



Blackbank Wood

Management Plan 2016-2021

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Blackbank Wood
Location:	Longtown
Grid reference:	NY350678, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 85
Area:	6.93 hectares (17.12 acres)
Designations:	

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

A predominantly birch woodland with a few younger oak, set on a relatively flat site with a good network on paths ensures easy access for walking all make this a very popular site. Ground flora is dominated by ferns and mosses including foxgloves and honeysuckle.

2.2 Extended Description

Blackbank Wood, purchased by The Woodland Trust during 1985, is long rectangular woodland located approximately three kilometres west of Longtown in north Cumbria, some two kilometres from the Scottish border. The woodland and surrounding land is extremely flat being part of the Solway plain and only 20m above sea level. Farming dominates most of the area though the Ministry of Defence owns much of the adjacent land to the south. The underlying soils are mostly deep peat and as a result there are a number of peat extraction companies in the locality.

To the north and east of Blackbank Wood the area is well-wooded most being under the ownership of The Netherby Estate. Though there is a mixture of both broadleaved and coniferous woodlands. To the west and south the land is sparsely wooded being dominated by Rockcliffe Marsh and the Solway Firth.

Blackbank Wood is reached from the A6071 that fronts its entire northern boundary isolating it from the woodland blocks to the north of the road. Access may be gained at the east or west end of the wood though restricted public parking only exists at the western end. The site is well used by local people and there are two parallel permissive paths running the length of the wood although the western half of the southern path falls outside the Woodland Trust boundary. There is a geocache located in the wood.

The woodland is approximately 500m long and 170m wide at the widest point and extends to 6.97ha. It consists predominantly of birch thought to have naturally regenerated following felling of a mature oak crop during the late 1940s. Though the trees appear variable in age most will have been established within a few years of each other. Since acquisition by The Woodland Trust small coupes of birch have been felled to allow the planting of oak, rowan and some ash. Where there is high light levels bracken is the dominant ground flora but beneath the closed canopy the ground flora is more diverse dominated by ferns (broadbuckler fern, male fern and common polypody) with bilberry, mosses, soft rush, foxglove, wood sorrel and honeysuckle all noted.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Blackbank Wood is 3 kilometres west of the village of Longtown; which is 9 miles north of Carlisle on the A7 in the county of Cumbria and three miles south of the Scottish border. Access is best obtained from the western end where it is possible to park vehicles on the unclassified road leading south from the A6071 (Gretna to Longtown Road).

A squeeze stile and large welcome sign denote the entrance to the wood and the start of a mown path that leads the entire length of the wood to the eastern end. Here a small wooden footbridge is crossed to gain access to Whisky Lonning, a wide track. A second path follows the southern boundary of the woodland and may be gained via another footbridge at the eastern end.

Approximately half way along the wood the path turns north at a small Woodland Trust welcome sign and rejoins the main central path. There is no formal public access through the woodland to the south of Blackbank Wood. The permissive paths extend to around 880 metres and pass through areas of mature birch as well as open coupes created for re-planting. Though generally in good condition and flat terrain, some areas of the path may become soft in the winter due to the underlying deep peat. A large welcome sign is located at the end of Whisky Lonning where it adjoins the A6071.

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

National Cycle Route number 7 Carlisle to Inverness goes through Longtown for more details see www.sustrans.org.uk

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long-term management intention is to maintain the biodiversity of the woodland by preserving and enhancing the existing habitat, landscape and amenity value of the woodland to enable the widest range of species to survive. Standing and fallen deadwood communities will be retained where safe to do so.

The current woodland composition is made up of approximately 85% birch and 10% Sessile oak and 5% other mixed broadleaves including alder, willow, holly, rowan, crab apple, beech, sycamore and the odd Scots pine.

Without intervention it is likely that the woodland will be birch dominated woodland and therefore there will be a lack of species diversity. Beech has already established itself in small amounts throughout the wood and, as a shade tolerant species, it is likely that this species will increase in numbers in the short term. As light is made available through natural loss of the birch overstorey, which is prone to windblow, the beech will be in a strong position to take advantage of the gaps. Sycamore is currently not regenerating freely however there are a number of mature and semi mature trees along the southern boundary. One factor that will play an important role in natural species selection is the presence of strong bracken growth, which will favour shade tolerant species.

The Woodland Trust will maintain informal access to the woodland commensurate with use to ensure that local users and visitors can enjoy the woodland. Public information through posters and local consultation will be provided to involve and inform visitors about the woodland and to enable them to gain a better understanding of the importance of woodland within the locality.

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

Access is best obtained from the western end where it is possible to park two or three vehicles on the unclassified road leading south from the A6071. A squeeze stile and large welcome sign denote the entrance to the wood and the start of a mown path that leads the entire length of the wood to the eastern end. Here a small wooden footbridge is crossed to gain access to Whisky Lonning a wide track (so called as it was believed to have been used by whisky smugglers). A second path follows the southern boundary of the woodland and may be gained via another footbridge at the eastern end. Approximately half way along the wood the path turns north at a small Woodland Trust Welcome sign and rejoins the main central path. The permissive paths on The Woodland Trust land extend to around 880 metres and passes through areas of mature birch as well as open coupes created for re-planting. Though generally in good condition some areas of the path may become soft in the winter due to the underlying deep peat. A large welcome sign is located at the end of Whisky Lonning where it adjoins the A6071. There is a geocache located in the wood.

Significance

Blackbank Wood is an important local amenity woodland offering an area for peaceful recreation where few others exist and as such it attracts a reasonable number of visitors. The nearest public rights of way are located near Longtown and none pass through woodland areas. Provision of permissive access to local people and visitors from the surrounding communities fulfils one of the Woodland Trusts key outcomes and promotes its aims and objectives to locals and visitors alike. The woodland also provides an educational role where active management can be seen in operation. The Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plan incorporates the action for landowners to give the public the opportunity to experience and appreciate wildlife and this is successfully achieved at Blackbank Wood.

Opportunities & Constraints

There are no public rights of way within the vicinity and no opportunity to link with other permissive paths. Parking is restricted to the unclassified public road at the western end of the wood. Extending the permissive paths within the woodland is limited as the woodland is relatively small and the soil very peaty and wet in places. The A6071 is an extremely fast road and a constraint to access.

Opportunities exist to inform the public of the Woodland Trusts objectives, the role of woodlands in the environment and management practices pertaining to Blackbank Wood through posters and consultation.

Factors Causing Change

Fly tipping

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The Woodland Trust will maintain informal access to the woodland through the provision and maintenance of entrances with welcome signs and a permissive path network. Safety inspections will be regularly undertaken. Public information and promotion of the woodland locally will be enhanced where possible and posters will be used to inform and involve visitors to the woodland to promote greater understanding of the importance of woodland within the environment.

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

Maintain and repair three formal pedestrian access points with welcome signs, 2 bridges and 880m of permissive path to Woodland Trust specification strimming and cutting encroaching vegetation from the entrances and paths. Annual trim the roadside hedge to Highways specification. Litter pick site and remove material as necessary. Undertake regular safety inspection - see risk assessment database. Continue to involve local people by consultation and posters.

5.2 Natural Secondary Woodland

Description

The woodland, extending to 6.97ha, consists predominantly of birch thought to have naturally regenerated following felling of a mature oak crop during the late 1940s. Though the trees appear variable in age most will have been established within a few years of each other. Since acquisition by The Woodland Trust small coupes of birch have been felled to allow the planting of oak, rowan, ash and native shrubs. The current woodland composition is made up of approximately 70% birch and 15% mixed broadleaves including alder, willow, holly, rowan, crab apple, beech, sycamore and the odd Scots pine. Sessile oak currently makes up approximately 15% of the whole wood. Only 1 (small) ash tree was noted in Zone A in 2018 when doing an ash dieback general survey and it did not have signs of dieback then. Hawthorn and elderberry were also noted to be present however these are restricted to the old overgrown hedge that fronts the northern boundary along the A6071. There are excellent deadwood communities both standing and fallen throughout the entire area of the woodland and birch bracket fungi amongst others were noted to be thriving.

There is little shrub layer within the woodland apart from the planted stock and there are two small areas of rhododendron which are nearly eradicated.

The herb layer is well developed consisting mainly of a mixture of ferns: male fern broad buckler fern common polypody and bracken depending on the amount of light reaching the woodland floor. Soft grasses, rushes mosses, sedges, honeysuckle and wood sorrel were frequent. To the eastern end there is an area of bilberry with occasional heather. To the west where the ground has been disturbed on the southern boundary there are small areas of common nettle bramble and foxglove as well as a number of garden plants.

Significance

Blackbank Wood is an important landscape feature in the area and is highly visible from the A6071 Longtown to Gretna road. Perhaps of greater importance is the fact that it is broadleaved woodland in an area where there is a dominance of coniferous woods. Such variation in woodland types promotes habitat and species diversification both for flora and fauna and maintains a natural and progressive habitat corridor between other woodlands and the surrounding open countryside. Red squirrels and roe deer are known to inhabit the woodland along with a variety of bird species and smaller woodland mammals. The woodland has a good representation of ferns and excellent deadwood communities with associated fungi and lichens as well as a number of niche habitats such as bilberry and mosses depending on how damp the ground conditions are.

Opportunities & Constraints

The opportunity exists to implement the Woodland Trusts long term vision set out in 'Keeping Woodlands Alive'. Following Trust policy there is an opportunity to accept non-native beech and sycamore into the mix of species within this secondary woodland; for the natural long term development of the woodland. Rhododendron/ bracken may pose a constraint to the establishment of natural regeneration. Garden exotics such as Solomon's seal have colonised localised patches of the woodland as a result of tipping but currently pose no threats.

The management of the woodland to the road is constrained by the need to ensure safety of passing vehicles.

Factors Causing Change

Colonisation of garden plants from tipping. Bracken is having a significant impact on the ability of natural regeneration to develop.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long-term management intention for this wood is to maintain the biodiversity by preserving and enhancing the existing habitat, landscape and amenity value of the woodland to enable the widest range of species to survive. Standing and fallen deadwood communities will be retained where safe to do so.

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

Undertake some small scale coupe felling and re-stocking with a mix of native broadleaves and shrubs to improve the species composition and the overall stand structure to create a more resilient woodland (Planned for 2018).

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	6.97	Birch (downy/silver)	1955	High forest	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site, Mostly wet ground/exposed site, Services & wayleaves	Informal Public Access, Natural Secondary Woodland	

Sub compartment 1a is the whole wood 6.97ha. The land is flat with few features apart from a number of old drainage-ditches most of which are now overgrown. The current composition is 85% birch with both silver birch and downy birch being present, all thought to have naturally regenerated during the early 1950s. The remaining 15% of the canopy is made up of sessile oak, common alder, beech, goat willow, holly, rowan and very occasional sycamore, crab apple, hawthorn and elderberry the latter two being restricted to the road frontage where they form part of the old hedge. A few Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) were also noted to be present. Only 1 (small) ash tree was noted in Zone A in 2018 when doing an ash dieback general survey and it did not have signs of dieback then. Apart from the oak and sycamore that are generally mature trees located on the southern boundary, the remaining species are of varying age classes and distribution. Two areas felled and replanted with native broadleaves in 1989 and 2000 are now well established and the area can be now managed as part of the main woodland compartment. There is a well developed herb layer, but little shrub layer - composed of predominantly young beech and two small areas of rhododendron. There are excellent deadwood communities, both standing and fallen. Apart from the western boundary and a small part of the northern boundary there are no fences. On the western boundary there is a post and rail fence through which access to the woodland is gained via a squeeze stile. On the northern boundary there is a short section of post and wire fence extending as far as the mown sight lines for exit onto the A6071. An overhead telephone line is located on the western boundary of the wood the stays of which go back into Blackbank Wood. Just outside the Woodland Trust boundary is an electricity sub station located adjacent to the south west corner of the property. Pedestrian access may be gained at the east or west end of the wood though restricted parking only exists at the western end. The wood is well used by local people and there are two parallel permissive paths running the length of the wood although the western half of the southern path follows the track immediately south of the Woodland Trust boundary. There is no formal public access through the woodland to the south of Blackbank Wood.

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2019	1a	Selective Fell	0.40	58	23

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 on 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.