



Parish & Oldhills 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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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: | Parish & Oldhills Wood |
| Location: | Chalford |
| Grid reference: | SO909030, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 163 |
| Area: | 15.64 hectares (38.65 acres) |
| Designations: | Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Landscape Value, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty |

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Ancient semi-natural woodland dominated by beech high forest with a scattering of ash and oak and a rich tapestry of hazel, holly and yew beneath. A rich floral population including ramsons, bluebell and spurge laurel. Well used by local residents.

2.2 Extended Description

Parish and Oldhills is a lowland beech-ash woodland between the villages of Chalford, Frampton Mansell, France Lynch and Oakridge Lynch. The wood lies within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and in the National Character Area 107 - Cotswolds, where ancient beech woodland is a particularly distinct and prominent feature along the scarp and incised valleys of the Cotswolds. Parish and Oldhills wood forms part of a diverse core of semi-natural habitats; from high forest and coppice woodland, to nationally recognised limestone grassland. The site is situated on a steep south facing slope, on thin free draining calcareous soil in the Cotswolds.

The site is ASNW comprised of a mature beech dominated canopy with scattered ash and oak of the NVC woodland type W12 Beech-Dog's Mercury. There are two small sections of Planted Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) in Cpt 1a. The under storey throughout contains hazel, holly and yew. The diverse woodland flora population includes ramsons, bluebell, spurge laurel, wild garlic, woodruff and violets.

On its eastern edge is the ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW) Three Groves wood to the south east owned by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT), and semi-natural limestone grassland to the north east (Strawberry Banks nature reserve) in private ownership under a management agreement with GWT. The eastern boundary of the WT ownership follows a stream creating an important riparian zone through open and wooded semi-natural habitats. To north west is semi-improved permanent pasture.

The whole of the southern boundary runs adjacent to a minor road linking the local villages of Chalford and Frampton Mansell. The site has a steep road frontage approaching 1km in length. All of the footpaths through the wood are Public Rights of Way (PROW). The stretch of public footpath between the main management access point (SO91160294) and the northern entrance (SO90740345) has been designated as a Permissive Bridleway for the benefit of local horse riders.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Parking

Parking can be obtained off the county lane between the villages of Chalford and Frampton Mansell at a small official pull-in in the SE corner at the main management access point to the site.

Public transport

Chalford and Chalford Hill have a number of bus stops linking the area to Stroud. More information can be found at <http://www.travelinesw.com>

3.2 Access / Walks

Overview

Public access can be obtained from all sides, with visitors from the south off the county lane between the villages of Chalford and Frampton Mansell at three locations. From Chalford to the south west, the first pedestrian entrance along the road at GR SO 90800275 is via steps, and the path is steep and slippery when wet. The second pedestrian entrance along the road at GR 91070286 is also steep. The management and pedestrian access point in the SE corner at GR SO91150293 is the most gradually sloping foot entrance into the woodland. Other pedestrian entrances are only available to foot users following the local footpath network. The easterly entrance at GR 90359046 follows the footpath from Chalford, and from the North down the steep gully from the village of France Lynch. Footpaths running east out of Parish and Oldhills may be used to gain access to the Three Groves Wood and Strawberry Banks nature reserves.

All of the footpaths through Parish and Oldhills are Public Rights of Way, and are unsurfaced, some following the countour whilst others are steep in places. A steep, surfaced permissive bridleway dissects the site north-south. The site is easily linked to the surrounding villages of Chalford, Frampton Mansell, France Lynch and Oakridge Lynch.

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The Ancient woodland site (AWS) will have been maintained as predominantly high-forest with a mixed age, species and structural diversity, supporting a varied habitat for associated woodland fauna and flora. Management of the site will ensure continuity and development of mature beech trees and old coppice trees.

Maintain high-quality access provision offering a variety of pedestrian and through-walks over the site. Entrances will be welcoming and clear with appropriate signage and interpretation. The woods will remain a popular local visitor attraction for a diverse range of people.

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

Parish and Oldhills is a lowland beech-ash woodland of the NVC woodland type W12 Beech-Dog's Mercury, predominantly ASNW with two small sections of PAWS. It is comprised of a mature beech dominated canopy (circa 70%) with some mature ash comprising 20% (showing signs of ash dieback in 2018 inspection - average 25% crown dieback) and occasional oak (circa 5-10%). The understorey is dominated by hazel, holly and yew but includes field maple, hawthorn and wych elm, and regenerating sycamore. There is a diverse ground flora population of locally typical ancient woodland indicators that include ramsons, bluebell, wood anemone, yellow archangel, lily of the valley and spurge laurel.

The site was managed as coppice until the last century but was subsequently converted to beech high forest. Oldhills Wood (Cpt 1a) was clear-felled after the Second World War producing a mix of maiden and coppice re-growth (1945) with a little regeneration. There are two small sections of PAWS in Cpt 1a where thinning was undertaken between 1986 and 1991 under BWGS 3/6/1295 and felling licence STR 195, restoring the areas to an ASNW composition. The smaller Parish Wood (Cpt 1b) retains a mature high-forest canopy with a slightly older (1900) age class with some regen. Both compartments have a similar species structure. Compartment 1c is a very small (0.02Ha) separate block of semi-natural wet alder woodland set the south side of the County highway and adjoining a public recreation area.

Parish and Oldhills wood sits in a landscape that has good connectivity and permeability to biodiversity, much of the surrounding land to the east is under conservation management by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (Three Groves Wood and Strawberry Banks nature reserves). To west is permanent pasture (semi-improved). Common pipestrelle, Soprano pipestrelle, Noctule, Serotine, Myotis, and Lesser horseshoe bats have all been recorded within the woodland, and there are historical records of Bechsteins. A well-established badger sett is located within Cpt 1a. The eastern boundary of the wood follows a stream running north to south creating an important riparian zone through open and wooded habitats.

Squirrel and deer damage can both be observed but appear within acceptable levels, a small amount of laurel is apparent to the west corner of Cpt 1b. Trees along the roadside (southern) boundary are inclined to up root in the thin soils. This has resulted in trees, notably younger ash drawn quickly into the beech canopy, falling across the road. Tree safety work carried out frequently along this boundary with some regeneration of hazel and beech now occurring. Ash dieback observed and tree safety felling works planned for 2019-20.

Site geology consists of drifting Fullers Earth over limestone bedrock. This is typical to the Cotswold area and accounts for the limestone flora communities. These thin soils are prone to erosion.

Significance

Parish and Oldhills wood forms part of a diverse core of semi-natural habitats in the local area. The wood lies within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and in the National Character Area 107 - Cotswolds, where ancient beech woodland is a particularly distinct and prominent feature along the scarp and incised valleys of the Cotswolds.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

Terrain: steep slopes, unstable and easily damaged soils.

Poor management access - despite the surfacing of some internal tracks, their use for management is limited due to their narrowness and steepness, and there is no timber stacking area.

Presence of bat species for tree felling - ensure bat EIA is carried out for any planned felling works.

Factors Causing Change

- Browsing by squirrels and deer;
- Chalara Ash die back
- Other pests and diseases.
- Climate change.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The Ancient woodland site (AWS) will have been maintained as predominantly high-forest with a mixed age, species and structural diversity, supporting a varied habitat for associated woodland fauna and flora. Management of the site will ensure continuity and development of mature beech trees and old coppice trees.

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

Ensure continued existence of ancient woodland site features, allowing a diverse structure with a broad range of species to be maintained through largely natural processes, with the continuity and development of mature trees as notable assets of the woodland biodiversity. Ensure the value of the ASNW key feature is not threatened or degraded by invasive or non- native species.

Laurel will be checked for annually and controlled as necessary, complying with relevant legislation and UKWAS standards.

Felling of ash dieback infected ash trees along Zone A road boundary once crown dieback exceeds 25%. Approx. 90% of ash trees in Zone A are infected, with an estimated 80 trees in total. Ash only comprises a max 20% in rest of wood, and only tree safety felling works of ash to take place elsewhere. No enrichment planting planned in this plan period, plenty of species diversity and regeneration in wood that will fill gaps in canopy left by ash dieback.

Complete deer impact assessment and develop appropriate deer management strategy.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

Parish and Oldhills wood is situated between the villages of Chalford, Frampton Mansell, France Lynch and Oakridge Lynch, within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The site is situated on a steep south facing slope and forms part of a diverse core of semi-natural wildlife rich habitats, with neighbouring nature reserves managed by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.

The wood is visited daily by local walkers, runners and dog walkers, with occasional horse riders, and some visitors from further afield. Most visitors are on foot with people passing through on longer linear walks or walking through the site to get from village to village. All of the footpaths through the wood are Public Rights of Way (PROW). The stretch of public footpath between the main south management access point (SO91160294) and the northern entrance (SO90740345) has been designated as a Permissive Bridleway for the benefit of local horse riders; it was re-surfaced in 2002.

The whole of the southern boundary runs adjacent to a minor road linking the local villages of Chalford and Frampton Mansell. The site has a steep road frontage approaching 1km in length, with one narrow layby for parking at the management access point.

On its eastern edge runs a gentle stream from north to south, dividing the wood from the bordering semi-natural ancient - Three Groves Wood (to the south east) owned by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT), and semi natural limestone grassland to the north east - Strawberry Banks nature reserve, in private ownership under a management agreement with GWT.

The footpaths are protected from horses straying from the permissive bridleway by kissing gates and squeeze gaps, and the stoned surface of the main track through the wood makes for good all year round visiting. Un-surfaced tracks are muddy and slippery during wet periods.

Occasional use of the site by mountain bikers building ramps and jumps on and off the paths can damage flora and pathways. Use by youths for den making, fire lighting and drinking/littering occurs. Local residents report such mis-use occasionally during summer. Horse riders occasionally stray off the permissive bridleway seeking alternative routes.

Significance

Public access is vital to ensure on-going support for the Trust's work. Inspiring everyone to enjoy and value woodland is a fundamental aim of the Woodland Trust. Parish and Oldhills provides an important local amenity for people living in the area, and it is well used by local walkers, dog walkers and young adults, and is an important amenity to the surrounding area.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:

- Upgrade access infrastructure to improve pathways for walkers

Constraints:

- The steeper slopes and poor management access across the site restrict access particularly to those people with mobility limitations
- Littering, camp fires and cyclists building ramps and jumps on and off the paths damages flora and increases the muddiness of paths

Factors Causing Change

Erosion and deterioration of paths.

Mis-use and vandalism of the site.

Loss of trees or woodland through pests/diseases E.g. Ash die-back.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Maintain high quality access provision offering a variety of pedestrian and through walks over the site. Entrances will be welcoming and clear with appropriate signage and interpretation. The woods will remain a popular local visitor attraction for a diverse range of people.

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

The short term objective is to maintain the site as easily accessible, attractive, well maintained and safe woodland.

The path network and entrances should remain in good condition and appropriate for level and type of use and in accordance with access category B.

General site uplift - installation of new gates and signage and replacement of old access gates, stiles and furniture will be undertaken in 2018 to improve access and make the site more welcoming.

Other entrance furniture will be maintained as required to keep them welcoming and in good condition during path cuts and allow access to walkers.

Litter will be regularly collected to maintain a welcoming feel to the site. Other anti-social activity, including the potential for damage to the un-surfaced tracks by unauthorized horse or cycling access, will be monitored and rectified as appropriate.

Monitor ash dieback along tree safety zones.

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 | 13.88 | Beech | 1920 | High forest | No/poor vehicular access within the site, Site structure, location, natural features & vegetation, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc | Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access | Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Landscape Value, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty |

Compt. 1A is historically referred to as 'Oldhills Wood'. Much of the managed beech high forest was cleared after the First World War. This is now seen as a mature (circa 90 years old) mix of maiden and coppice re-growth supporting a high forest canopy of approximately 70% beech 20% Ash and 10% Oak. The NVC type is W12, the understorey contains hazel, holly and yew. The compartment floor supports a diverse ground flora population of locally typical ancient woodland indicators that includes ramsons, bluebell, wood anemone, yellow archangel, lily of the valley and spurge laurel.

Some areas of Cpt 1a display large amounts of young ash seedling, other areas show viable regeneration striving towards naturally created gaps in the canopy. Some of the woodland has a full beech canopy restricting ground flora development. Evidence of previous thinning management can be found in this compartment.

External boundaries of the compartment include the county highway to the south, GWT managed reserves and watercourse to the east and permanent (semi-improved) pasture to the north. The stoned route running north-south is a permissive bridleway and provides year round access. The PROW running parallel to the County road was previously widened into an un-surfaced management access track. Rest of access limited for machinery, with no turning area due to steep slopes. All of sub-compartment has a steep southerly aspect.

| | | | | | | | |
|---|------|---------------|------|------------------|---|---|--|
| 1b | 1.50 | Beech | 1800 | High forest | No/poor vehicular access within the site, Site structure, location, natural features & vegetation, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc | Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access | Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Landscape Value, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty |
| <p>This compartment is historically referred to as 'Parish Wood'. It was managed as beech coppice woodland until the last century. It has since been retained as Beech high forest with a mature canopy of circa 120 years old. It is NVC type W12 comprising beech with some ash. The understorey contains hazel, holly and yew, with occasional buckthorn and spindle, with laurel creeping in from neighbouring property to the west. There is diverse range of locally typical ground flora that includes ramsons, bluebell and spurge laurel. Ground conditions are steep with access further impeded by lack of any internal management rides for vehicles through the compartment; the topsoil has limited bearing capacity when wet.</p> <p>The only internal access is pedestrian from Cpt 1a. Externally 1b adjoins the County highway to the south, residential property to the west and permanent pasture to the north. The sub-compartment has a steep southerly aspect.</p> | | | | | | | |
| 1c | 0.40 | Alder species | | Non-wood habitat | No/poor vehicular access within the site, Site structure, location, natural features & vegetation, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc | Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access | Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Landscape Value, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty |
| <p>A separate very small area of open ground on the road with occasional alder bordering a stream and recreation area, located to the south of the county road adjacent the main site. The area is dominated by nettles and is not suitable for planting.</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.