



Owlacombe Wood

Management Plan 2006-2011

MANAGEMENT PLAN - CONTENTS PAGE

ITEM Page No.

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 Informal Public Access

5.2 Natural Secondary Woodland

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Owlacombe Wood
Location:	Roborough
Grid reference:	SS569166, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 180
Area:	3.44 hectares (8.50 acres)
Designations:	

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

This wood spans a small meandering river and is very popular with local people. It is just across the road from the larger Combe Wood that also has public footpaths running through it. There is a circular walk within the wood and the paths are generally in good condition although crossing the river can be tricky when there has been a lot of rain.

2.2 Extended Description

Owlacombe Wood is set either side of a small meandering river in a discrete valley near the community of Roborough. Although the wood shows signs of having been planted in the 1800s with some large Beech & Sycamore thought to be remnant standards within a field system. It is now an example of a mature Western Oak Woodland. Stored Oak coppice dominates with Ash and Birch but there are individual specimens of Beech and Sycamore which are regenerating freely.

Both side of the river is a small floodplain and this wet ground habitat adds to the biodiversity of the site. There are large coppiced Alder and Willow along the meanders which are liable to wind throw. The surrounding land use is predominantly improved agricultural land to the east, south and west with adjoining woodland on the northern boundary of the property. The wood was thinned in winter 1997/8 and paths were improved. The site appears to be well used by locals and occasional horse rides. The site is also susceptible to occasional fly tipping.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

The site is accessed from the adjacent road. A stone but rough track runs through the length of the wood. A path spurs from this to ford the stream linking back to the road allowing a short, but circular route.

The woods are situated south west of the village of Roborough. The road from Roborough to the wood is steep, narrow and does not have a pavement. There is a pull in on the opposite side of the road to the wood, 100m past the entrance, with room for two cars. The entrance way is a walk through gate with three posts and the gaps are no more than 50cm wide. The path, wide and slightly loose with stones, descends down to the river where it can be muddy even in dry weather. The path continues through the wood to a similar walk through gate further down the road.

The nearest bus stop is in Great Torrington near the primary school, over five kilometers from the wood, and the nearest public toilets are at The Quay, Town Hall and Victoria Park in Bideford and all three have RADAR accessible toilets. (www.directenquiries.com)

This information was correct on 19/06/2007. For up to date local travel information see the travel line website www.travelline.org.uk

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

1 - To maintain the existing Oak Woodland type by managing the regeneration of non-native species in line with WT policy on increasing native woodland cover.

2 - To improve the age class and biodiversity within the wood in accordance with Woodland Trust corporate objectives. This will be achieved by a combination of canopy manipulation by thinning, selective felling, and ride side coppicing while at the same time assessing natural gap creation within the woodland.

3- To maintain the public access network within this small wood for the benefit of informal local users increasing people's enjoyment of woodland in line with WT objectives.

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

The wood is open for quiet informal use predominantly by locals with paths maintained to provide a circular access route through the woodland

Significance

Public Access complements the Woodland Trust's core objective increasing people's awareness and enjoyment of woodland.

Opportunities & Constraints

River dissecting site makes a circular route difficult during periods of heavy rain.

Factors Causing Change

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain the public access network, making improvements as silvicultural operations allow.

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

Annual Path/Ride cutting & Entrance Maintenance. Tree Safety Work as WT Policy

5.2 Natural Secondary Woodland

Description

Whilst having been planted, the mature woodland on the site is developing Semi-Natural Characteristics

Significance

Maintenance of the the woodland cover will require works to ensure it retains a 'native ' appearance and complements the Woodland Trust's core objective of increasing new native woodland cover.

Opportunities & Constraints

The good form and quality of the Oak should ensure that thinning will continue if required and markets allow. Natural crown break down and regeneration of native species may take away the need for thinning and planting.

Factors Causing Change

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To enhance the woodland by developing a more Native species mixture 90% and nuturing to a mixed age class, high forest system.

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

NB Following review of policy on non native species Jan 2003 control of non native species set out in this plan will not now take place.

Coppice streamside alder and willow 2008 individual stools
Monitor regeneration through the woodland in 2010

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	2.72	Mixed broadleaves	1870	null		Informal Public Access, Natural Secondary Woodland	
<p>Predominately W10 woodland - A mixed stand dominated by stored (but thinned) Oak coppice P1870. Ash and Birch are occasional throughout. Shrub layer is dominated by abundant Hazel, with occasional Holly. Bramble, Honeysuckle and Bluebell are common in the ground flora. Old standards of Sycamore and Beech occur rarely but add interest for older growth. In areas there is intense regeneration.</p> <p>Along the river W6 woodland occurs - Alder and Willow dominate with predominately nettle and Hogweed in the ground flora.</p>							

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2008	1a	Coppice	0.20	1	0.2
2010	1a	Thin	2.72	0	0

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.