what is otherwise predominantly farmland.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

The property ties in nicely into the surrounding public access network via a footpath from Fleckney and a bridle path from Kibworth also being accessible via the tow path on the Grand Union Canal. There may be opportunities to promote the property more widely as part of access and promotional opportunities in the wider area as and when they arise.

The incursion of a small minority of horse-riders off the designated bridle paths can make walking conditions for visitors difficult during wet periods.

#### Factors Causing Change

N/A

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

Maintain wide-open rides, pathways and entrances in perpetuity so that the property remains accessible as recreational green space for local people and the wider public.

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

Cut all paths/rides in May, June, July, August and September.

Entrance maintenance in May, July and September.

Monitor and assess the condition of entrances, paths and rides once every three years.

## 5.2 Secondary Woodland

### Description

7.41 ha of new native woodland adjacent to the Grand Union Canal, planted in the year 2000 in an area consisting predominantly of agricultural land near to the settlements of Fleckney and Kibworth. The woodland consists of 22 native species and adds substantially to the habitat diversity of the local area.

### Significance

In an area of predominantly farmland the planting of Mill Field Wood added significantly to the habitat diversity of the local area, the importance of this habitat will improve further as the woodland matures.

### Opportunities & Constraints

Potentially the opportunity to engage with the local community in the longer term management of the property.

The woodland is quite isolated with management access via a track on adjacent property, this could make future thinning operations and extraction of timber difficult.

### Factors Causing Change

Threats from squirrels and ash die back.

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

To allow the woodland to develop into native high-forest with trees and shrubs of varying age classes and species types. The woodland will reach this state largely via natural processes through a minimum intervention management approach. "Woodland Condition Assessments" will inform management going into the future, interventions only taking place if highlighted as necessary by the Woodland Condition Assessments; the aim being to ensure the long term resilience of the woodland in perpetuity.

The areas of grassland will be retained and the area covered by the SSSI managed appropriately in order to maximise the quality of the habitat.

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

Carry out light thinning work in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 as per the following prescription:

Select 6 medium-sized coupes (50 x 50 metres) annually. In these fell diseased ash in favour of oaks and other broadleaves and natural regeneration of species other than ash. Create windrows and habitat piles of brash and extract timber to ride-side where it can be removed off site, either by contractor or local community. The location of these thinning coupes will be selected in such a way that the whole wood will be progressively thinned over a period of four years.

Monitor the effects of the thinning work on sub-canopy light levels, regeneration, structure, robustness and diversity of ground flora.

Inspect the woodland annually to check for issues associated with tree health.

Prior to the next management plan review carry out a Woodland Condition Assessment.

### 5.3 Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat

#### Description

The southern section of sub-compartment 2a and the whole of 3a were formed from the spoil that was created by the excavation of the Grand Union Canal in the 18th Century. The grassland area has remained comparatively un-disturbed and has become floristically diverse with a number of yellow meadow ant hills present. It has been designated as part of the Grand Union Canal SSSI.

#### Significance

A floristically rich patch of meadow in an area dominated by intensive agricultural land.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

The canal side bank is covered by blackthorn which has the tendency to encroach onto the species rich grassland. The southern section is difficult to mow because of the yellow meadow ant hills. The removal of the mown grass has proved to be difficult but is something that should be investigated if the opportunity arises or alternative options investigated.

#### Factors Causing Change

Scrub encroachment.

Inability to remove mowed grass.

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

Conserve the biodiversity of the grassland in perpetuity.

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

Mow the meadow in September annually and remove arisings if possible.

Monitor the meadow annually alongside the wider secondary woodland key feature observation to ensure there are no unwanted issues / scrub encroachment.

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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	3.46	Mixed broadleaves	2000	Wood establishment		Informal Public Access	
<p>Compartment 1a is located at the northern extremity of the site. The triangular planting areas are divided by a broad grassed ride beneath the electricity transmission lines. The area is predominantly of native broadleaves with 4 yew trees marking the area of the "Wed Wood". There is a higher proportion of species such as alder and various willow species, which thrive in wetter conditions in the lower section of the compartment. All the trees have grown vigorously over the last years. During volunteer days most of the compartment has been relieved of its tree-shelters and some willows have been coppiced and selected trees had their crowns lifted in order to create some structural diversity.</p> <p>Recently the trees have become severely etiolated and the sub-canopy light environment such that sub-dominant trees have become suppressed and the shrub and ground layer shaded-out. In some areas the ash has over-topped the oak which has resulted in the death of many stems. The situation has been made more severe by the incidence of die-back on ash and squirrel attack on oaks.</p>							
2a	3.02	Mixed broadleaves	2000	Wood establishment	Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site	Informal Public Access	Site of Special Scientific Interest
<p>Compartment 2a is a stand of mixed broadleaved species. The area has a shallow westerly aspect running down to a small stream situated towards the western end of the compartment. The stream runs in roughly north-west south-east direction entering the Grand union canal at the north western end of the compartment.</p> <p>A wide ride has been left along the northern side of the compartment and follows the route of the public bridleway. The 10 tonne granite Millennium feature is situated toward the eastern corner, bought locally from Croft Quarry.</p> <p>All the planted trees have grown vigorously over the last years. During a volunteer day in 2007 tree shelters were removed and some specimens formatively pruned in the lower section of the site. Recently the trees have become severely etiolated and the sub-canopy light environment such that sub-dominant trees have become suppressed and the shrub and ground layer shaded-out. In some areas the ash has over-topped the oak which has resulted in the death of many stems. The situation has been made more severe by the incidence of die-back on ash and squirrel attack on oaks.</p>							
3a	1.28	Open ground		Non-wood habitat	Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site	Informal Public Access	Site of Special Scientific Interest

Compartment 3 is a long narrow spur situated at the southerly end of the site. This is mainly an area of grassland with some encroachment of shrub species from the surrounding vegetation. The area is noticeably less rich in true grassland species, and has a higher proportion of ruderal plants. The area does however contain a species of ant 'Lasius flavus' which is a subterranean species requiring the warmth of the sun to allow the ants to become active. 80+ mounds have been identified and a number of them have been estimated at being 150 years old or more. The whole of this sub-compartment lies within the Grand Union Canal SSSI.

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

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2019	1a	Selective Fell	0.75	53	40
2019	2a	Selective Fell	0.75	60	45
2020	1a	Selective Fell	0.75	53	40
2020	2a	Selective Fell	0.75	60	45
2021	1a	Selective Fell	0.75	53	40
2021	2a	Selective Fell	0.75	60	45
2022	1a	Selective Fell	0.75	53	40
2022	2a	Selective Fell	0.75	60	45



## 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.