



Helmeth Hill

Management Plan 2015-2020

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Helmeth Hill
Location:	Church Stretton
Grid reference:	SO469938, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 137
Area:	23.67 hectares (58.49 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Tree Preservation Order

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

An ancient woodland adorning Helmeth Hill just half a mile east of Church Stretton. Visitors can follow a circular path to explore a wealth of ancient woodland species including small-leaved lime and toothwort, yellow archangel and wood sorrel.

2.2 Extended Description

Helmeth Wood covers Helmeth Hill just half a mile to the east of Church Stretton. It lies within the Shropshire Hills AONB, is covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) and is an important landscape feature. The underlying geology is comprised of Precambrian Uriconian rocks of volcanic origin which have given rise to a steep sided N/S ridge with rocky outcrops. The majority of the wood is ancient coppiced Sessile oak woodland overlying damp, acidic soils with Birch, Ash and Alder frequently to the north of the site. The oak was last coppiced approximately one hundred years ago during the First World War. Ash dominates the very steep north/north-eastern slopes.

The ground flora is dominated by Bramble, Bluebell and Yorkshire fog, this reflecting the heavy grazing by sheep in the past. Where conditions are flushed along the base of the northern slopes, a rich ground flora is found particularly in association with the Ash stand. Ancient woodland indicator species include; Small Leaved Lime, Toothwort, Yellow Archangel and Wood Sorrel. Bracken frequently dominates where gaps exist in the canopy.

Access to the wood is via a public foot path to the south-west of the site and via a public bridleway to the north-east corner of the wood. The public footpath crosses the field adjacent to the west of the wood and enters the site via a "step-up" stile. Access via the Public Bridleways on both the northern and eastern flanks is also via stiles. There is no parking available nearby. Within the wood visitors can follow a circular path which is quite steep and wet in places reflecting the site's topography and ground conditions. There are also further paths which provide access to the high point of the ridge from the circular path which follows the flanks of the hill.

The site is surrounded by improved grassland to the west, south and southeast and by ancient woodland to the north and north east.

The Key features for this wood are F1 Ancient semi-natural woodland and F2 Informal public access.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Lies north-east of the town of Church Stretton. To get to the wood it is best to follow the public footpath which links into the site of the western boundary over a stile, or in the north east corner of the site again where there is a public footpath running adjacent to the site and visitors can gain access over the a further stile. There is a circular path that runs through the wood approximately 1.7km in length. The path gets quite wet, steep and narrow in places and would not be suitable for less-able or wheelchair access.

Nearest bus stop - Approx ½ mile away at end of Sandford avenue B4371 where it meets Watling Street North.

Nearest train station - Approx 1 mile away Church Stretton centre - approx

Nearest toilet - Easthope Road, Church Stretton centre, disabled facilities - ½ miles way

You can also try www.transportdirect.info or www.traveline.org.uk on the internet for the most up to date details for public transport in the area.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

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

In accordance with the Woodland Trust WMA the woodland will be allowed to develop naturally with exception of essential tree safety work and ride edge coppicing in selected areas where appropriate to enhance visitor enjoyment.

In accordance with the Trust WMA, free public access will be provided for quiet, informal recreation and the woodland managed to make it accessible, welcoming and safe.

Regular tree inspections will be undertaken by competent people. Tree safety works will be implements in accordance with recommendations from inspection reports and in line with current best practice.

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 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Description

Helmeth Wood is an ancient sessile oak woodland, which was traditionally coppiced to provide wood for local use and is an important feature in the landscape.

Significance

Helmeth Wood is the only completely wooded hill in the range of narrow hills which run almost parallel to the Long Mynd and Wenlock Edge. The wood contains a diverse range wildlife.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:-

The site is quite steep and wet in places making it difficult to work silviculturally. There is also an awkward management access route which is long and across neighbouring land. This neighbouring land is also often wet and easily damaged.

There is no easy area to stack timber on site.

Opportunities:-

Work has been carried out in parts of the wood to the south of the wood in the past, while in Trust ownership and using the management access track to the east of the site.

Factors Causing Change

Sheep grazing - adjacent fencing (not WT responsibility) poor in places.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain 23.78 hectares of Semi-Natural Woodland

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

To ensure the area of SNAW is maintained. The woodland should be monitored appropriately to note any changes or threats that may present a problem.

A Woodland condition assessment carried out every 5 years.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

The site can be access via the public footpath network to the west of the site and also from a bridlepath to the north east corner of the property. The site has a long circular permissive path which takes visitors around and through the site affording beautiful views towards the Long Mynd, particularly when walking along the woods western portion of the wood. In addition there are also further paths which provide access to the high point of the ridge from the circular path which follows the flanks of the hill.

Significance

The permissive route through Helmeth is both beautiful and peaceful affording links into the wider footpath network. The woodland is important as it is one of a limited number locally that offer public access where much of the land accessible on foot is open and absent of woodland cover.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:-

The site can be very wet and steep in places making the path a little difficult to negotiate.

Opportunities:-

Path improvement work including steps and boardwalks have been installed with great success along sections of the circular route.

Factors Causing Change

Deterioration of path condition.

Change or increase in level of visitor use.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Well maintained, interesting ,accessible circular path that takes visitors around and through the wood.

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

Maintain the permissive paths and entrance points to the site through visits and inspections carried out as part of the annual estate maintenance contract (x2 visits per year). Paths to be cut a minimum of 2 metres width and any obstruction with 2 metres vertically cut-back.

Steps and revetments to be maintained.

Tree inspections will be undertaken every 3 years with tree safety works will be implemented in accordance with recommendations from inspection reports and in line with current best practice.

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	14.90	Oak (sessile)	1880	Min-intervention	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Tree Preservation Order
<p>Widely spaced Sessile Oak coppice with Birch, Ash, Wild Cherry and occasional Pedunculate oak and Crab Apple. Alder is common on the lower, wetter slopes to the west. The shrub layer, which is relatively sparse over much of the site is dominated by Hazel with occasional Blackthorn, Field Maple, Hawthorn, Elder, Dog Rose and Guelder Rose. The ground flora is dominated by Bramble to the west and north whilst Yorkshire Fog and Bluebell are dominant to the south and east. There are a number of open areas in this sub-compartment which are dominated by bracken.</p>							
1b	4.40	Oak (sessile)	1880	Min-intervention	Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Tree Preservation Order
<p>Pure oak coppice with no shrub layer. The ground flora is dominated by Yorkshire Fog and Bluebell.</p>							
1c	4.50	Ash	1960	Min-intervention	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Tree Preservation Order

Lies on steep north/northeastern slope and is dominated by self-sown Ash (20 to 60 years) with occasional Pedunculate Oak coppice. Wych Elm was formerly present in the canopy. A group of eight stools of small leaved lime is present, approximately six metres in diameter, and probably formed as a clone. Hazel and Elder are predominant in the shrub layer and the ground flora is dominated by Bramble and Bluebell. Along the base of the northern slope is a wet flush zone. Alder and Sallow are common in this area and the damp, base rich conditions have given rise to a rich ground flora which includes : Yellow Archangel, Red Campion, Dogs Mercury, Ragged Robin, Enchanters Nightshade and Wall Lettuce.

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.