WOODLAND TRUST

Castle Hill 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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Castle Hill Wood
Location:	Castleside nr Consett
Grid reference:	NZ078490, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 88
Area:	6.56 hectares (16.21 acres)
Designations:	Area of Landscape Value, Woods on your Doorstep

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Castle Hill consists of native broadleaf trees and shrubs. Part of the wood contains an old quarry now dominated by gorse scrubland that provides valuable wildlife habitats including pools and boggy areas.

2.2 Extended Description

Castle Hill Wood is situated on 6.54 ha of land on the northern edge of the village of Castleside in Co. Durham (NZ 0785 4909). The land is held by the Trust on a 999-year lease from Derwentside District Council beginning in December 1999 and was planted (Cpt 1) in December 2000 under the Trust's Woods On Your Doorstep (WOYD) campaign with native broadleaved trees and shrubs.

Situated in an Area of High Landscape Value, the site occupies a small hill at its southwest corner from where the land gently falls away to level ground at its east end. The aspect is northerly, giving extensive views over the surrounding landscape. The wood joins the A68 along its western boundary and has new housing along most of its southern boundary, except for the southwest corner where the wood adjoins horse paddocks. Improved grassland lies to the north of the wood and to the east the newly planted (2016/170 Four Lane Ends Wood, managed by the Woodland Trust and leased for 15 year from the District Council. Part of the site (Cpt 2) consists of an old quarry, now dominated by gorse scrub that provides valuable wildlife habitat, along with the pools/boggy areas that have developed in its southeast arm.

An old well exists in the eastern half of the wood, fenced-off and located in the corridor of open ground underneath the overhead electric powerline that crosses the eastern end of the wood, running north-south. No public rights of way exist over the wood but a public footpath (No 11) runs along the outside of the wood's east boundary. Permissive paths that run between the planting blocks provide access to the wood and people are invited into the wood by Woodland Trust welcome signs at entrances. The Wood is very well used by local people for informal recreation, particularly dog walkers and children playing. Vehicular access for management purposes is available directly off the A68 through the field gate in the western boundary.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

For those wishing to reach the wood by public transport, bus stops are located on the A68 and the A692 in Castleside. From these stops the wood can be reached within a few minutes, either by walking along the A68 and entering the wood from the west directly off the A68 via a squeeze stile in the wall or by passing through a metal kissing gate located near the bus stop on the A692 and walking down the public footpath (No 12) and entering the wood from the east. For those travelling to the wood by car, no car parking facilities exists at the wood and so visitors will have to find on-road parking within Castleside village.

Once in the wood, 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 gently westwards with some short steep slopes but overall, much of the site is flat, though the ground can be soft and wet in places, particularly during winter time at its eastern end. An old quarry occupies much of the western end of the wood and is overgrown with gorse.

For those needing public conveniences whilst visiting the wood, public toilets can be found off the A68 just two to three minutes walk of the western entrance to the wood in Castleside village. A RADAR toilet is available about one mile away from the wood off A68 at Allensford Caravan/Picnic Park to the north of Castleside.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long-term intentions are to increase the woods resiliance, biodiversity and age structure and to establish a local resource for wood products.
Through the introduction of coppice management, a diversity of species and age structures will be maintained and promoted.
Where possible creating a wider range of habitats within the wood will be achieved, for example improving the wetland areas and creating scrapes and ponds.

The footpath network within the wood will be improved to provide easily accessible tracks for public and management 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 whole of Castle Hill Wood is open for free public access on foot to members of the public. To facilitate this, three entrances give access to the wood; two at its east end and one off the A68 to the west and a network of permissive paths and rides are maintained by regular mowing. Two seats provide visitors with a place to sit and enjoy the wood.

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 of woodland. Being located on the northern edge of Castleside, the wood acts as an important local amenity, providing one of the few areas around the village where people can wander freely.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints - The seasonal pool that forms over part of sub-compartment 1a does interfere with access to the site at its southeast corner when present . The anti-social behaviour of digging and construction of bike ramps alongside the eastern boundary presents a nuisance for walkers but does not seriously impact on people's ability to use the wood.

Opportunities - The construction of a perminant pond at the southeastern corner and the associated landscaping will improve the access and paths in the area and create a higher quality wetland area. The surfacing of the path/tracks through the site will allow access throughout the year and the introduction of drains will channel the water to areas where they can be managed appropriately.

Factors Causing Change

Creation of unauthorised gates in fence along southern boundary, Excavations by kids creating bike ramps, Seasonal water logging on part of site.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The footpath network within the wood will be improved to provide easily accessible tracks for public and management access.

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

During this plan period the short term objective is to:
- Improve the path/track network in the wood.

This will include the following operational works:
1. Construction of a wetland area in an area that is seasonally wet and impassable in sub-compartment 1a.
2. Upgrading of the 3 entrances,
3. Surfacing of the path network.

5.2 Secondary Woodland

Description

Approximately 8640 trees and shrubs were planted in December 2000 with 12 native species, sessile oak forms the most prevalent tree species on site with hazel the most common shrub, over a gross area of 4.80 hectares in order to create new a native broadleaved wood on former semi-improved grassland. Around 600 common juniper were also planted on the small hill at the southwest corner of the site

A disused stone quarry covering 1.74 ha and dominated by a dense cover of gorse with a scattering of other shrubs, small trees and coarse grasses, including rushes in wet areas along the southeast arm of the quarry.

Seasonal pools create bodies of standing water during the winter months providing an interesting temporary habitat.

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 wood develops. Consequently, increasing the area of new native woodland is one of the Trust's four key corporate objectives that the creation of Castle Hill Wood helps to fulfil.

Gorse is a native species and the dense scrub it creates provides excellent habitat for wildlife, particularly for birds that use the protection afforded by the dense spiny scrub for nesting and feeding. Within the context of the whole site, the gorse scrub not only provides significant habitat diversity but also provides an area of mature semi-natural habitat within an otherwise immature environment.

Wetland scrapes and ponds have generally decrease nationally. The improvement of these wet areas will encourage more permanent populations in the area and create another habitat type for plants and wildlife

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints - Anti-social behaviour and fire are the biggest constraint to the natural development of this habitat, most of which, if not all, are due to arson. Fly-tipping arising from kids bringing in materials to build camps causes some detrimental impact but to date, this has not become a significant problem. Mammal browsing is expected due to the dense cover in the gorse providing refuge for both rabbits and deer.

Opportunities - The 'expansion' of the area of woodland in the area has been achieved by the leasing of land from the Council. Any further expansion would be great in linking up all these woodlands and the associated benefits of having larger blocks rather than smaller fragmented woods.
The small pools and wet areas along the southeast arm of the quarry and southeast edge of the wood, provide good opportunities for biodiversity increase to occur. Through deepening and widening some of these wet areas improvements could be made.
Establish a working wood that provides employment and materials for local markets and strengthens the local markets in coppiced materials.
The small pools and wet areas along the southeast arm of the quarry and southeast edge of the wood, provide good opportunities for biodiversity increase to occur. Through deepening and widening some of these wet areas improvements could be made.

Factors Causing Change

Vandalism. Tree diseases, Mammal browsing.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long-term intentions are to increase the woods resilience, biodiversity and age structure and to establish a local resource for wood products.
Through the introduction of coppice management, a diversity of species and age structures will be maintained and promoted ensuring that native broadleaved woodland is successful, remains healthy and vigorous so that, over the long-term, the wood becomes self-perpetuating through natural regeneration, ensuring its existence in perpetuity..
Where possible creating a wider range of habitats within the wood will be achieved, for example improving the wetland areas and creating scrapes and ponds.

The introduction of coppicing and the provision of woodland for local wood workers to obtain materials for commercial use.

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

During this plan period the short term objective is to:
- Introduce a program of coppice management,
- Increase the variety of habitats within the woodland,

This will include the following operational works:
1. Establish coppice management to approximately 4.8ha of the wood. Sub-compartment 1a will be progressively coppiced over the 5 year plan period.
2. Thinning will be carried out in areas along the path network, to remove potential future hazard trees.
3. Construction of a wetland area in an area that is seasonally wet and impassable in sub-compartment 1a.
4. The quarry environment will be managed by minimum intervention, allowing the existing gorse habitat to develop naturally, free of interference.

6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By

APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	4.80	Oak (sessile)	2000	High forest	People issues (+tve & -tve), Site structure, location, natural features & vegetation	Informal Public Access	Area of Landscape Value, Woods on your Doorstep
Planted in 2000, sessile oak forms the most prevalent tree species on site with hazel the most common shrub. Around 600 common juniper were also planted on the small hill at the southwest corner of the site. A seasonal pool creates a body of standing water during the winter months providing an interesting temporary habitat, whilst at other times of the year this area generally remains wet. An old quarry covering 1.74 ha is now heavily colonised by gorse scrub. MANAGEMENT CONSTRAINTS: Seasonal wet areas in some places, limited vehicular access within the compartment.							
2a	1.74	Woody shrubs		Min-intervention		Informal Public Access	
An old quarry covering 1.74 ha is now heavily colonised by gorse scrub. Some small pools and other wet areas have formed, creating further habitat diversity of value to wildlife. During December 2000 gaps between the gorse alongside the path running through the northern end of Cpt 2 were also planted. These consist mostly of shrubs such as dog rose, holly and hazel. MANAGEMENT CONSTRAINTS: Seasonal wet areas in some places, limited vehicular access within the compartment.							

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2018	1a	Coppice	0.20	10	2
2019	1a	Coppice	0.20	10	2
2019	1a	Selective Fell	4.80	1	5
2019	2a	Selective Fell	1.70	3	5
2020	1a	Thin	0.20	25	5
2020	1a	Coppice	0.20	10	2
2021	1a	Coppice	0.20	10	2
2021	1a	Thin	0.20	25	5
2022	1a	Thin	0.20	25	5
2022	1a	Coppice	0.20	10	2
2023	1a	Thin	0.20	25	5
2023	1a	Coppice	0.20	10	2
2024	1a	Coppice	0.20	10	2
2024	1a	Thin	0.20	25	5
2025	1a	Thin	0.50	10	5
2025	1a	Coppice	0.20	10	2

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.

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