



# Preston Spring Wood

## Management Plan 2017-2022

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## MANAGEMENT PLAN - CONTENTS PAGE

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
Introduction	
Plan review and updating	
Woodland Management Approach	
Summary	
1.0 Site details	
2.0 Site description	
2.1 Summary Description	
2.2 Extended Description	
3.0 Public access information	
3.1 Getting there	
3.2 Access / Walks	
4.0 Long term policy	
5.0 Key Features	
5.1 Informal Public Access	
5.2 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland	
5.3 Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat	
6.0 Work Programme	
Appendix 1: Compartment descriptions	
Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)	
Glossary	

## MAPS

Access	
Conservation Features	
Management	

## 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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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.

## 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>	Preston Spring Wood
<b>Location:</b>	Preston Under Scar
<b>Grid reference:</b>	SE064914, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 99
<b>Area:</b>	13.59 hectares (33.58 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc)

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

This woodland sits immediately to the north and west of the small village of Preston-under-Scar, forming an important landscape backdrop to the village. A designated Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, large exposed patches of limestone bedrock make a particularly striking feature of the site.

### 2.2 Extended Description

Situated on a south facing valley side on the very eastern edge (just outside) the Yorkshire Dales National Park (this area is excluded from the Park due to local quarrying activity and MOD firing ranges). The woodland sits immediately to the north and west of the small village of Preston-under-Scar forming an important landscape backdrop to the village.

Within the woodland, hard limestone bedrock is exposed in a number of large steps, especially evident to the north and east with a small broken cliff up to 4m in height, with areas of extremely shallow soils and exposed scree common throughout the woodland. The whole site, although outside the Yorkshire Dales National Park, is included within the Richmondshire District Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and is designated as Ancient Semi Natural Woodland as part of the NCC Draft Inventory of Ancient Woodland 1987. Ancient woodland is an extremely scarce resource in this part of the Yorkshire Dales, however the woodland does form part of a larger chain of

broken woodlands following the valleys sides, although these are mainly estate plantation woodlands, designated as planted ancient woodland and have lost much of the ancient species. Land use to the north-east, east and west and is grazing land, with plantation woodland to the north and remnant heavily grazed ancient woodland to the south-west.

The site is composed of 9.31ha of Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, 3.19ha of younger planting (2007-2011) and 1.04ha of open pasture. The pasture is partly unimproved, although the area closest to the management access (cleared of stone, ploughed and re-seeded to try and establish some better production) was only maintained like this for a couple of years. The edges of the pasture bordering the woodland have remnant woodland species with bluebells and dogs mercury still evident along with large numbers of primrose and have been planted into, using native broadleaved species - in 2007 and 2011. Within the area of unimproved pasture is a small (just under 0.1Ha) wet flush/ marsh which has managed to survive through the sensitive management of previous owners. This is dominated by hard rush (*Juncus inflexus*) with frequent marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*) and a good variety of Carices. Previous sheep grazing has favoured ragged robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*) which is abundant and spectacular during June flowering. Seepage is also present to the east of the pasture where carnation sedge (*Carex panicea*) is abundant.

The woodland is dominated by ash, with sessile oak, remnant elm and a very small proportion of planted mature sycamore. The sycamore is most evident on the lower slopes accessible from the pasture and appears to have been planted in the late 1800's or very early 1900's for possible timber production. The under storey is dominated by frequent hazel coppice, and where the ash woodland opens up towards the upper slopes, hawthorn scrub tends to dominate. As with many upland ash woods, although here it is likely compounded by the effects of grazing, there are frequent glades and openings, bracken is common along with species-rich calcareous grassland, creating an irregular, complex transition of habitats from the ash woodland through hawthorn scrub, bracken and grassland to the limestone outcroppings forming the north eastern boundary to the wood. Other under storey species along the exposed limestone outcrops include blackthorn, wild gooseberry (*Ribes uva-crispa*) dog rose, soft downy rose (*Rosa mollis*) and spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*). Within the woodland, in combination with the extreme levels of rabbit browsing, sheep grazing has reduced the successful establishment of natural regeneration to almost zero, and has almost certainly increased the area of open space within the woodland.

Edge habitat where the greatest amounts of regeneration would be expected is limited to scattered hawthorn, although in areas dominated by limestone scree, some ash regeneration is establishing along with blackthorn. The ground flora is spectacular, not just for the number of species present, but for the variety of habitats that are evident within such a small area, including Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, unimproved calcareous grassland (including limestone outcropping), continuous bracken, scattered bracken, dense and continuous scrub, dry modified bogs, marshy grassland and scattered scrub. Bluebell, dogs mercury and wood anemone dominate the mature ash woodland areas with huge swathes of primroses on the more open and sunny south facing slopes.

Access to the woodland is available along a public footpath via two steps over stiles following almost the entire south-western boundary through the open pasture and then ancient woodland. There is a second permissive path running almost parallel through the woodland at a slightly higher level, which is not maintained but remains well used by local people. It was recorded on early maps as a footpath but omitted from later OS editions. A short spur runs north-east through the woodland giving limited access to some of the areas of open ground and scrub, then leading out of the wood to

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public footpath via unimproved grassland, with the permission of the owners. Management access is limited to the field gates onto the pasture, from the north-western extremity of the wood, direct from the minor road.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

The woodland can be found to the north-west of the small village of Preston-Under-Scar, approximately 5km to the west of Leyburn. Ignoring signs to the village, there is a minor road to the west of the village, rising up onto Bellerby Moor and MOD firing ranges. A little way (500m) up this road, access to the woodland is available via double metal gates and a step over stile onto the pasture. Parking is available at this point for 1 or 2 cars ensuring that access to the field is still available through one of the two metal gates. An unsurfaced public footpath runs along the entire southern boundary to the woodland, through upland pasture and then Ancient Semi Natural Woodland. A second path runs almost parallel through the woodland on the first of a series of 'steps' associated with the limestone outcrops, this path is not maintained and is an old historical route omitted from current OS maps. A short spur runs northwards into the areas of more open ground and hawthorn scrub, and does lead out of the woodland across unimproved meadow to a Public Footpath (with the owners permission). All of the paths within the woodland can be rough due to the limestone outcropping and many have narrow and steep sections. Limited parking (1 or 2 cars) is also available opposite the entrance to the quarry (500m further on from the first entrance) again ensuring that parking does not restrict access through the gates.

Bus routes stop within the village, from where the shortest access to the woodland is to the northwest only a few minutes walk. Information from the traveline website. Further information about public transport is available from Traveline- [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk) or phone 0870 608 2608

The nearest public toilets are available in Leyburn approximately 5km to the east, where there is also ample free car parking in the village centre.

### 3.2 Access / Walks

## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

An Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland of great value due to its location and diversity of habitats, close to the edge of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, with a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation designation and in a part of the country with little remaining ancient woodland, the intention is to promote the development of this native broadleaved high forest following years of overgrazing.

Unfortunately at present the woodland can not be considered to be resilient in the face of climate change and the increase in pest and diseases. Ash is a significant component of the species mixture of this wood and with the onset of ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) already evident on the younger trees, the management principles for this site will have to remain relatively fluid to adequately respond to the changes in the wood.

The current level of public access will be maintained through the existing Public Footpath and Woodland Trust permissive routes. Grassland meadows will remain un-grazed, allowing the natural development of the marsh areas



## 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

A locally popular footpath runs along the entire southern boundary to the woodland, with a second permissive route within the woodland itself (not maintained) which is a route historically used by locals but omitted from current OS maps. A short spur from this unmaintained path links to the unimproved meadow and Public Footpath to the North (outside Woodland Trust ownership).

#### Significance

Very accessible site, with the main path wide and on level ground with the opportunity to experience ancient woodland, in an area of very low woodland and ancient woodland cover, with magnificent views across Wensleydale, into the Yorkshire Dales National Park and west to Castle Bolton (a very popular tourist site). In addition it provides a very attractive wooded backdrop to the village and to the northern side of the valley in between areas of plantation woodland and farmland.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

Further development of routes within the woodland would be possible, but not necessary due to the levels of usage and the potential damage to the remaining ancient woodland and ground flora and the difficult ground conditions. The permissive routes are not maintained and only kept open by usage.

#### Factors Causing Change

Significant changes in the number of visitors to the site.  
Restricted access to some areas of the wood due to ash dieback and large numbers of dead trees.

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

Maintain the existing quality of path network along the route of the public footpath. No future path creation to be undertaken due to the difficult terrain, relatively low visitor usage and the disturbance to the exceptional ground flora.

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

Maintain only the current single footpath route (700m) ensuring the Woodland Trust areas of ownership are marked with welcoming signs to either end of the public footpath. Paths and routes are to be maintained through at least annual inspection for tree safety, vegetation clearance and litter. Other desire and permissive routes will be remain un-cut.

## 5.2 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

### Description

Ancient Semi Natural Woodland dominated by ash, with occasional sessile oak, remnant elm, hazel coppice and hawthorn. Rich ancient woodland ground flora along with pockets of open ground, containing bracken and species rich calcareous grassland.

### Significance

This is an Ancient Semi Natural Woodland in an area of the country with less than 4% woodland cover and only 1% ancient woodland. Although not within the Yorkshire Dales National Park, it does border the park. It is associated with unimproved or semi improved grassland, and marsh, yet is surrounded in the wider area by plantation woodland, MOD firing and training ranges (heather moorlands) and a large area of limestone quarrying activity.

### Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunity to utilise some of the areas dominated by bracken within the existing woodland area and along the woodland edge, for restocking with native broadleaves. However, these areas do provide a diversity of habitats, with glades and herb rich grasslands - an irregular and complex transition of habitats typical of upland ash woods, in which planting may not be suitable - whilst still allowing a slower process of natural regeneration, which is made more difficult by the continuing effects of rabbit grazing. Planting should be confined to the areas of bracken encroachment where ancient woodland ground flora is still present.

### Factors Causing Change

Deer Damage, Rabbit Damage, ash dieback, climate change, pests & diseases.  
Ash dieback found within the wood in 2017 so the potential impact of this disease will increase in future years.

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

Maintain native broadleaved woodland on this ANSW site.

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

Continue to monitor the ash, paying particular attention to the mature trees. The expectation is that some responsive thinning works will be undertaken (likely 2018/19), particularly focussed on thinning around the mature oak and sycamore to make them more wind stable and promote them within the crown, before the eventual loss of ash.

Continue with rabbit control throughout the plan period, working with neighbours wherever possible.

### 5.3 Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat

#### Description

A small wet flush in the southern part of the pasture, just less than 0.1 Ha in size, designated a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) dominated by hard rush with frequent marsh marigold and a wide variety of Carices. Ragged robin is abundant through June. Some seepage to the east of the meadow area favours the abundant carnation sedge, which should be included on maps with the main wet area for any management that may affect it.

#### Significance

This small marshy area, is rich in species (36 recorded) and also associated with unimproved grassland and adjoining Ancient Semi Natural Woodland habitats to the North and the South. Most wet areas of this size in the area will have been ploughed/ filled to enable easier management. It is only because of sensitive management by the previous owners that is still exists.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

Past grazing regimes and the maintenance of a generally unimproved pasture grassland has favoured the species currently found within the marshy areas and a grazing regime should be allowed to continue. Lack of grazing may lead to a reduction in the grassland species and possible regeneration of woodland - initially hawthorn scrub, whilst this would fit with woodland objectives, there may be an associated loss of marsh species.

#### Factors Causing Change

Rabbit damage, deer browsing.

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

To maintain the wet flush in its current condition and area as an important habitat in conjunction with semi improved grassland and semi natural ancient woodland.

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

Continue to undertaken control of the rabbits to try and ease the significant browsing pressure. Should these levels ever reduce drastically, look to re-introduce an annual grazing regime of sheep and/or stock to maintain the current habitat and species across the wet flush and the surrounding grassland.

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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	9.31	Ash	1900	High forest	Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc)
<p>Ancient Semi Natural Woodland on a series of south facing limestone steps, dominated by ash, with a small number of mature sycamores, occasional sessile oak and remnant elm. Understory of scattered hazel coppice and large areas of open hawthorn scrub. Extremely rich woodland flora associated with the shallow soils, exposed limestone outcrops and scree, dominated by bluebells, wood anemone, dogs mercury and large areas of primrose on the open south facing slopes. Large areas of bracken are starting to dominate in open areas and around the hawthorn scrub on the upper slopes, giving way again to species rich unimproved calcareous grassland and limestone outcrops on the northern and north-eastern boundaries.</p>							
2a	2.32	Ash	2007	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland
<p>A mixture of planting from 2007 and 2011, undertaken to buffer the ancient woodland. Predominantly ash with a lesser mix of native broadleaves including; oak, rowan, field maple, planted in 1.2m shelters. The work in 2011 was wholly by volunteers from the local village.</p>							
2b	0.47	Ash	2003	High forest	Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland
<p>A small area of restocking undertaken in March 2003 following the loss of elm to Dutch elm disease and to respond to the development of bracken. Located within the centre of the existing woodland, it was re-stocked with predominantly ash with oak in 1.2m tree shelters. Now well established, tree guards are starting to split from the bases of the trees. Rabbit browsing damage is significant within the compartment.</p>							
2c	0.40	Ash	2007	High forest			

Planting of mixed native broadleaves dominated by ash with oak and some alder and field maple, undertaken in 2007 along the woodland edge where the ground flora still shows remnants of the ancient woodland, following tree losses from Dutch Elm Disease and through overgrazing. A gentle to moderate south facing slope now dominated by bracken and rough grasses.

3a	1.04	Other		Non-wood habitat	Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, County Wildlife Site (includes SSCI, SINCC etc)
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South facing pasture adjoining Ancient Semi Natural Woodland. A proportion has been improved within the last 20 years (ploughed and re-seeded) with the remainder containing predominantly unimproved grass species, with woodland species (bluebells, dogs mercury) clearly evident along the boundary with woodland. The unimproved pasture contains an important wet flush area, rich in water-loving species. Bounded to the north-west by a minor road and then plantation woodland, and to the south by remnant, heavily grazed Ancient Semi Natural Woodland and improved grassland.

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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	2a	Thin	1.00	5	5
2023	2a	Thin	1.00	5	5

## 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.