



Fieldside Covert

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Fieldside Covert
Location:	Yelvertoft
Grid reference:	SP616759, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 140
Area:	6.17 hectares (15.25 acres)
Designations:	County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc)

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Just a short walk along the Grand Union Canal, Fieldside Covert Wood is littered with deadwood which make great homes for invertebrates.

2.2 Extended Description

Fieldside Covert lies 1.5 km to the East of Yelvertoft and is accessed for both management and by pedestrians from the Yelvertoft - Elkington road at SP616767. The wood straddles the Grand Union Canal which itself has been designated as County Wildlife site (Elkington Section No 131). Approximately two-thirds being to the south (Compartment 1) and one-third to the north (Compartment 2). The site has a north-westerly sloping aspect and has an average gradient of 1 in 12 but with a convex slope at its south-easterly boundary. There is evidence of ridge and furrow in both sections which suggests that it is post-enclosure secondary woodland and its name suggests that its purpose was initially as a fox-covert.

The wood is essentially a broadleaved high forest where the canopy forming species were principally Oak, Ash, Sycamore and Elm. However the Elm element, which formed the core of the wood, was destroyed by Dutch Elm Disease in the 1970/80s and its position taken over by thickets of Blackthorn, Wild plum, Hawthorn and Elder. There are a number of fine Oaks throughout compartment 1 and they are dominant along the southern margins. The main canopy-forming species in the higher eastern sector is Sycamore.

Beyond the thicket areas of former Elms the same species form a significant sub-storey some 8m below the canopy. In areas of low light penetration the ground layer is principally mosses and male fern and in non-shaded areas bramble and honeysuckle proliferate.

North of the canal, in compartment 2, Ash, Oak and Sweet chestnut form the canopy species and Hawthorn, Field maple, Elder and Holly the under storey which is less dense than in compartment 1. In the higher light environment dog's mercury and nettles dominate the field layer.

There are considerable amounts of standing and lying deadwood in all parts of the woodland.

The proximity of the canal, the multi-storeyed structure of the wood, the diversity of species, the deadwood, all combine to form a myriad of habitats for herbaceous plants, mammals, birds, and invertebrates and therefore the key feature for subsequent management will be the maintenance of biodiversity in this mature secondary woodland.

The restricted parking on the Yelvertoft-Elkington road, the long, sometimes muddy approach mean that the wood is unlikely to have heavy usage by the public for informal recreation. However during the Summer barges often moor-up close to the wood and people use it for an evening stroll or walking the dog.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

From canal towpath which can be accessed from the village of Yelvertoft some 2km to the west. Also access along management access from the Yelvertoft - Elkington road at SP616767, this access route is approx 750m long and can become rutted and muddy during periods of wet weather. Very limited parking on the verge at head of access track. A set of steps and a squeeze-stile immediately south of the canal bridge provides controlled access to the circular path within compartment 1. The central NW-SE ride gives the walker an alternative route. There is additional access at the 'management gate' at SP617760. Internal paths can become muddy in wet weather

No public toilets locally

Bus stop in main street Yelvertoft, bus routes and times can be obtained from www.traveline.org.uk or ring traveline on 08712002233. From bus stop either follow canal tow path to the wood entrance, or, walk on the minor road towards Elkington (no path) and take the management access track off the road down towards the wood

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The Woodland Trusts objectives and long term intentions for Fieldside Covert are determined after balanced consideration of a number of points relating to our Woodland Management Approach (WMA), carrying out woodland condition assessments and seeking to conserve key features in relation to our outcomes. Where there is conflict, the interests of biodiversity take precedence over people. We do not intervene at our sites unless there is evidence that it will improve woodland biodiversity and/or public understanding and enjoyment.

In line with the Woodland Trusts Management Approach (WMA), Fieldside Covert will be managed through breaking up areas of dense, mature blackthorn thicket, allowing increased light levels to reach the woodland with the aim of providing better conditions for native broadleaf regeneration. We will also seek to thin around existing broadleaf regeneration, as well established trees, where they are being suppressed or put under stress. We will look to manage areas of dense mature/semi-mature sycamore through thinning.

Essential tree safety work will be carried out where required. This will include monitoring for Chalara in the ash trees within the stand and on site boundaries.

Ride edge coppicing along selected lengths of footpath will also be carried out where this contributes to increasing the overall enjoyment of visitors to the site.

Informal, quiet recreational use will be encouraged throughout the whole of the wood.

The aim of these intervention works is to increase resilience in the woodland through greater species diversity and age structure, with the hope that the woodland will be able to better deal with issues such as climate change and tree pests and diseases as they occur in the future.

Key Features: F1 Natural Secondary Woodland & F2 Informal Public Access

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 Natural Secondary Woodland

Description

A post-enclosure secondary woodland probably initially established as a gamecovert. Although probably planted it contains largely native or long naturalised broadleaved species with a significant understorey of native trees and shrubs. There is little evidence of former management and as a consequence a mixed age, multi-storeyed secondary woodland with large areas of thicket has been allowed to develop providing a broad diversity of habitats. The proximity of the canal also provides an additional dimension to the diversity of habitats and species.

Significance

The degree of isolation ensures its importance to local biodiversity. The nearest woodland of comparable size is 3 kms to the north but 13 kms to the south. Its uniqueness and its elevated site mean that it is an important element in the local landscape. It provides an important facility for those birds and mammals that feed on the adjacent farmland but require the shelter of woodland for nesting and roosting.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints.

Isolation.

The woodland is relatively isolated; almost an island in a sea of agricultural cultivation and so consequently linkage with similar habitats is limited via the canal side habitats. As a consequence its contribution to local biodiversity is highly significant. Only 3% of Northamptonshire is covered by broadleaved woodland (Biodiversity Action Plan for Northamptonshire).

Badger setts located in compartments 1a and 2a - consider when planning any operations within the woodland.

Opportunities.

Enhance stand structure, diversity and encourage natural regeneration through selective coppicing and thinning of sycamore and oak, and clearing areas of mature blackthorn.

Factors Causing Change

The natural processes of succession.

Spread of sycamore through compartment 1a through natural regeneration.

Tree pests and diseases - Mature ash trees make up a significant portion the stand within compartment 2a and can also be found on the site boundaries. As such monitoring for Chalara will be undertaken through KF observations.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long term objective is to have a robust and resilient mixed broadleaf woodland with a diverse range of native species such as oak, elm, cherry, ash and field maple; a wood with a diverse age range and structure, a healthy understory and plentiful natural regeneration and a variety of habitats such as high forest and ride side coppice.

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

To increase resilience through greater structure and species diversity by clearing areas of mature blackthorn thicket along rides and within woodland - increasing light levels and providing conditions for natural regeneration.

To promote any natural native broadleaf regeneration and maintain existing trees of interest through selective felling.

To coppice area of mature sycamore.

Carry out silver cultural operations to ash on canal boundaries where Ash Dieback has been identified through monitoring and where the trees pose a health and safety risk.

Monitor woodland health through annual key feature observations.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

Access to the wood is either from the Yelvertoft-Elkington road or from a footpath (Public right of way) some 250 metres south of the road and then via a permissive track over the canal bridge or from the canal tow path. No public access is provided to the wood north of the canal (Compartment 2). Access to the bulk of the wood to the south of the canal (Compartment 1) is either via a squeeze gate close to the canal bridge or the “management” gate in the south-east corner of the wood. There is an established circular footpath around the southern section of woodland for site visitors to use. Particularly during the summer additional use is made by canal barge users who moor close to the wood.

Significance

There are few woods in the locality and none that provide public access. Its elevated site and its proximity to the canal enhance its aesthetic appeal and consequent public appreciation.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:

Despite the long approaches to the wood use is well established and because of its isolation and uniqueness the wood provides an opportunity for public enjoyment not available elsewhere in the locality.

The nature of the variation in the structure of the wood and the proximity of the canal provide the visitor with a variety of different experiences within a relatively small area.

Work with emerging forest schools group, utilising the woodland for environmental education.

Constraints:

The problems of parking on the Yelvertoft-Elkington road, the long, sometimes muddy approach may deter some potential users.

Factors Causing Change

Scrub encroachment onto paths

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Maintenance of informal public access

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

To keep paths and entrances clear of encroaching vegetation on an annual basis.

To maintain and upgrade the Woodland Trust "Welcome" signage. Signage to be inspected and cleaned by the contractor annually.

To maintain and where needed enhance the existing pedestrian access point as part of the visits made by the contractor as detailed in the work programme.

All of the above to be included in the Estates Management Contract for the property.

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	4.27	other oak spp	1820	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site	Informal Public Access, Natural Secondary Woodland	County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc)
<p>Located straddling the Grand Union Canal on a north-facing slope. The occurrence of ridge and furrow suggest that wood was planted in the post-enclosure period, probably in the early nineteenth century. A stand of mature mixed broadleaves (Oak, Sycamore, Ash and Elm), the Elm was lost to Dutch Elm Disease in the 1970/80s. As a consequence large areas of thicket (Willow Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Hazel and Elder) have developed and now form a central core dissected by the NW-SE ride. During the late 1980s attempts were made to replant this former Elm area with Oak, Cherry and Field maple and although some have been severely suppressed a proportion have survived and will form the next generation of canopy trees. Beyond the core and beneath the canopy there is a well-developed second storey of the thicket species and in some locations regenerating Sycamore. In areas of low light penetration the field layer is principally mosses and male fern and in non-shaded areas bramble proliferates. A number of Scots pine were planted along the NE boundary.</p>							
2a	2.18	Ash	1880	null	No/poor vehicular access to the site	Informal Public Access, Natural Secondary Woodland	County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc)
<p>Located north of the Grand Union Canal on a north-facing slope. The occurrence of ridge and furrow suggest that wood was planted in the post-enclosure period, probably in the early nineteenth century. Ash, Oak and Sweet chestnut form the high forest canopy at 20m whilst Hawthorn, Field maple, Elder and Holly occupy the sub-canopy at 12m in approximately 30% of the area. Thickets of Blackthorn and Elm are found in the NW corner. There are large amounts of standing and lying deadwood. Seepage from the canal provides wet ground in the southern sector. The field layer is principally Dog's mercury and Nettle. There is much evidence of badger activity.</p>							

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2019	1a	Coppice	0.35	114	40
2019	1a	Selective Fell	4.18	4	15

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.