



Sparkford Wood

Management Plan 2018-2023

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Sparkford Wood
Location:	Sparkford, Nr Yeovil
Grid reference:	ST612274, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. N/A
Area:	11.60 hectares (28.66 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Site of Special Scientific Interest

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Extended Description

Sparkford Wood is situated less than 1 mile north east of the town of Sparkford directly off the A358. It is very close to the junction with the A303.

Sparkford Wood is a site of approximately 11.20Ha/27.66 acres, made up of 8.34Ha/20.60 acres of SSSI (named Sparkford Wood) designated Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (7.7ha of which is in WT ownership) plus 2.86ha/7.06 acres of part pasture land/some regenerating woodland -. It is located very close to the A303 trunk road (one of the main routes from London to the south west) and near to the popular Haynes Motor Museum. Access is via a short private drive off the busy A359.

This very attractive SSSI wood is noticeably species rich and has been well managed by the current owner and her late husband. The woodland has a large population of homostyle Primroses (*Primula vulgaris*) of international significance in providing research opportunities - see Appendix 4. It contains several veteran trees; there is some laurel encroachment. There is also an interesting beehive some 3m up in the trunk of one mature tree. The SSSI citation mentions that the wood's survival in prime Somerset agricultural land makes it somewhat unique as a landscape feature of fragmented ancient woodland (Appendix 4). It has a spectacular bluebell display in spring: although not formally open to the public, it receives a number of visitors at this time and there is already a good network of paths throughout the wood. 'Slurry Field and 'Railway Field' are rank species poor grassland and will be planted with native broadleaf woodland to mimic that of the SSSI woodland .

The wood is with the National Character Area No.140. Yeovil Scarplands

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

To protect and enhance the special interest of this ancient woodland (Compt 2a & 2b))and to increase its resilience and value for wildlife by growing the 'core area' through expanding tree cover in the adjacent fields (Compts 3a & 4b) to a woodland community similar to the ancient woodland. The wood will not be promoted to the public as the long term objective is that once the new planting has established then the wood will be let out on a long term 3rd party lease.

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 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Description

The ancient woodland is a very attractive oak hazel woodland with an excellent display of bluebells in the spring is also has a large population of homostyle Primroses (*Primula vulgaris*). Compartment 2a is designated as SSSI. White admiral butterflies have been recorded in the wood on regular occasions. Compt 2b is also ancient woodland on the ancient woodland Inventory. There is an area of laurel in the south east corner of Compt 2a.

Significance

As a SSSI its national importance as ancient woodland is recognised. The woodland has a large population of homostyle Primroses (*Primula vulgaris*) of international significance as well.

This is not an area of Somerset where the WT has any significant presence in terms of estate holdings.

Opportunities & Constraints

Given that the SSSI is in favourable condition according to Natural England, there is no need to look at enhancement activity.

Factors Causing Change

Tree diseases, particularly ash die back are in the area, however as the woodland is mainly oak hazel woodland ash die back should have a limited affect.
Deer and squirrel will have an effect on the regeneration of the woodland although the impact of both appears low at the moment.
None native invasive plants such as laurel that is present could have a negative impact on the woodland.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To let the ancient woodland develop naturally only intervening if the SSSI (Compt 2a) becomes unfavourable in condition according to Natural England.

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

To let the ancient woodland develop naturally and maintain the SSSI in favourable condition and lowering the risk of the laurel by removing it from the woodland and cutting the rides and central glade to maintain the ground flora and the population of homostyle primroses.

5.2 New Native Woodland

Description

The two fields (Compt3 a and 4a) are both species poor grassland although compt 4a has a pond in the south western corner. Compt 4a is also the wetter of the two being waterlogged in winter and has a much higher rush content. There are a number of old structures and farm machinery that need to be removed. Both areas will be planted up with native broadleaf woodland similar to that of the SSSI

Significance

The new planting will help achieve the Woodland Trusts objectives of creating new native woodland and will also increase the opportunity for species to disperse from the SSSI and act as a buffer for it.

Opportunities & Constraints

Compt 4a has historical record of a round house on it which will limit the amount of planting. Providing a safety buffer between the woodland and the railway line will also restrict the amount of planting / species selection close to the railway.

Factors Causing Change

Deer, squirrels, voles and drought could all affect establishment.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To create a new area of woodland that will in part replace that which was present according to the Ancient Woodland Inventory, but also buffer the existing ancient woodland.

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

To establish new woodland by:
 Removing the old farm structures and machinery.
 Planting new woodland and beating up for the first three years to ensure full establishment.

5.3 Informal Public Access

Description

Sparkford Wood was historically a private woodland opened to the public for bluebell days, as well as allowing a few local people to access the wood. The wood is less than 1 mile north east from the town of Sparkford and adjacent to the Haynes Motor Museum just off the A359 and close to the A303. A small track goes directly off the A359 (Compt 1a) leading to the wood itself but also a house called 'Woodlands'. There are a number of main rides through the wood that are flat and easily accessible. There are also a number of smaller narrow paths around the wood that were named after family members with some small foot bridges across narrow ditches.

Significance

The wood is beautiful and close to Yeovil in an area that does not have a lot of open-access ancient woodland.

Opportunities & Constraints

As the Woodland Trust intends to 'let' the site out eventually on a long-term lease, its approach is to limit public access to the woodland to very low numbers.

Factors Causing Change

If a greater number of visitors use the wood through word of mouth then the Trust may have to review its approach.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain the wood as a safe accessible woodland but with very limited, if not decreasing number of visitors.

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

To maintain the wood as safe and accessible but without any promotion. This means:

1. Not putting up any Woodland Trust Signage or promoting it on the website or in any literature.
2. Removing the old footbridges as they are unstable.
3. Annually cutting the main rides to keep them open - all minor paths will be left to grow over
4. Carry out tree safety works as required for the main paths and access track to 'Woodlands'.

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	0.19	NULL		Non-wood habitat	No/poor vehicular access within the site		
<p>This compartment is the access track off the road to the entrance of the wood. It consists of a stoned track, grass verge and hedgerow. Historically the grass verge apparently had a few species of interest in such as ox-eye daisy. These are no longer present. The track is also the access to 'Woodlands' a private house.</p>							
2a	7.70	Oak (pedunculate)		High forest			Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Site of Special Scientific Interest
<p>Sparkford Wood is a broadleaved semi-natural woodland situated on heavy fertile soils. It dates from at least the 18th Century and its survival amongst the prime agricultural land of south-east Somerset makes it unique. It is a good example of traditionally managed and undisturbed lowland oakwood. The site consists largely of tall spreading Pedunculate Oak <i>Quercus robur</i> maidens with locally common Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> and an understorey of Hazel coppice <i>Corylus avellana</i>. The ground flora, which includes abundant Bluebell <i>Hyacinthoides non-scriptus</i>, varies in conjunction with differences in soils which range from mildly calcareous to acid. The woodland has a large population of homostyle Primroses <i>Primula vulgaris</i> which have been the subject of some classic genetic studies. These plants are unique in that they represent a self-fertile form of a normally self-sterile species, and they are of international significance in providing research opportunities.</p>							
2b	0.65	Oak (pedunculate)		High forest			
<p>This compartment is ancient woodland but not part of the SSSI although similar in composition</p>							
3a	1.04	Oak (pedunculate)	2018	Wood establishment			
<p>This compartment is ancient woodland on the ancient woodland inventory and is shown at woodland on Epoch series 1 OS maps. It is rank grassland with large amounts of nettle and thistle. It is known as 'Slurry Field' as a slurry pit was once located along the eastern edge. There are tall hedges on the southern and western edges.</p>							

4a	2.01	Oak (pedunc ulate)	2018	Wood establishment	Archaeological features		
<p>This compartment (known as railway field) is also species poor rank grassland although it appears to suffer from water logging during wet weather as there are large amounts of rush in the field. There is a small pond in the western corner. The eastern edge has been planted with a mixture of native broadleaf trees around 10 years ago.</p> <p>Somerset Archaeology have records of an ancient round house site forming part of an early Medieval settlement (HER number: 31823)</p>							

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.