WOODLAND TRUST

Shank Wood

Management Plan 2017-2022

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MAPS

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Shank Wood
Location:	Hethersgill, Longtown
Grid reference:	NY466705, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 86
Area:	7.62 hectares (18.83 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Site of Special Scientific Interest

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Shank Wood is a tranquil wood in a steep gorge bordering the Rae Burn. The wood contains oak, ash, birch, sycamore and alder and is an important habitat for woodland birds. Waymarked paths run through the wood from Whiteclose Farm to Shank Castle.

2.2 Extended Description

Shank Wood is a 20 acre (7.64ha) Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) which forms part of the Lower Lyne Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which is an NCR (Nature Conservation Review) Grade II site. A tranquil woodland, facing south and eastwards in a very steep gorge which borders the Rae Burn, a tributary of the River Lyne. The land varies from gently sloping to very steep and is dissected at various points by streams, some of which are very steep sided. The underlying rock is carboniferous sandstone, although small areas overlay New Red Sandstone, and the soils are predominantly acidic brown earths with some calcareous sandstone soils.

The surrounding land is gently undulating in nature and the agricultural land use is predominantly pasture and extensive areas of woodland to the north east (Kershope Forest). In view of the local topography, Shank Wood is not prominent in the surrounding landscape, but nevertheless, it forms an integral part of the woodland bordering on the River Lyne and its tributary, the Rae Burn.

The wood now resembles oak high forest with ash, birch, sycamore, alder, elm, hazel and rowan - much of the oak in particular has been coppiced in the past. There is an area of old wood pasture with mature oaks and alder and an alder clearing on an old river terrace adjacent to the Rae Burn. Areas within the woodland have been felled and replanted with predominantly oak with some ash, birch and hazel -with the aim of diversifying the age structure of the wood. The ground flora is particularly rich in the areas adjacent to the river and in the steep gullies and wet flushes. Elsewhere, the flora has been impoverished by grazing and the invasion of bracken. This is an important habitat for woodland birds.

Parts of the site are very difficult to access and others are very wet - particularly along the northern boundary. Waymarked footpaths run through the wood from Whiteclose Farm across the Rae Burn to Shank Castle, around the edge of the river terrace and also through the centre of the woodland following the line of the river into adjoining woodland. The woodland has low but regular usage.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Shank Wood is 9 kilometres east of the town on Longtown, 9 miles north of Carlisle in the county of Cumbria and three miles south of the Scottish border.

A public right of way (footpath nos 101012 and 131012) comes from the Longtown to Shank Hill Road down a track towards Whiteclose Farm and then runs down the edge of field no. 6564 and crosses the site and on towards Shank Castle. In addition to the public footpath, a permissive path has been created (and is waymarked), this goes around the edge of the flat area in the middle of the wood and then in a south westerly direction to meet the River Lyne. The path continues through the adjacent woodland under different ownership, to create a circular loop.

Visitors coming by car leave the M6 at junction 44 and head north to Longtown on the A7. In the town take the second on the right and follow this for about 1.5km and then turn right onto an unclassified road. Follow this straight through the crossroads and round two sharp bends for some 9km. There are no formal car parking facilities and parking is difficult on this road; park near the track to Whiteclose Farm. From this point the public footpath can be followed as described above.

The Rievers Cycle route passes close to the south of the wood at Boltonfellend. From their cyclists can head north and take the second on the left LittleFell End. From here there is a public footpath north to the wood. There is no cycle route across the fields; this is a foot path only. The route across the field is often very wet.

Stagecoach buses 179, 379 from Carlisle Bus station run regularly between Carlisle and Longtown. For further information contact Traveline on 0871 200 22 33. Local bus info can also be found on the Traveline website, as well as info about bus routes in other parts of the country. There are no public toilets near to the wood. Facilities can be found in Longtown (9km or Brampton 11km). Further information on the area can be found at www.longtown-uk.net

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term vision for Shank Wood is in line with the outcomes in the Trust's action plan 'Keeping Woodland Alive' and also takes into consideration the objectives set out by English Nature for Lyne Woods SSSI complex and aims to maintain, improve and restore the biodiversity of this ASNW site set in the valley that borders the Rae Burn.

Through minimum intervention the aim is to perpetuate the W11 Sessile oak/downy birch/wood sorrel ancient woodland high forest with its intimate mixture of tree species of various age classes, natural regeneration, a developing understorey and ground flora typical of this type of woodland. Management to retain high forest and achieve the Trust's corporate objectives will include retention of mature natives and non-natives in the canopy for continuity and to promote veterans and where possible the retention of standing and fallen deadwood. The management will promote the natural development of the woodland with natural regeneration (the preferred method of succession) in the very long-term promoting the establishment of an uneven age structure to the woodland.

It is the long-term intention to continue to provide informal public access in line with the corporate objective of increasing people's enjoyment of woodland and commensurate with access category C. Through management of the 3 access structures and retention of a simple path network, the wood will remain an asset providing both a pleasant and educational experience for visitors.

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 public right of way (footpath) runs down the edge of field no. 6564, into Shank Wood, crossing the site and continues on towards Shank Castle. In addition to the public footpath, a permissive path has been created (and is waymarked), this goes around the edge of the flat area in the middle of the wood and then in a south westerly direction to meet the River Lyne. The path continues through the adjacent woodland under different ownership, to create a circular loop. These paths are often quite wet.

Significance

Increasing enjoyment of the woodland is one of the Trust's key outcomes. Encouraging public access to Shank Wood is particularly important given the scarcity of woodland (and in particular, ancient woodland sites) open to the public in this part of Cumbria. Given it's SSSI status as part of the community of woodlands along the Lyne valley, it is important to make this resource available to the public to experience and learn from.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities: The footpaths through the woodland create the opportunity for members of the public to experience and enjoy one of a whole network of woods that make up the Lower Lyne Woods SSSI. The wood is a good example of ASNW that has had a history of coppicing and little planting of non-native tree species. There are also opportunities for the local school to gain some educational benefit from the wood and the waymarked trails to be promoted to wider audience. There is an opportunity to increase the amount of on site interpretation to allow a greater understanding of the woods history, conservational value and management.

Constraints: Due to it's location, the wood is not particularly easily accessible to the general public and much of it is on such steep slopes and gullies and it is not possible to increase the number of footpaths through other parts of the wood.

Factors Causing Change

Invasive bracken

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The Trust will continue to promote the woodland amongst people in the region and members nationally, so that visitors to the area can continue to share in it's beauty, gain an understanding of the woodlands importance in the landscape so long as the primary objective of 'no further loss of ancient woodland' is compromised. This is in line with the outcomes in the Trust's Action Plan 'Keeping Woodland Alive'. The objective is to maintain the informal public access through the wood commensurate with the current level of use; category C, this includes all three entrances structures and the path network linking to the extended way-marked route through neighbouring land.

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

Access provision will be managed in keeping with the access guidelines for category C. This will include path maintenance annually to facilitate access along the route to variable width of between 2 and 3m depending on the type of bordering vegetation - paths need to be kept particularly wide through the bracken areas, as this tends to fall over the paths. Management of the three entrances annually and all structures (way marker posts, footbridges and stiles) within the wood to a good and safe condition keeping signs visible and clean. Specifically remove the chicken wire from the three internal sleeper footbridges and re-surface with “buffalo board” cut to width.
Remove the western entrance sign from its present position by the tributary stream to a location at the side of the footpath 25 metres east from the bank of the River Lyne. Note that there is no linear feature to mark the boundary of the WT ownership. See map supplied for location.

5.2 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Description

Shank Wood is a predominantly W11 (Sessile oak-downy birch-wood sorrel) woodland, that has existed for at least 300 years. The predominant stand type in this wood is sessile oak with birch, ash and occasional elm and sycamore. This stand type grades into alder wood (Peterken 7B & 7C) along the northern boundary in particular but also to the east and south west. The ground flora is variable, richest in the gullies leading down to the Rae Burn and in the base rich flushes mix with pendulous sedge (Carex pendula), wild angelica (Angelica sylvestris), upland enchanter's nightshade (Circaea intermedia) and reed grasses (Phalaris sp.). In areas where there has been a history of grazing, the vegetation is dominated by coarse grasses or bracken. In common with typical upland oak woods, there is generally a rich community of lichens and bryophytes resulting from permanently moist gullies and a consistent canopy cover. The amount of dead wood (both standing and fallen) is reasonable due to the inaccessibility of the steep slopes leading down to the river.

Significance

Whilst not prominent in view of local topography, Shank Wood is part of the network of woodlands that make up the Lower Lyne Woodlands SSSI, in an area where woodland cover is not very high. It is typical of an upland ASNW oak wood, with several different stand types within the wood that reflect the underlying geology and soils and past management. The areas alongside the river and the steep gullies and rich flushes on the valley sides have maintained the most botanical interest and add diversity to the ground flora, while clearings on the old river terraces add further interest.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities: Although the wood is not particularly large in size, the fact that is forms part of a network of similar woods along the Lower Lyne valley is important to it's survival and conservation value as an ASNW. There are opportunities through natural development of the woodland to create a more varied woodland of high forest nature, that contains a mixture of trees species, age classes and vegetation types. This woodland was probably last coppiced some time between 1874 and 1894 and as such the habitat is now established as high forest with species relient on semi shade.
Constraints: Deer browsing and sheep grazing may pose a threat to the natural regeneration and development of the wood.

Factors Causing Change

Lack of natural regeneration, Uncontrolled grazing, Deer damage.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The aim is to manage Shank Wood through minimum intervention accepting the current composition of species (see tree species section 8, the DAFOR scales estimates in this section are approximate by ±5%) accepting sycamore as naturalised; as long as the overall characteristics of the woodland retains continuous cover, promotes specimen/veteran trees, allows succession through natural processes and maintains the typical diversity of lower plants. Some non-natives species including the horse chestnut and the Noble fir are not regenerating naturally in the wood and so will eventually be eliminated as they age and die.

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

It is the intention to eradicate uncontrolled grazing through boundary management working with neighbouring landowners as necessary. See work programme. Factors causing change including deer browsing will be monitored as part of the general woodland observations for possible positive and negative impacts on achieving and maintaining the key feature.
The areas of planted oak are now becoming suppressed by the crowns of each other and this will eventually lead to trees of poor form. Therefore it is the intention to re-space these trees during 2018.
Squirrel control will continue to be carried out annually under the contract, guidance and specs of the Red Squirrels Northern England campaign.

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	7.62	other oak spp	1900	High forest	Gullies/Deep Valleys/Uneven/ Rocky ground, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Site of Special Scientific Interest

This compartment makes up the entire woodland. It is bounded by the river to the south, a grass field to the north and mixed woodland to the west. Within the western spur the ground slopes gently down to the footpath and then drops steeply for a short distance to a flat area alongside the river. There are a number of streams that cut through the compartment down to the river. Generally, the trees are widely spaced and there are numerous open areas throughout the compartment. In the north of the woodland is on the very steep sided slopes and gullies down to the river along the eastern edge.

The canopy consists of mainly mature/semi-mature oak, sycamore, alder and birch, some from over mature coppice. These are generally widely spaced. Along the steeper bank sides down to the flat area next to the river, the canopy consists of a mixture of semi-mature oak and alder with sycamore and the occasional ash. Rare elm exists on the steeper slopes. Alder occurs in quite dense pockets along the northern boundary where the ground is very wet (particularly along the field boundary, even in summer). Rare beech, horse chestnut and Noble fir occur in discrete areas within the wood. Ash dieback arrived in the area in 2017 but will have little effect on the wood as there are few ash in it. The understorey, where it occurs (rarely), consists of occasional hawthorn, elder, hazel and rare bird cherry along the field boundaries. It is most abundant down the steeper sides that lead to the flat areas alongside the river - hazel, sycamore coppice growth, cherry and rowan.

There are three areas of planted trees, two in the middle of the wood and one at the northern end of the woodland. The sycamore along a section of the northern boundary in the middle of the wood was felled in 1989 and replanted with oak (0.25ha). The second area, on the flat ground surrounded bounded by the main footpath (that leads to the south eastern corner of the site), was felled in 1989 and also replanted with oak (0.10ha). The last area at the northern end of the wood is where 0.06ha of sycamore was felled in 1995 and replanted with oak and it is on relatively steep sloping ground, under the canopy of mainly mature oak.

The ground vegetation, in the main, is made up of either dominant bracken (or ferns depending on location) or grasses. Generally the bracken is confined to the numerous open areas and the grass where less light reaches the forest floor. However, some of the open clearings contain a mixture of grasses and bracken. To the north of the wood on the steep slopes the ground vegetation is more varied and diverse than in the rest of Shank Wood and includes pendulous sedge (Carex pendula), wild angelica (Angelica sylvestris), upland enchanter's nightshade (Circaea intetiana) and reed grasses (Phalaris sp.).

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2018	1a	Thin	0.50	5	2.5

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.