



Park Moss

Management Plan 2017-2022

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Park Moss
Location:	Arley, Warrington
Grid reference:	SJ660817, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 109
Area:	9.90 hectares (24.46 acres)
Designations:	Community Forest, Green Belt, Local Wildlife Site

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Park Moss is a quiet broadleaved woodland in a lovely rural setting near the Arley Hall estate in North Cheshire. The canopy is dominated by Silver birch with some mature oak, alder and sycamore. Ferns, bracken and bramble make up the majority of the ground layer with some localised patches of woodland flowers and plants. A network of permissive paths wind through the wood, all of which are unsurfaced and can become very wet in winter. The wood is a peaceful refuge for wildlife and home to a variety of birds and animals, with the more open sunny rides attracting butterflies and insects in the summer.

2.2 Extended Description

Park Moss is a 9.9ha woodland in North Cheshire near to the villages of Arley and Appleton Thorn. It was acquired by the Woodland Trust in 1985. The site is flat, low lying remnant moss land and consequently the ground can often be wet particularly in the winter. The surrounding landscape is rural, mainly improved grazing pasture with a low level of tree cover apart from old hedgerows and wooded copses. The site is bounded by a series of open drainage ditches two of which cross through the wood.

It is secondary broadleaved woodland predominantly silver birch, oak, alder, rowan with some sycamore, willow, wild cherry and downy birch. The canopy is dominated by even aged silver birch with mature oak and alder by the roadside and eastern boundaries. There is some natural regeneration of birch, rowan and occasional oak where gaps have been created in the canopy from windblown trees. The wood is split into two compartments, the larger main compartment lies to the north of Arley Road and a small triangular shaped compartment to the south of the road.

Soon after acquiring the woodland in 1985 a section of the wood was clear felled of Corsican pine and restocked with mixed broadleaves (including oak, cherry, rowan, hazel and alder). Restocking the felling coupe proved to be challenging with invasive bracken, bramble and intense rabbit browsing competing with the planted stock.

Ground flora is dominated by bracken and bramble but includes broad buckler fern, herb robert, oxlip, red campion, cow parsley, raspberry, stitchwort, climbing corydalis, and a few isolated patches of bluebells.

There are six pedestrian entrances for public access into the wood, four of which are from Arley Road and two others are public footpaths leading into the wood from the adjacent farmland. There is approximately 1500m of unsurfaced permissive paths across the site, although these can become wet and muddy in places especially in winter. The site is regularly used by local people for walking and dog walking, although visitor numbers are low.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Getting there:

Park Moss is located on Arley Road between the village of Appleton Thorn and Arley Hall and Gardens, approximately 7 miles to the south of Warrington. The main entrances into the wood are from Arley Road. There is no on-site car parking at the wood. The nearest formal car parking is at Arley Hall and Gardens about 1 mile further along the road after passing the wood. Arley Road has no pavement and is a fast country road.

The nearest bus stop is by St Cross Church on Stretton Road in Appleton Thorn village which is approximately 2 miles away from the wood.

There are no public toilets in the vicinity. The nearest facilities are at Appleton Thorn or Arley Hall and Gardens.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term intention for Park Moss is to promote a high forest of predominantly oak-birch secondary woodland. It will be managed so that it is diverse in structure, age class and species, which will ensure that it is as resilient as possible to future changes imposed on it (e.g. tree diseases and climate change). It will be left to develop through natural processes where possible with a minimum intervention management regime. Silvicultural intervention may be required if large parts of the wood become single aged or dominated by one or two species. The main driver for management operations in the wood will be tree safety particularly by the roadside and along the paths and work will need to be undertaken periodically.

Mature trees notably oak, alder and occasional silver birch will be retained as long as possible to promote a succession of future veteran trees, and standing and fallen trees will be retained where safety allows enhance the deadwood habitat. Natural regeneration will be favoured although if this falls below sustainable levels for future regeneration of canopy species then restocking with suitable species (oak, alder) will be considered.

The woodland ditch network will be managed to ensure that they remain clear of blockages and free flowing as required as part of the covenant for the wood.

Open public access will be retained at the wood in perpetuity. Visitor access will be provided to a good standard with entrances and signage maintained to ensure the site is welcoming for visitors. The network of paths will be managed appropriately for the level of visitor usage to the site, and the main path ride will be maintained to keep it wide and open to enhance visitors enjoyment as well as creating a more diverse structure to the woodland ride edge. The wood will be made as safe as practicable through regular safety inspections of high-risk tree zones and access infrastructure.

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

Park Moss wood has approximately 1500m of unsurfaced permissive footpaths with 6 pedestrian entrances which have either squeeze stiles or open access. A public footpath runs along the inside of the western edge of the main compartment and another public footpath crosses through the small compartment to the south of the road. These public footpaths link the wood to the wider countryside path network. The woodland paths are often wet and boggy especially during winter. There is no car park at the wood and only limited space in front of the main access gate for one or two cars. The site is used regularly by local people for walking and dog walking, although visitor numbers are low, therefore it has been given an access category designation C which equates 'low usage but where we do maintain the paths'

Significance

Increasing enjoyment of woodland is one of the Woodland Trust's key outcomes. Park Moss provides an amenity woodland offering peaceful informal public access. By maintaining the paths and entrances this will help to encourage visitors to enjoy and value the site. The woodland also provides an educational role and is used from time to time for local Forest school activities.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: no formal parking at the site and Arley Road (fast country road) is unsuitable for parking which restricts opportunities to increase visitor numbers to the wood. The paths are often wet and boggy due to the underlying peat soils and relatively poor drainage and increasing visitor numbers could cause more damage to the paths and surrounding ground flora.

Factors Causing Change

Bracken and other coarse vegetation encroaching onto paths. Paths becoming wider and in places new paths being created by people walking to get around wet / boggy sections of path which causes trampling of surrounding vegetation.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long term objective is to maintain the current level of public access to Park Moss. Entrances and signage will be maintained to ensure the site is welcoming for visitors. The network of paths will be managed appropriately for the level of visitor usage to the site, and the main path ride will be maintained to keep it wide and open to enhance visitors enjoyment and create a more diverse structure to the woodland ride edge. The wood will be made as safe as practicable through regular safety inspections of trees in high risk zones and inspections of access furniture.

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

During this plan period the main short term objectives are to maintain the level of visitor access. This will be achieved by:

1. Carrying out the annual maintenance of approximately 1500m of paths and 6 entrances to ensure they are kept open for use. All signage will remain clean and visible, and be replaced if they deteriorate. The main path ride will be cut wider once a year to maintain a more open sunny aspect for visitors to enjoy.
2. Conducting regular safety inspections of trees in high risk zones (e.g. beside the road and paths), to ensure the wood is as safe as possible for visitors, neighbours and road users.
3. Carrying out monitoring at least once during this plan period to assess whether the access provision is adequate and to determine the severity of any threats to the wood from public access. Appropriate measures to lessen any recorded threats will be undertaken.

5.2 Natural Secondary Woodland

Description

Park Moss is secondary woodland dominated by Silver birch, with oak, alder, sycamore, rowan, and a few downy birch, willow and wild cherry. The understorey contains mostly silver birch, rowan and willow, with a sparse shrub layer of mainly hazel, holly, hawthorn and elder. Ground flora is reasonably diverse with broad buckler fern, male fern, wavy hair grass and areas of dense bracken and bramble. There are localised patches of woodland flowers including some bluebells. An open ride cuts through the centre of the woodland and contains a reasonably diverse assemblage of ferns and acidic loving grasses. The woodland is surrounded by and crossed in two places by drainage ditches which have a variety of plants.

Significance

Cheshire has less than 5% woodland cover, which is one of the lowest for any county in England. The wood is fairly isolated from any other woodlands in the surrounding area, and therefore it is of significance locally for biodiversity by providing a valuable habitat for woodland wildlife and for its landscape and amenity value. The other semi-natural habitats within the wood (ditches, areas of open ground /path rides) further enhance the biodiversity value of the site particularly for butterflies and other invertebrates. It has a good representation of ferns and deadwood communities with associated fungi, lichens and mosses. Park Moss is designated as a Local Wildlife Site.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: Management access on site is limited due to the wet ground conditions and ditches.
 Opportunities: to promote future veteran trees by the retention of mature trees through to senescence where safe to do so.
 Tree safety work will provide opportunities to create gaps in the canopy for natural regeneration to establish.

Factors Causing Change

Regular wind blown trees resulting from wet peaty ground conditions.
 Wet ground conditions may affect the species able to successfully regenerate.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long term objective for Park Moss is the continuity of mixed broadleaved high forest, with a diverse structure, age and size classification. It will be managed by minimum intervention and left to develop through natural processes, although if large parts of the wood become single aged or dominated by one or two species then silvicultural management will be carried out to counter this. Mature trees will be retained through to senescence to promote future veterans, where it is safe to do so. The drainage ditches crossing through the site will be managed to ensure that they remain clear of blockages and free flowing as required as part of the covenant for the wood.

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

During the plan period the main short term objective is minimal silvicultural intervention allowing the woodland to develop as naturally as possible.

This will be achieved by:

1. Carrying out a woodland condition assessment once during the plan period to monitor the health, resilience and diversity of the woodland and to identify any threats from tree disease, pests and mammals.
2. Clearing vegetation and fallen trees annually from the ditches to ensure they are clear of any blockages.

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	0.39	Pedunculate/common oak	1900	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site	Informal Public Access, Natural Secondary Woodland	Community Forest, Green Belt, Local Wildlife Site
<p>Small compartment separated from the main compartment of the wood by Arley Road. The road forms the northern boundary of this compartment with grazed pasture fields (fenced with post and rail/stock fencing) adjacent to the other boundaries. The canopy is mainly mature and semi-mature oak, common alder, Silver birch and sycamore. The shrub layer is good with rowan, holly, goat willow, birch and hawthorn. Ground flora includes bramble, bracken, broad buckler fern, herb robert, oxlip, nettles and dock. A public footpath enters the compartment at the southern corner over a ditch via a sleeper bridge and then runs along the inside of the south east boundary coming out onto Arley Road.</p>							
2a	9.51	Silver birch	1970	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site	Informal Public Access, Natural Secondary Woodland	Community Forest, Green Belt, Local Wildlife Site
<p>The main compartment of the wood is located on the north side of Arley Road and is bordered on all sides by agricultural grazing land (with post and wire stock fencing), apart from the short section of the southern boundary which abuts Arley Road and is unfenced apart from by the entrance gate. The canopy is dominated by mature and semi-mature Silver birch with oak, alder and occasional goat willow and downy birch. There is a single mature Scots pine along the northern boundary. The understorey includes silver birch, rowan, holly, elder, alder and occasional oak. The shrub layer is quite sparse, comprising mainly scattered hawthorn, elder and holly. Regen of rowan, holly, oak and birch are present in small numbers generally along rides and the woodland edge where light levels are greater. The ground flora is dominated by broad buckler fern and bracken with climbing corydalis, greater stitchwort, red campion, raspberry and localised bluebells along the northern boundary. There is significant variegated ivy and nettle around the entrance from Arley Road. Two broad drainage ditches cross through the compartment.</p>							

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.