



Little Foxes Copse

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Little Foxes Copse
Location:	Hadlow Down
Grid reference:	TQ541260, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 188
Area:	5.20 hectares (12.85 acres)
Designations:	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

A fascinating opportunity to experience a woodland creation site set in the beautiful rolling landscape of the High Weald. The mixed native trees and shrubs, planted over two decades - 1991/2 and 2000/1, now fit snugly into the landscape.

2.2 Extended Description

Little Foxes Copse is a woodland creation site comprising of two ex-sheep pastures planted with mixed native broadleaved trees and woody shrubs in two phases: 1991/1992; 2000/2001. It is situated in the East Sussex High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in between the villages of Hadlow Down, Five Ashes and Rotherfield. The site is on level ground or a south-facing slope with seasonally waterlogged soils, mainly on Wadhurst Clay.

The earlier planting (Cpt 2a, originally known as Little Foxes Field) was on a 3m x 3m spacing in straight rows and was linked to Stonehurst Lane by a narrow strip of planting (mainly shrubs) along the public footpath that crosses the site. The site was partly funded and planted by the English Townswomen's Guild. All species except ash have been heavily damaged by grey squirrels. A strip along the boundary with Broadreed Wood (ASNW to the NE) was left to naturally colonise with trees. It now contains alder, birch, oak, hazel and blackthorn.

The second phase of planting (Cpt 1a) was one of the 200 sites planted by The Woodland Trust as part of the 'Woods On Your Doorstep' (WOYD) campaign to mark the Millennium. This area is planted on a 2m x 2m spacing in sinuous curves following the line of the wide central ride. The design of the planting was done in conjunction with the local community to blend in with the landscape and retain views for neighbouring houses. Main species are oak, ash and hornbeam. The area closest to Stonehurst Lane was planted with shrubs (mainly hazel) and smaller trees (e.g. field maple, crab apple) in order not to lose the view from the lane. The remaining grassland on the main ride and also under the younger trees in Cpt 1a is of good conservation value with species such as common spotted orchid, birdsfoot trefoil, lesser stitchwort, selfheal, agrimony and fleabane.

Since 2014 ash trees across the site appear to have been affected by ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) with some dying.

There is a surfaced parking area at the entrance to the site where the public footpath leaves the lane.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

General location:

Little Foxes Copse is situated off Stonehurst Lane between Hadlow Down and Five Ashes. The lanes are narrow and have no pavements.

General overview of paths & entrances:

From Stonehurst Lane there is a wide kissing gate leading in to the site on the public footpath. There are grassy rides and paths around the site with gentle to steep gradients. They can be very wet and muddy during the winter and after wet weather.

Parking:

There is a small parking area at the entrance to the wood off Stonehurst Lane, suitable for up to 4 cars.

Public Transport:

Nearest train station: Buxted, approx 4miles form the site via the A272 to Hadlow Down, then School Lane, Waghorns Lane and Stonehurst Lane.

Nearest bus stop: Butchers Cross, Five Ashes, approx 1 ½ miles from the site via Stonehurst Lane. Information obtained from Traveline website on 29/3/2007. Further information on public transport can be obtained from Traveline: www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk or tel: 0870 608 2 608).

Public Toilets:

Nearest public toilets: Mayfield, South Street car park, approx 3½ miles from the site. Disabled facilities accessible with a RADAR key. Information obtained from Wealden District council website on 18/1/2007 (www.wealden.gov.uk tel: 01892653311).

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

In the long term (50 years +) Little Foxes Copse is expected to develop into a native broadleaved woodland with a high forest structure. Variation in habitat will be provided by wide, grassy rides. Some ride-side management will be necessary to maintain the open aspect of the site in the future. This will add structural diversity to the wooded element as the coppiced trees and shrubs regrow.

As the new woodland develops it will provide a buffer to adjoining and nearby ancient woodlands (Broadreed and Fox Woods) and will link the two. It is expected that both tree and ground flora species from Broadreed Wood will continue to colonise parts of the site as has started to happen in both compartments already.

The impacts of deer, squirrels and tree diseases (particularly ash dieback) will change the initial species composition of the planted trees with natural regeneration filling in the gaps with species such as alder, hazel and blackthorn. The felling of some dead or badly affected trees will be necessary for public safety.

Annual ride/path maintenance and periodic rideside management will maintain and improve public access but the site infrastructure and visitor numbers will remain low key due to its small size and rural location.

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 Secondary Woodland

Description

Most of Cpt 1a was planted as part of the Trust's Woods on Your Doorstep (WOYD) campaign to mark the millennium. A community planting day was attended by people from local villages. Both cpts are an extension to, and buffer zone for the neighbouring ancient semi-natural woodland, Broadreed Wood. Main planted tree species are pedunculate oak, ash, wild cherry, field maple, hazel, birch, rowan and crab apple. Woody shrubs include spindle, Guelder rose, hawthorn, blackthorn and hazel.

Cpt 1a was planted on 2m x 2m spacing in curved lines following the edge of the wide central ride. Cpt 2a was planted on 3m x 3m spacing in straight rows.

Subsequent losses and damage to planted trees from deer, squirrels and ash dieback are beginning to change the species composition of the site with natural colonisation by blackthorn, hazel, alder and oak supplementing the mix.

The site lies on Wadhurst Clay with its seasonally water-logged soils.

Significance

Extending and buffering ancient woodland is seen as being the best way of protecting them from threats such as climate change, intensive agricultural activities and the ecological problems caused by fragmentation and reduction of habitat. The site lies within the heavily wooded High Weald which has good woodland connectivity although this exacerbates the problems with grey squirrels.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: mammal damage; clay soils; small site.

Opportunities: to allow site to develop naturally with colonisation by native trees and plants from surrounding woods and hedges.

Factors Causing Change

Natural succession to high forest with natural regeneration of oak, ash, alder, hazel, blackthorn.

Browsing and bark stripping damage by deer, rabbits and grey squirrels.

Loss of species such as ash to disease.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The species composition and structure of the woodland will largely be left to develop by natural process. It is likely that ash will become a very minor component, limited to a few disease-tolerant trees. Where oak is badly affected by squirrel damage and where ash dies, gaps created in the canopy, a mix of species is likely to arise from natural regeneration including alder, hazel and blackthorn. Although affected by squirrel damage, hornbeam is likely to continue to be a significant species on the site as it is more tolerant of the damage and the heavy wet soils. Some canopy gaps further away from seed sources may become more permanent and be dominated by grassland species or bramble. The site should have a minimum of 70% tree cover.

The ride network should remain open and with good quality grassland habitat present. Shrub-dominated ride edges will grade into the surrounding high forest woodland and not encroach onto the main central ride in Cpt 1a.

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

During the plan period the site will be monitored for the progress of ash dieback and mammal damage and subsequent regeneration of trees within any gaps created. Ride edges will be managed to maintain access along narrow paths and keep wide rides open.

- Biennial monitoring of tree disease, mammal damage and overall canopy cover (min 70%). Due in 2018, 2020, 2022.

- Annual or biennial ride management works based on assessment of need.

5.2 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

Little Foxes Copse is situated approximately 1.25 miles north-west of Five Ashes and 1.5 miles north-east of Hadlow Down (pop: 875). The larger villages of Mayfield (pop: 3718) and Rotherfield (pop: 3208) are approx. 3 miles away.

There is a small surfaced parking area on Stonehurst Lane suitable for 4 cars. From here a public footpath leads SE along the edge of Cpt 1a and crosses into Cpt 2a via a culvert in a steep-sided small valley. In addition both compartments have permissive paths allowing short circular walks. In Cpt 1a there is a path around the outside of the site plus a wide central ride and a narrow path through the planted trees. All paths and rides are grassy and are mowed annually. Soils are clay-based and prone to water-logging.

Significance

The footpath is part of a good local path network allowing walkers access to this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The informal access within the site allows local residents a safe and easy walk for dogs and children. The site is also used by picnickers.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: wet ground conditions; steep slopes leading into the valley between the 2 parts of the site; sheep grazing in adjoining fields (issues with dogs).

Factors Causing Change

Internal and external views will change as the trees grow.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The site will continue to have low-key public access with minimal infrastructure. The public footpath and permissive paths leading from it will be maintained to allow unhindered access as well as maintaining the grassland habitat within the site.

The parking area will be maintained at its current size in a safe condition.

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

Maintain public access by regular mowing/stripping and regular inspections of infrastructure and tree safety.

- Annual path cut (July).
- Zone B summer tree safety survey every 2 years (2018/2020/2022).
- Annual site hazards/infrastructure inspection: culvert, gates, benches (Sept).

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	3.25	Mixed native broadleaves	2001	High forest		Connecting People with woods & trees, Secondary Woodland	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Woodland creation site planted winter 2000/2001 with mixed native broadleaves (trees and shrubs) on a 2m x 2m spacing. Shelters removed 2011. See Key Feature description for species. Strip of P92 mixed broadleaves along public footpath running along western edge.							
2a	1.91	Mixed native broadleaves	1992	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site	Connecting People with woods & trees, Secondary Woodland	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Woodland creation site planted winter 1991/1992 with mixed native broadleaves on a 3m x 3m spacing. Heavy squirrel damage to oak and birch. See Key Feature description for species.							

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.