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WOODLAND
TRUST

Rook Wood

Management Plan 2014-2019

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Rook Wood
Location:	Llanigon
Grid reference:	SO218407, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 161
Area:	10.35 hectares (25.58 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Ancient Woodland Site, National Park, Planted Ancient Woodland Site

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Rook Wood is mixed broadleaf ancient woodland just to the south of Hay on Wye, near the England-Wales border. Wildflowers to look out for include bluebells, honeysuckle and wood sorrel.

2.2 Extended Description

Rook Wood is mixed broadleaved ancient woodland just to the south of Hay on Wye, near the England-Wales border. A beech plantation was established on the site in 1955, but following thinning operations in the 1990s and general decline of the beech, the site is increasingly dominated by ash, birch, oak and other native broadleaves. Ground flora on the site is dominated by bramble, with significant areas of bluebell and wood rush and small areas of honeysuckle and wood sorrel. The southern end of the wood, higher on the slope, was less densely planted with beech and has retained a more mixed canopy and denser ground flora.

The site was formerly divided into three compartments. Although different areas of the wood retain some distinct elements, the overall character of the site, as a mixed broadleaf wood decreasingly dominated by a former beech plantation, is quite coherent. Additionally, the proposed management is consistent over the site, making management compartment delineations unnecessary.

The wood is surrounded by active pastureland on three sides. On the southern boundary is an adjoining area of ancient semi-natural woodland that predates the beech plantation.

There is a Public Right of Way that passes both inside and outside the northern boundary of the wood. The lightly used permissive path that forms a double loop within the wood that links with this public right of way. Another public right of way skirts the southern boundary, though does not allow access from this boundary.

The Key Features of this site are Planted Ancient Woodland Site and Public Access. Rook Wood has a watercourse that crosses it, and the wood is part of a larger continuum of ancient semi-natural woodland to the south, that is called Long Wood.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

A Public Right of Way runs along the northern edge of the wood and the Trust maintains other permissive footpaths within the wood for the walkers who use the area and for management access.

There are stiles where the Public Right of Way enters the site at the southwest corner and where the permissive path leaves the site at the northwest corner. Where the Public Right of Way leaves the site on the western boundary there is a gate and an information sign. There is no direct access from the road, access is gained by crossing the pasture neighbouring the site on the west.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

It is the intention of the Trust to retain a high forest of mixed native broadleaf species. Diversification of species composition and canopy age structure is desirable through natural processes. As access is very difficult, intervention is not deemed suitable. The presence of planted beech is acceptable in the canopy. Ground flora associated with Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands is present throughout the site, and will continue to proliferate under this policy.

The woodland is open for public access and aesthetically pleasing, although public access is not actively promoted.

Stock proof boundaries will have been maintained on all sides. The hedge along the northern boundary path enhances the path character and provides views across the valley. Other paths and rides through the wood (including the public footpath) are maintained in good and safe condition for walkers.

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

A beech plantation was established on this ancient woodland site in 1955. Subsequent management and natural succession have encouraged the development of a more mixed species canopy, although beech is still a significant canopy feature, although overall <50%. There are substantial areas of ancient woodland specialist flora, including wood sorrel, honeysuckle, wood rush and bluebell. Recent storms have created potentially valuable deadwood habitat and created canopy gaps.

Significance

Ancient semi-natural woodland is an irreplaceable and threatened habitat type in Britain. Protection and restoration of ancient woodland is one of the Woodland Trust's primary objectives

Opportunities & Constraints

The lack of direct road access is a consideration for silvicultural operations.
General decline of the planted beech and increasing dominance by native species.

Factors Causing Change

The beech planted on the site is in general decline due to squirrels, scale insect and unsuitability of this species for the site.
Natural regeneration of ash and oak and colonisation by other native species.
Ash decline as a result of Chalara may be an issue during this management plan term.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Continued development of a high forest of mixed native broadleaf species and an associated community of woodland and ride-edge flora and wildlife on the site is desirable. Natural processes are creating diversification of tree species composition and canopy age structure, with an on-going decline of beech, making the latter a declining constituent of the canopy.

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

Ensure wood remains stock proof so that natural regeneration can continue.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

There is a Public Right of Way that passes both inside and outside the northern boundary of the wood. The lightly used permissive path that forms a double loop within the wood that links with this public right of way. Another public right of way skirts the southern boundary, though does not allow access from this boundary. Next to the permissive path on the northern boundary is a hedge which helps to maintain views across the valley and a clear and attractive path boundary. Path and ride edges have particular aesthetic value and provide important wildlife habitat within the site. Spring bluebell displays are a valuable feature.

Significance

Given that a Public Right of Way crosses part of the site, and public access is an objective of the Woodland Trust, public access will continue, although not be actively promoted at this quiet and relatively inaccessible wood.

Maintenance of the permissive path and ride system in the wood increases habitat diversity in the wood, creating both aesthetic and wildlife benefits, as well as ensuring safety for any visitors.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints to public access include the lack of nearby parking or roadside signs. The site has the potential to enhance the experience of the walkers on the Public Right of Way.

Factors Causing Change

The hedge growth on the northern boundary would obscure views without continued maintenance.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Permissive paths will be maintained in a safe condition for management and public access and aesthetically valuable assets such as bluebell patches will be protected.

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

Ensure that existing provision of permissive and public paths within the wood are in a safe and passable condition.

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	10.40	Ash	1960	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access to the site, Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Previously the wood was divided into three compartments, these have been combined into a single compartment, 1a, due to the similarity of woodland structure and proposed management. The wood as a whole can be described as a restored Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site, the original planting being beech that is not dominating.

The canopy is dominated by beech and ash with some birch and oak. The southern, uphill section of the wood was planted less densely with beech and retains a few medium-large oaks that pre-date the plantation. The canopy in this southern area also includes some cherry and the understory includes some hazel and holly. In the northern section there is a diverse understory of rowan, hazel, holly, elm and wych elm. There is a plentiful understory of ash and oak regeneration between 20 and 30cm tall in patches across the site (2014). In some areas ash regeneration is at a density of 6 stems per square meter. A number of fallen and standing dead beech, cherry and birch trees provide valuable deadwood habitat. The ground flora is dominated by bramble, however there are large areas of woodrush on the western edge and there are patches of bluebell, wood sorrel and honeysuckle in the northern and southern sections of the wood. In the northwest corner of the site young beech was not thinned in 1996, and so this area retains a more complex age structure and denser shade than the rest of the wood. A stream crosses the wood from south-east to north-west. The hedge along the northern boundary path helps to maintain views across the valley and a clear and attractive path boundary. The hedge on the southern boundary is overgrown and the intent is to allow it to become a part of the woodland. There is a Public Right of Way that passes both inside and outside the northern boundary of the wood. The lightly used permissive path that forms a double loop within the wood that links with this public right of way. Another public right of way skirts the southern boundary, though does not allow access from this boundary.

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.