



Ashenbank Wood

Management Plan 2014-2019

MANAGEMENT PLAN - CONTENTS PAGE

ITEM	Page No.
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Introduction

Plan review and updating

Woodland Management Approach

Summary

1.0 Site details

2.0 Site description

2.1 Summary Description

2.2 Extended Description

3.0 Public access information

3.1 Getting there

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 Long term policy

5.0 Key Features

5.1 Wood Pasture

5.2 Informal Public Access

6.0 Work Programme

Appendix 1: Compartment descriptions

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Glossary

MAPS

Access

Conservation Features

Management

THE WOODLAND TRUST

INTRODUCTION

The Trust's corporate aims and management approach guide the management of all the Trust's properties, and are described on Page 4. These determine basic management policies and methods, which apply to all sites unless specifically stated otherwise. Such policies include free public access; keeping local people informed of major proposed work; the retention of old trees and dead wood; and a desire for management to be as unobtrusive as possible. The Trust also has available Policy Statements covering a variety of woodland management issues.

The Trust's management plans are based on the identification of Key Features for the site and setting objectives for their management. A monitoring programme (not included in this plan) ensures that these objectives are met and any necessary management works are carried out.

Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATING

The information presented in this Management plan is held in a database which is continuously being amended and updated on our website. Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations. Please either consult The Woodland Trust website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk 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:	Ashenbank Wood
Location:	Cobham
Grid reference:	TQ675692, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 177
Area:	29.95 hectares (74.01 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Tree Preservation Order

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Rare fungi and wildlife thrive in this Site of Specific Scientific Interest, which includes ancient woodland, former wood pasture and some great archaeological features.

2.2 Extended Description

Ashenbank Wood, 74 acres (29.95ha) situated west of Rochester and close to the village of Cobham and set within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is ancient semi natural woodland (ASNW) but also contains a significant area which was until very recently wood pasture or old parkland. There is a small section at the southern end which is in private ownership. Ashenbank Wood is set within a concentration of other ancient woodland, wood pasture and parkland sites, with Shorne Woods Country Park owned by Kent County Council to the north. Cobham School own the historic parkland of Cobham Park and the National Trust own part of Great Wood with Plantlife owning the remainder of Great Wood and Ranscombe Farm to the east. Jeskyns Community Woodland owned by Forest Commission and planted in 2007 lies immediately to the south of Ashenbank Wood. All these sites offer public access and are joined together in a loose partnership called the Cobham Shorne Countryside Project (CSCP). Ashenbank Wood was acquired by the Woodland Trust in 1984.

The ASNW part of Ashenbank Wood contains oak, ash, hornbeam and sweet chestnut historically managed by coppicing. There are also a significant number of open grown veteran trees of oak, hornbeam and sweet chestnut set within the coppiced areas. In the former wood pasture or old parkland area secondary woodland of mainly sycamore and birch now dominate, but set within this habitat are significant veteran trees of mostly sweet chestnut which were established in the late 18th century as part of Humphry Repton's landscape design for Cobham Hall which owned the area we now know as Ashenbank Wood. There are significant areas within the wood which are maintained as open glades through grazing by cattle.

Approximately 2ha was compulsory purchased from the Woodland Trust along the northern boundary of Ashenbank Wood in 1999/2000 to construct the channel tunnel rail link and 6.9ac (2.79ha) was acquired back from Union Railways in 2006 in the north west corner of this wood. Ashenbank Wood was designated as part of the Shorne and Ashenbank Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1968 due to its deadwood habitat, veteran trees and open ground habitat. The whole wood is subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) - Order no.1, 1960.

Ashenbank Wood has a good path network with 2 circular walks which are way marked starting from the car park, and there is also a direct path link to Jeskyns Community Woodland. A 10km circular multi user path, The Darnley Trail links together the surrounding ancient and veteran tree landscape and passes through a part of Ashenbank Wood as does a Public Right of Way.

Ashenbank Wood contains archaeological interest both recent and ancient with a Bronze Age barrow from 2400-1500BC, a medieval wood bank and the remains of five World War 2 camps built by the RAF to outstation personnel from the Gravesend airfield.

The underlying geology at Ashenbank Wood is chalk bedrock overlain by Thanet Beds. As a result the soils are principally gravelly and free draining with a flat terrain in the north which extends into some undulating shallow dry valleys at the southern end.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

By bus:

Nearest bus stop: War Memorial in Cobham, near the junction of The Street and Halfpence Lane. This is approximately half a mile north of Ashenbank Wood.

By train:

Nearest train station: Sole Street station which is on the London-Swanley-Rochester line. Sole Street station is approximately two miles from our car park along the public roads.

Further information about public transport is available from Traveline - www.traveline.org.uk or phone 0871 200 2233.

By bike:

There are no specific facilities for locking bikes to apart from to the rustic post and rail fence which surrounds the car park.

By car:

From the Londonbound A2, take the exit marked 'Cobham, Shorne'. At the roundabout, take the second exit signed 'Cobham'. The main site entrance and car park is located approximately 200 metres along Halfpence Lane on the right hand side of the road. The car park will take up to 10 cars. There is a vehicle barrier across the car park entrance which is closed every evening at dusk or by 8.30pm whichever is first, and is opened by 9.00am every morning.

Halfpence Lane is a busy road and parking along it is not recommended if the car park is closed. Alternative parking can be found at Shorne Wood Country Park Visitor Centre just north of the A2.

3.2 Access / Walks

From Cobham, Ashenbank Wood can be reached by road or by Public Footpath. Access is available across most of the site, except for part of the southern end which is still privately-owned.

You can access the wood either from the car park (opened and closed daily) on the eastern side of the wood off Halfpence Lane; or via the public footpath (NS178) which links Cobham village to Shorne Woods Country Park on the north side of the A2 and crosses the wood's centre. Jeskyns Community Woodland is accessed directly from Ashenbank Wood with a continuous path connection between the two sites. The NS178 is an unmodified grass and earth surface, which can get slippery and muddy when wet.

There are six entrances to Ashenbank Wood which lead onto the permissive path network.

- one entrance (the main one) is accessed from our car park as mentioned above. This has two exits into the wood via kissing gates, with the one beside the wooden 3.6m gate being an all access kissing gate suitable for pushchairs. The waymarked trail starts from here.
- three entrances are along Public Footpath NS178, at the south-west and in the north-east corner via all access kissing gates.
- two entrances off Scotland Lane (RUPP or Road Used as a Public Path) at the extreme north-west corner via a pedestrian only access kissing gate and the other on the west side of Ashenbank Wood also via a pedestrian only access kissing gate.

The majority of the paths are unmodified grass and earth surface, which can get slippery and muddy when wet. There are some steep slopes in the western side of Ashenbank Wood, and along the steeper sections there are steps dug into the path to make the route safer to use. Along the paths in the south of Ashenbank Wood, the path crosses over fallen trees into which the path has been built.

Due to past military use, small sections of the paths have a stone/tarmac surface, but these are not continuous and are linked together by unmodified grass and earth surface paths.

A well-developed network of permissive paths runs through the wood, which includes one waymarked trail which runs from the car park - a walk of around 40 - 50 minutes. There is also a direct path link to Jeskyns Community Woodland from the permissive path network.

A 10km circular multi-user path called The Darnley Trail links Ashenbank Wood with Shorne Woods Country Park, Jeskyns Community Woodland, Cobham Park and Ranscombe Farm. The part of the trail that passes through Ashenbank Wood links up access between Halfpence Lane and the byway called Scotland Lane. This may be used by walkers, horse riders, cyclists and mountain bikers, the latter being discouraged from using other routes which can be narrow.

Within the car park is the "Welcome Board" panel with the site leaflet available from a dispenser; and another free-standing sign giving clear directions on how to join the way marked route. Other information boards have been placed at points of interest along the paths to help explain the history of the wood. The site leaflet is also available from the visitor centre at Shorne Woods Country Park. Download the Ashenbank wood site leaflet (PDF, 0.9MB).

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

In fifty years' time, Ashenbank Wood will contain a diverse structure providing a good range of different habitats typical of native broadleaved habitat with its areas of ancient semi natural woodland and wood pasture along with the preservation of its archaeological interest. There will be a mosaic of open ground habitat in the north and east of the site within which are open grown veteran and future veteran trees. The open habitat will have coppiced edges managed on short rotation. Areas of high forest formed from stands of mature coppice will be managed through minimal intervention and will be concentrated to the south and west of the site. Veteran trees within both high forest and open habitat areas will be allowed to develop and decline with age without competing tree growth affecting their crowns through grazing or where this is insufficient regular halo thinning or coppicing of the surrounding trees. Deadwood falling from these trees and any which blow over will be left in situ or moved off the path network to continue adding to the deadwood component of Ashenbank Wood. The open ground habitat will continue to be managed principally by grazing with some mechanical intervention when required, so perpetuating the open character of this woodland, but also aiding the structural development and its interest to wildlife by allowing a revolving scrub habitat to evolve.

With the development of ash dieback disease from 2013, there will inevitably be subtle changes as ash trees decline in health and succumb to this fungus whilst it is likely that sycamore, field maple, birch and other species will increase their proportion within the canopy.

Through the active management around the veteran trees and the coppiced edges to the open ground areas, habitat for a range of invertebrate, bird and mammal species, including woodland specialist species which rely on temporary open space, will be provided for. The ancient and veteran trees will be managed to prevent catastrophic collapse. Visitors will be kept away from higher risk trees to avoid unnecessary intervention wherever possible - by fencing or by scrub management. Trees to become ancient open grown trees as future replacements for the existing cohort are identified on site and on adjacent land where landowners are sympathetic.

The areas of over mature coppice habitat being managed through minimal intervention will see an increase in the age of the trees. This will allow an increasing deadwood habitat to develop which will in turn support a large range of invertebrates and fungi. In addition as the trees senesce there will be an increasing prevalence of coppice stools splitting and falling apart. This will not only help to generate more deadwood but also allow the regeneration of an understory through increasing light levels. This is to be expected as a previously managed coppice woodland converts to a more semi natural woodland habitat through minimal intervention.

The presence of non-native trees and shrubs will continue to be monitored. Deer will undoubtedly be present at Ashenbank Wood in 50 years' time and their numbers will be monitored and controlled if numbers become too high so preventing the woodland from regenerating.

The site's popularity with the public due to its stunning displays of bluebells and wood anemones in spring time, its ease of access from the neighbouring towns and its good path network linking to neighbouring sites is unlikely to diminish. The management of the public access infrastructure and its well-maintained network of paths will therefore have to keep abreast of this high public use.

In this way the Woodland Trust's corporate objectives are achieved to protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future and to inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees.

The Woodland Trust will continue to work in partnership with surrounding landowners, to develop a landscape scale approach to the protection, restoration and enhancement of a high value ancient treescape and their associated special wildlife.

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 Wood Pasture

Description

Ashenbank Wood's habitat of ASNW, covering approximately 40% of the site and wood pasture or old parkland, covering approximately 60% of the site, blend together as a mixed habitat with only subtle changes in tree species and ground flora indicating one type from another.

In the ASNW, there are clearly areas supporting W8a tree and plant communities typical of ash-field maple woodland, and others which support W10a with hornbeam, oak and sweet chestnut. Old open grown hornbeam standards and coppice stools occur scattered through the ASNW area, some of which were windblown in the storm of 1987 and have been left to develop naturally. Parts of the ASNW have been historically managed as coppice and can be found in the southern and western parts of Ashenbank Wood although much of this is out of rotation. The wood pasture or old parkland habitat covers the remainder of the site in the northeast and eastern half of the wood.

There are 2 features of Ashenbank Wood which stand out. The significant amount of open ground habitat which is concentrated mainly in the wood pasture or old parkland habitat, but is also found within the ASNW part. Research carried out by the Oxford Archaeological Unit in 1995 concluded that prior to the early nineteenth century most of the northern part of Ashenbank Wood comprised a mosaic of open fields, rough grazing, heath and wood pasture with local areas of trees and scrub. This would explain the existence of veteran trees of great size and girth suggesting they grew in an open landscape, but also the existence of ancient woodland plant indicators which survived within the more wooded parts. Grazing is thought to have ceased in the early 20th century before being resumed in 2011. The open ground habitat is dominated by bracken with bluebell, creeping soft grass and rough meadow grass. The ground flora in the wooded parts of the wood pasture or old parkland habitat is sparse with dog's mercury and bracken being most dominant ground species. Other species are rare and mainly confined to ride edges but include three ancient woodland indicator plant species: wood speedwell, wood sorrel and wood fescue.

Secondly, the number of veteran trees mostly of sweet chestnut with some oak and ash which exhibit open grown characteristics with heavy lower branches, which are found throughout Ashenbank Wood. A tree survey in 2004 confirmed that there are 135 trees which are classified as ancient and other veteran trees many of which are scattered through the wood pasture habitat. They are made up of sweet chestnut, oak, hornbeam, ash, hawthorn, sycamore and wild cherry. This has significance for this site as Ashenbank Wood was designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1968 as a good example of stand-types associated with Tertiary gravels, clays and sands. The site supports an important and diverse invertebrate fauna, especially its Coleoptera (beetles), Hemiptera (true bugs) and Odonata (dragonflies). The main SSSI interest is in the wide range of invertebrates including species associated with dead wood and aquatic species linked to the three ponds on site. In addition Ashenbank Wood (along with Cobham Park and Wood) is a site of national significance based on the recognised protocol for assessment of Old Growth/Pasture sites

which support an obligate saproxylic beetle assemblage, (beetles which only exist in deadwood) with at least one species recorded as Red Data Book category 2 (vulnerable) and 17 as notable (nationally scarce). Of the beetles, more than 50% of the species recorded for Ashenbank are found in wood pastures and perhaps 25% are wood pasture or open crowned tree specialists. In addition, leisler's, soprano pipistrelle, common pipistrelle and brown long eared bats have been recorded. Associated with the deadwood are a high number of fungi. In 1999 a survey recorded 382 species of which 21 were rare and 134 were occasional or uncommon. Several of the rare species were mycorrhizal indicating a long biological continuity of tree/ soil biodiversity. There were also rare species on decaying wood and also eight different natural hollowers.

Set within the woodland at Ashenbank are a number of ancient and recent archaeological interests. A Bronze Age Barrow dating from 2400 - 1500 BC is found on high ground in the centre of the wood.

A shallow wood bank of medieval age or older passes through the middle of the wood.

During the Second World War personnel from the Gravesend air field were out stationed in 5 purpose built camps. All of the structures were removed in the early 1950's apart from 4 air raid shelters which remain and numerous foundations and bits of brick work from other structures.

There are 2 old ponds within the woodland plus one which was dug as part of the mitigation work for the channel tunnel rail link in 2000.

Areas of rhododendron and laurel were present on site until cleared in the mid 2000's.

Significance

The ancient trees along with other concentrations of ancient and other veteran trees in the near vicinity makes the whole area one of very high value in a UK context. Ashenbank Wood is adjacent to Cobham Park which extends into Cobham Great Wood and then to the north Shorne Woods Country Park. Altogether they comprise an exceptional veteran tree and deadwood habitat resource with associated notable and rare species which will benefit from the maintenance of the wood pasture structure. Ashenbank Wood is a small part, at the western end, of an historic landscape that is recognised as nationally important on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

ASNW is a dwindling habitat and as such all remnants of ancient woodland needs to be protected from further loss.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:

By building on the work started in the previous plan by introducing grazing, we can continue to improve the habitat condition of the open areas by establishing in the long term a revolving matrix of scrub and tree species through a natural mechanism using grazing as the main tool supplemented by mechanical cutting when required.

By ensuring the continuity of and the improvement in the habitat of the veteran tree collection through management of the competing trees surrounding them. In addition over successive management plan periods the choice and management of a successor generation of future veteran trees can be secured. This will ensure that Ashenbank Wood maintains its importance for its obligate saproxylic beetle assemblage. Surveys to be conducted during this plan period will help identify the existence of key species associated with the veteran trees and their deadwood.

The priority is to work closely with other organisations in this area that also have ancient trees or have capacity to re/establish trees to provide cohorts of open grown trees to become the ancients of the future.

The management at a landscape scale with other partners would benefit from further fungi and saproxylic invertebrate study.

Constraints:

No accurate calculation has yet been made using aerial photographs or Li-DAR images to work out the percentage of open areas compared to wooded areas. Such information would help determine and steer future management options so that the correct balance is achieved.

The high public use of this site by a mainly urban population not used to walking in close proximity to livestock could determine whether cattle continue to graze at Ashenbank Wood in the long term or whether other livestock are used.

If no management occurred on site, secondary woodland would eventually fill in the open glades of the wood pasture areas.

Ash dieback will probably allow sycamore to increase its range through the site in the W8a areas to the detriment of native species.

Factors Causing Change

Without intervention by grazing (or mechanical methods) there would be a natural succession of open areas to secondary woodland. Invasive rhododendron could re-establish from neighbouring garden.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To ensure that there is a continuity of open grown veteran trees and decaying wood habitat which support a range of rare and important fungi and the obligate saproxylic beetle assemblage. To ensure a successor generation of trees that will become veterans in the future through use of natural regeneration or by planting. To achieve a sustainable balance of open areas managed as grazed grassland with a revolving and evolving scrub element, within which are the open grown veterans and successor trees, with these grassy areas merging into one another to make larger more open areas with patches of scrub and coppice stools in between. Where open grown veteran trees and their successors are within a more wooded environment, to ensure that successive interventions of halo thinning and coppicing occur around each tree to maintain them in open grown conditions if grazing alone does not achieve this.

Retain standing and fallen deadwood where safe to do so.

The existence of sycamore to be tolerated as a future replacement of ash, but eradicating rhododendron, laurel and other invasive species if found.

A healthy and secure ground flora to be maintained throughout.

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

At the end of the plan period it is expected that the open areas within the wood pasture habitat will start to exhibit a more diverse structure and mosaic through a combination of grazing by livestock and mechanical cutting, however the Bronze Age barrow to remain tree free, and a programme of opening up around veteran trees to continue.

Create/ maintain structural diversity of the habitat matrix by:

- Coppicing

Maintaining and creating woodland edge habitat up to 15 metres deep is to be continued and maintained around 4 of the major open glades (A, B, C, D) in the central and northern parts of Ashenbank Wood (see map in appendix). This will be achieved through coppicing approximately 1.2ha of edge habitat with the work split evenly through the plan period. The edge habitat will be split into 2 zones and maintained on short rotations with zone 1 cut on a rotation of 3-5 years, and zone 2 cut on a rotation of 10-15 years, and all cut in a piecemeal fashion. This will accentuate the woodland edge habitat providing valuable temporary open space coppice habitat.

- Grazing

Grazing is to be carried out by cattle or hardy breed of horse across the whole site by between 5 and 12 animals. For stock management and for public access considerations, the site has been split into 2 compartments. The livestock will only graze one compartment at a time, spending approximately equal amounts of time within each compartment with the availability of suitable fodder dictating how long the livestock spend in each compartment. Grazing to start each year in early June and finish in October/November.

- Habitat analysis

Using recent LiDAR images produce a map in 2017 of the open areas within Ashenbank Wood. This will enable a more accurate assessment to be made of the percentage of Ashenbank Wood which is wooded compared to the open glade areas.

- Mechanical cutting

If required

mechanical mowing is to occur once a year during August or September to cut back lank growth of bramble and bracken within the open areas which have not been adequately grazed by the livestock to help encourage a more diverse ground flora.

- Invasive species control

By the end of

this plan period all rhododendron and laurel within Ashenbank Wood to be eradicated through targeted herbicide applications.

Maintain/ enhance the veteran trees through:

- Surveys

In 2016/17, the location of all

veteran trees and suitable successor or new recruits as future veteran trees will be plotted and mapped. Adjustments to the halo thinning programme for this plan period will be made as a result of this survey with and management around new recruits considered in future plan periods.

To undertake surveys in 2016 of key species associated with veteran trees and deadwood (saprotrophic fungi and saproxylic beetle assemblage) to determine their presence and effectiveness of the current management prescription.

- Halo thinning

Felling competing trees around

veteran trees will enable their open grown habit to be retained. During this plan period approximately 50 veteran trees and successor trees will be identified for working around with thinning/coppicing of trees occurring up to 5 metres out from their crown edge. This work will be undertaken during 2015 and 2017 following the results of the 2016/17 veteran tree survey.

- Successor trees identified

Within all areas

to be coppiced, select for retention all standards and to recruit young maiden trees where possible for future veteran trees so that these should number no more than approximately 20-25 trees per acre (50-60 per ha).

In 2017 to selectively fell 2 small areas, each approximately 0.1 - 0.2ha, of sycamore dominated secondary woodland in the north of the site and interplant with approximately 35 local provenance and UK grown pedunculate oak at 8-12m spacing and maintain the new planting by cutting back competing coppice growth until the trees are established.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

Ashenbank Wood is classified by The Woodland Trust as a category A site, where we are expecting a high level of public access (15-20 visitors using one entrance every day) and a site which is important for demonstrating our corporate objectives with people engagement events. The wood is very well used, often by dog walkers.

Ashenbank Wood has 7 entranceways leading onto the permissive path network as described in Section 3, "Public Access Information". The car park off Halfpence Lane is the main access point and the two way marked routes start from here. The car park holds approximately ten cars and is opened and closed daily. Within the car park is the "Welcome Board" panel with the site leaflet available from a dispenser, and another free standing sign giving clear directions as to how to join the way marked routes.

Jeskyns Community Woodland is accessed directly from Ashenbank Wood with a continuous path connection between the 2 sites.

Ashenbank Wood is also linked to other woodland neighbours via the Darnley Trail, a 10 km long distant multi User Path which runs through the northern part of Ashenbank Wood linking up access between Halfpence Lane and the byway called Scotland Lane.

To provide information on Ashenbank Wood for visitors there are information boards placed around the site on the permissive path network giving details on: World War 2 RAF camps, deadwood habitats, Bronze Age barrow (Scheduled Ancient Monument) and wood pasture habitat. The site leaflet is also available from the visitor centre at Shorne Woods Country Park.

Forest School activity to be permitted as and when requested.

Significance

Public access to this woodland helps fulfil one of the Woodland Trust's corporate objectives, to "Inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees". It enables access to a large ASNW and gives an opportunity for the Woodland Trust to promote the message of ancient woodland habitats and the importance of its protection.

The access and parking is free at Ashenbank Wood in contrast to our immediate neighbours who charge for their parking.

Scheduled Ancient Monument is of National Significance.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunity:

the provision of public access to a large ASNW for its enjoyment - fantastic display of spring flowers; to demonstrate conservation management by Woodland Trust; to use the woodland as a resource for education by allowing Forest School activities and by holding events for primary aged children targeted at the history of the wood, veteran trees and wood pasture habitat.

To work with other partners to promote the whole landscape of special trees and decaying wood habitat.

Constraints:

Persistent use of the site as a meeting place leading to antisocial behaviour can lead to unnecessary congestion in the car park and can be intimidating for other visitors. Fly-tipping can be a problem at entranceways and gateways.

Factors Causing Change

Fly tipping, anti-social behaviour

Long term Objective (50 years+)

A well established and safe network of paths for informal public access in Ashenbank Wood where responsible visitors can appreciate and respect this wood with its different habitats, archaeological and wildlife interest without causing disturbances. The visitor numbers to be in line with its category A status with provision for parking on site in a car park if required. The provision of way marked routes, a site leaflet and information boards to be available on site if required. Educational opportunities to be considered with partners within the Cobham Shorne Partnership Project.

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

During this plan period, the short term objective is to continue to provide public access at Ashenbank Wood which is safe and enjoyable. How this will be achieved:

- Path mowing

3.5km (2.1 miles) of paths will be maintained to allow continued access across the whole site for pedestrians by mowing as appropriate during the summer months. Horse access along the Darnley Trail will be maintained by mowing and cutting back tree growth interfering with the route as necessary during the plan period. Safe access from the car park onto Halfpence Lane to be ensured by the cutting of roadside vegetation periodically through the summer months to maintain site lines along the public road.

- Site based information and enjoyment

The continued provision of a site leaflet available from Ashenbank Wood car park and from Shorne Woods Country Park visitor centre. To continue to provide information boards on World War 2 RAF camps, veteran trees and deadwood habitats, Bronze Age barrow and wood pasture habitat and replace if they become damaged or illegible. To ensure that the Bronze Age barrow and the area containing camp 5 from World War 2 remains free from trees through livestock grazing between June and November and supplemented by mechanical cutting to prevent degradation of the structures and to allow the public to view this relic.

- Monitoring of antisocial behaviour

To continue to monitor the antisocial use of the wood and liaise with Kent Police to help stop antisocial behaviour occurring and removal of fly tipped material as and when is required. Periodic closures of the car park could occur to assist Kent Police.

- Annual inspections

Annual inspection of all gates, waymarker posts and constant monitoring of path surfaces.

- Tree safety

Annual Zone A tree safety inspection. Fungal survey to be carried out once in every 24 month period in the autumn with a summer survey in between to check trees' crowns. Zone B tree safety inspections are to be carried out every 2 years with arboriculture work carried out when necessary. In 2015 to selectively thin to waste trees within tree safety zones A and B south of the car park and along the edge of Halfpence Lane covering approximately 2ha once during the plan period to ensure there is space in which trees can produce healthy and balanced crowns to aid their stability and safety to the public.

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	29.95	Mixed broadleaves	1700	Wood pasture	Archaeological features	Informal Public Access, Wood Pasture	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Tree Preservation Order

ASNW in the south and west of the site with hornbeam and sweet chestnut coppice with oak and sweet chestnut standards many of veteran age. South western part contains open glade areas with veteran trees exhibiting open grown characteristics.

Old parkland or wood pasture in north and east of the site with significant open glade areas, veteran trees of mostly sweet chestnut with some ash. Woodland affected by 1987 storm with evidence of windblown trees and coppice stools still present, with many still alive and continuing to grow. There is significant deadwood habitat in the veteran trees and also as windblown and dead trees.

During 1999 along the northern boundary, the trunks of 30 trees felled as part of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link works on the northern section of the forest were relocated into the wood. 12 of these trees were re-erected up against existing trees to provide vertical deadwood habitats which contrast with the more typical horizontal deadwood of fallen or windblown trees.

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2015	1a	Thin	2.00	0	0
2017	1a	Coppice	0.40	100	40

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.