



# Merry Hill

## Management Plan 2013-2018

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## 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 Open Ground Habitat

5.3 Secondary Woodland

6.0 Work Programme

Appendix 1: Compartment descriptions

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk) or contact the Woodland Trust ([wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto: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.

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## 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](http://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.

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## 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

<b>Site name:</b>	Merry Hill
<b>Location:</b>	Bushey
<b>Grid reference:</b>	TQ130940, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 176
<b>Area:</b>	75.80 hectares (187.31 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Community Forest, Green Belt

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

Merry Hill is a superb 76 hectare wooded habitat on the outskirts of London, close to the historic town of Watford. It contains a delightful mix of old trees, newly planted woodland and orchard, a stream and vast open meadows that stretch across the scenic and peaceful Hertfordshire countryside.

## 2.2 Extended Description

Merry Hill is a superb 76ha woodland creation site located between Harrow and Watford on the outskirts of London. Despite being only 15 miles from central London and surrounded by the outlying suburbs of Bushey, Oxhey and Carpenders Park, Merry Hill fits snugly into a surprisingly rural and wooded landscape. It was formerly an arable farm, acquired by the Trust in 1996. Subsequently over a third of the site was planted with native broadleaf trees between 1997 and 2000. Lying within Watling Chase Community Forest, over 62,000 trees and 3 miles of hedgerows were planted, part of which was under the Woodland Trust's 'Woods on Your Doorstep' millennium project.

Complementing the young woodland are vast open meadows, some of which are grazed throughout the summer months, adding diversity and richness to the site as well as offering splendid views across the countryside. An establishing orchard is also an interesting addition to this large community woodland. The grazed pasture to the northwest is known as Attenborough's Fields, an open conservation area well supported by the local community. The fields to the west and the Golf courses on the southern and eastern boundaries are privately owned. The underlying geology comprises London clay overlaid by the slowly permeable and seasonally waterlogged soils with some brown subsoil of the Windsor series.

Merry Hill is extremely popular with the local residents and it is well connected to the public rights of way network. The woodland, grazed pasture and rough grassland meadows provide a mosaic of diverse vegetation providing ever-increasing potential for wide biodiversity and recreational interest.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

### By bus:

The nearest bus stop is on Bushey High Street at the end of Merry Hill Road, along the opposite side of the A411. Buses are also available from Bushey London overground station.

### By train:

Bushey rail station is about 4.8km (three miles) from the wood, towards the southern edge of Watford, with regular services running to and from the Watford area via London's overground rail network.

For further information on public transport, contact Traveline on 0871 200 2233 or visit [traveline.org.uk](http://traveline.org.uk)

### By car:

Bushey is about 3.2km (two miles) south-east of Watford. From Watford, take the A411 towards Beechen Grove. At the roundabout, take the second exit onto the A411 Waterfields Way and continue to follow the A411 for approximately 2.4km (one and a half miles).

Turn right onto Kemp Place, just off Bushey High Street, and into a free public car park. From here it is a 536m (about a third of a mile) walk to the wood, along both surfaced and un-surfaced paths.

Walk east out of Kemp Place and turn left onto the High Street. Continue for about 182m (200 yards) then turn left onto Merry Hill Road, following this until you reach the wood. A small car park just inside the northern entrance off Merry Hill Road is available to disabled users and can be accessed under the RADAR national key scheme.

## 3.2 Access / Walks

Merry Hill lies to the south of Bushey near Watford and forms part of a large green oasis within the outer London urbanisation. Access is available directly from the surrounding urban roads via two entrances on the north-eastern boundary off Merry Hill Road and one on the south-western boundary off Oxhey Lane. Access can also be gained via a public footpath on the south-western boundary from Carpenders Park and from several points on the north-western boundary via Attenborough's Fields.

A hard-surfaced path, the Greenway, connects the two northern entrances off Merry Hill Road and Oxhey Lane and is suitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs. There are a series of other grassy paths throughout the gently undulating site, and some of these sections are seasonally muddy and become slippery when wet.

Wide kissing gates suitable for pushchairs are positioned at entrances and field boundaries, though small sections of steps and a couple of foot bridges are also dotted around the site.

A way-marked walk leads through the wood and there are several information boards and benches at regular intervals, mostly sited to offer spectacular views across the countryside.

## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term vision at Merry Hill is for an attractive and diverse natural landscape characterised by mixed broadleaf woodland, grassy meadows, grazing cattle and well known as an interesting and exciting natural amenity.

The site will continue to provide a diverse range of habitats, primarily early successional communities in close proximity to each other; from grazed meadows and rough grassland, through scrub and thicket to young woodland. The meadow scrub should be controlled through grazing and topped up by hand if needed, the un-grazed fields managed through topping and baling where appropriate and the broadleaved plantations will be allowed to develop and diversify through natural processes. Mature hedgerow trees will be left to senescence and beyond to provide valuable ancient trees and deadwood habitats.

Volunteer involvement across the site and particularly with the fruit field should continue as appropriate, with the fruit field remaining an interesting addition to this diverse site. A general feeling of openness and views out across the countryside will remain.

The Trust's corporate objective of increasing people's awareness and enjoyment of woodland will be achieved by continuing to provide and maintain appropriate access paths and facilities throughout the wood; but primarily this will be achieved by raising and maintaining the high profile status of Merry Hill and ensuring it is an exciting destination for woodland conservation and recreation.



## 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

Free public access exists across the whole of Merry Hill, which is hugely popular within the Bushey locale. It is frequently used for quiet informal recreation primarily by locals from Bushey and Oxhey, with dog walking being the primary activity. Merry Hill also offers opportunities for public engagement; some strong community involvement sees dedicated care of the fruit field, annual hedgelaying, tree planting events and small-scale site maintenance.

There are several access points, two from Merry Hill Road to the north east and two from Oxhey Lane to the west, as well as several entrances via Attenborough's Fields to the north. Two public footpaths exist - one that runs east to west across the highest part of the site and one that runs parallel to the hard surfaced Greenway bridleway which runs across the northern end of the site connecting Merry Hill Road to Oxhey Lane. Currently there is no Woodland Trust car park on site, however free car parking is available at Kemp Place in Bushey.

A way-marked walk leads through the site and there are several information boards and benches at regular intervals, mostly sited to offer splendid views across the countryside.

#### Significance

Merry Hill's size and convenient location make it a natural attraction for the local population who can enjoy and appreciate the maturing woodland and its associated habitats. Informal Public Access raises people's awareness and enjoyment of woodland.

In summary it:

Provides suitable areas for the surrounding population to walk and ride and also to exercise dogs.  
Provides opportunities for nature study and the appreciation of the countryside for people of all ages and abilities.

Adds interest to the surrounding region.

Adds to the local rights of way network.

Helps people understand the history of the landscape and how it developed.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

**Opportunities:**

Enormous potential to increase the profile of Merry Hill and the Woodland Trust through appropriate natural and educational investment projects that will engage more people with nature, instigate a step change in use and aim to make Merry Hill a 'destination'.

Encourage greater use of public transport to the site.

Upgrades and maintenance to footpaths and recreational facilities eg bridges, steps, culverts etc.

To support the creation of a formal link from the south-west corner of compartment 2b through to Mutton Wood allowing access for people from the Harrow area.

**Constraints:**

Occasional problems with vandalism and rubbish dumping.

Potential conflict between different user groups and between local residents.

Horses and bikes straying off the bridleway can cause severe damage to path surfaces and potentially to woodland ground flora.

Dog walkers and in particular dog walking businesses not cleaning up after their dogs can cause an unpleasant situation. Out of control dogs can have a detrimental impact on ground nesting birds during the breeding season.

Distance to Kemp Place car park commonly means cars park along Merry Hill Road near main entrance.

**Factors Causing Change**

Difference user conflicts.

Horse and bike users straying from the paths.

Irresponsible dog walkers.

**Long term Objective (50 years+)**

Merry Hill will remain open to the public, and will continue to be managed in a way that secures and enhances the positive experience people have of the site. It should offer an excellent visitor experience, be a destination in which people want to return and contain interesting habitats and exciting features that help engage people with the natural environment. In addition, the general vision is to maintain pathways and entrances, secure the attractively diverse habitats, retain open views and reduce the impacts of vandalism and inappropriate usage of the site.

Way-marked walks, information boards, benches and provision of leaflets will be retained / enhanced in line with public use and demand.

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

**Operational Objective:**

Easily accessible, attractive, well maintained and safe woodland regularly used by the public. Path network and entrances remain in good condition and are appropriate for level and type of use.

Retain a feeling of openness and views out of the wood from the existing viewpoints high in the site. This will be done by carrying out annual observations and any remedial works carried out as required to maintain this standard.

Maintain involvement with the fruit field volunteers, hedgelaying group and other active volunteer groups by occasional meetings and agreement of works to be carried out.

**Work Programme:**

Cut paths 4 times a year to a minimum width of 2m with some rides cut full width on rotation, including strimming the fruit trees on each mow and cutting the whole of the orchard at the end of the growing season.

Annual planting of a small number of fruit trees (5-10) into the fruit field, along with appropriate maintenance and volunteer input.

Annual assessment of condition of access provisions and remedial works carried out as necessary such as repair and maintenance to bridges, gates, benches, information boards and path surfaces, which may include hard surfacing of some short sections.

Annual tree safety inspection of both zone A (areas along main roads) and zone B (internal paths) for any unsafe branches/trees and carry out arboricultural works as necessary.

## 5.2 Open Ground Habitat

### Description

The open ground at Merry Hill currently accounts for almost 50% of the total area. It can broadly be put into three categories - natural grazed habitat, rough open grassland and unimproved grassland. The range of open space provides diverse habitats, allows the site to have an open feel and retains landscape characteristics and views.

Merry Hill was previously an arable farm with the exception of compartments 7a and 7d which were grazed pasture. In 1997 the fields were planted with a wild grass mix, and subsequently some fields were cut for hay and some fields grazed.

### Significance

The vast meadows allow the site to feel open and offer fine views over the surrounding landscape. The rough grassland and natural grazed fields will provide habitats for an array of wildlife.

### Opportunities & Constraints

#### Opportunities:

Establish an attractive natural grazed landscape and valuable rough grassland habitat.

To utilise some of the open space to fulfil the major access and interpretation requirements to increase site profile.

To retain the feeling of openness and views out across the countryside.

#### Constraints:

The un-grazed fields have suffered a steady loss of soil fertility and an impoverished grass sward leaving them susceptible to invasive species such as ragwort and thistle which may require regular and intensive control.

### Factors Causing Change

Natural succession to woodland

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

The open space habitats should remain an interesting and attractive landscape. The grazed meadows will be a natural landscape with scattered, mixed-aged scrub taking up about 20% of the grazed area. Ideally the land should be grazed by rare breed cattle such as English Longhorns.

The semi natural grassland in compartment 7a should retain a healthy mix of wild grasses and flower species, whilst the remaining rough grassland will provide fine habitats for ground nesting birds and invertebrates.

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

**Operational Objective:**

Maintain the 36.44ha of open grassland habitat in good condition. In the grazed fields ensure that a balance of approximately 80% grassland and 20% transient scrub is maintained. This will be achieved by continuing the current grazing regime of up to 35 cattle from April through to October and allowing scrub to develop to about 20% of the area.

Allow natural regeneration to creep out from the edges of the woodland in cpt 4a, 6a, 7c into some of the open meadow to create a valuable woodland edge habitat and the maturing self-set oak trees allowed to grow on. The remaining areas will be retained as open space and the majority of the scrub removed by cutting to ground level. The ragwort will be spot sprayed and pulled and an agricultural mix seeded over the top to improve the grass sward. Once this is free from ragwort this will be cut and baled at the end of the growing season.

7a should retain a high quality mix of grasses and flowers by cutting and baling at the end of the growing season after 15th July.

**Work Programme:**

Graze compartment 5a with a head of up to 35 cattle from April through to October. Allow scrub to develop to coverage of about 20%. Hand pull the ragwort within the grazed fields annually, a responsibility shared with the grazier.

Cut and bale compartment 7a once a year after 15 July to leave a cleared sward of about 1-2 inches high.

Remove scrub from 6a and 7c, manage ragwort through a combination of spot spraying pulling and scratch, sow with an agricultural mix and cut and bale annually once a suitable sward has developed.

Top 3a, 4a and 7d annually after the growing season.

## 5.3 Secondary Woodland

### Description

Native broadleaved trees and shrubs planted between 1997 and 1999. Main species include oak, ash and hornbeam. Compartment 1a, known as Little Hartsbourne, was largely planted by the local community under the Woods on your doorstep project.

The woodland blocks are establishing fairly well with patches of aspen and willow forming significant canopies and conditions suitable for emerging natural regeneration. Grassy rides have been created by regular mowing and culverts and bridges span the restored ditches.

### Significance

Early successional woodland with a diverse structure can help sustain and enhance biodiversity, and along with increasing the area of new native woodland, helps fulfil two of the Trust's corporate objectives.

### Opportunities & Constraints

#### Opportunities:

To increase the area of new native woodland by allowing natural regeneration to develop in compartments 4a, 6a, 7c. Selected areas (approximately 1.5ha) will be left uncut to develop as new woodland allowing the woodland edge to creep out and create a valuable wildlife habitat.

#### Constraints:

Amount of woodland creation is restricted by the local desire to retain open views.

### Factors Causing Change

The success rate of natural regeneration and the planted woodland.

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

Healthy, mature and attractive native broadleaf woodland of varying structure and habitats. A mixture of trees, woody shrubs and tall-herb communities, all integrating with the open space and associated flora and fauna to produce an excellent woodland habitat.

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

**Operational Objective:**

To ensure successful establishment and maturity of attractive and structurally diverse secondary woodland that is positively integrating into the existing habitats and landscape. Where possible, the range of scrub, thicket and young woodland habitats will be allowed to develop and diversify through natural processes.

**Work Programme:**

Annual hedgelaying day with local volunteers to carry out between 50-100m (depending on availability of group) concentrating on hedge along Greenway to assist with views to the north and stoned footpath to cattle field to ensure path width is adequate.

Create several shallow seasonal ponds in the regenerating compartment 2c to create additional wetland habitats in 2015.

Trim selected hedges on rotation once every three years in February to retain their shape and function.

Control ragwort through hand pulling and a suitable herbicide in wooded areas within 100m of grazed land every year.

Open up rides and coppice small areas (less than 0.5acres) to provide successional habitats and retain views on a rotational cut.

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## 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	8.50	Oak (pedunculate)	1997	High forest		Informal Public Access	Community Forest, Green Belt
<p>Planted in 1997 as part of the Trust's 'Woods on your doorstep' (Woyd) project, this new woodland was planted predominately by local school children and residents who named it Little Hartsbourne Wood. The main tree species of oak and hornbeam were planted in groups along with ash, birch, aspen and woody shrubs. The blocks of woodland are separated by mown rides and in the centre of the compartment is a large open grassy area with a cairn of local Hertfordshire pudding stone, locally sculpted and erected to celebrate the millennium. Established hedges surround the compartment and over east and west boundaries lies Grimsdyke golf course. An underground water pipe runs through the top of the compartment.</p>							
2a	12.20	Oak (pedunculate)	1998	High forest		Informal Public Access	Community Forest, Green Belt
<p>Compartment 2a was planted in 1998 with native broadleaves, primarily oak, hornbeam and ash, along with the odd cherry, field maple and woody shrubs such as blackthorn and guelder rose. They are maturing nicely and frequent natural regeneration now covers remaining open areas. A couple of hedge-lined ditches run down through the sub-compartment helping with drainage from the adjacent pasture. Numerous grassy rides weave through the blocks of woodland and the solid oak Jubilee Bridge, installed by volunteers in 2002, crosses Hartsbourne Stream in the south west corner. An overhead powerline runs diagonally through the compartment.</p>							
2b	2.80	NULL		High forest		Informal Public Access	Community Forest, Green Belt
<p>This sub-compartment lies in the lowest, wettest part of the site south of Hartsbourne stream. It was planted in 1998 with oak, hornbeam, assorted native willows, alder, aspen and woody shrubs. The willow in particular are thriving in the wet conditions and natural regeneration is spreading into the surrounding open land. There is a small pond adjacent to the most southerly stream on the boundary and an overhead powerline crosses the south west corner. A quieter, yet attractive part of the site that backs onto the golf course.</p>							
2c	4.21	NULL		High forest		Informal Public Access	Community Forest, Green Belt

<p>This low lying pasture lies just south of Hartsbourne stream on poorly drained neutral to moderately acidic London clay. A former arable field, the area was sown with a wild grass mix under a Countryside Stewardship Scheme in 1997. Since then the area has been mown annually but a diverse grass sward has struggled to develop well due to seasonal flooding, noxious weeds and ruderal grasses. Oak, ash and hornbeam natural regeneration are frequently found. Small groups of aspen were planted along the northern edge of the field and the stream is crossed by a number of culverts and bridges to allow public access. A subsidiary of Hartsbourne Stream trickles along the middle of the sub compartment and an overhead power line crosses the western tip of the field.</p>							
3a	2.60	Other	2001	Non-wood habitat		Informal Public Access	Community Forest, Green Belt
<p>Sub-compartment 3a was acquired by the Trust in 1998 on a 125 year lease and has been designated as a fruit field. Planting began in December 2000 and to date there are over 180 trees, planted in groups in this west facing field. A few more trees are added every year; species are mainly locally native varieties with many raised from seed collected nearby. The local speciality apple, Bushey Grove, plays a major role as well as ancient varieties such as Pig's Nose Pippin and Sir Isaac Newton's Tree. Complementing the apples are pears, plums, greengages, damsons, mulberries, cherries, crab apples, medlars and quinces as well as hazels and walnuts. The trees are generally grown on M16 root stock and should grow to become medium sized fruit trees. A small tree covered pond can be found in the south west corner and an overhead powerline crosses the field.</p>							
4a	3.50	NULL		High forest		Informal Public Access	Community Forest, Green Belt
<p>4a is a former arable field sown with a wild grass mix in 1997. It lies on poorly drained moderately acidic London clay. The field had been annually cut for hay but the quality of the grass has naturally reduced and finding a market for the arisings had proved increasingly difficult. Allowing more scrub and trees to grow in this area has created a mosaic of habitats and biodiversity interest.</p>							
4b	0.70	NULL		High forest		Informal Public Access	Community Forest, Green Belt
<p>A small strip of young woodland planted in 1998, mainly comprising oak and hornbeam with a few ash, field maple and woody shrubs. The southern end of the sub-compartment is particularly wet, especially in winter, and there is a small, restored farm pond under the cover of an old mature oak tree.</p>							
5a	16.90	NULL		Non-wood habitat	Site structure, location, natural features & vegetation	Informal Public Access	Community Forest, Green Belt

A collection of 4 fields originally sown with a grass mix in 1997. Formerly arable fields, the soils are poorly drained, moderately acidic London clay. They were annually cut for hay for the first few years but since 2002 have been grazed during the summer months. Grass species include Red Fescue, Small-leaved Timothy, Common Bent, crested Dog's tail and Cockfoot. Naturally, pockets of hawthorn and guelder rose scrub are beginning to develop, adding diversity to the grazed landscape.

Mature oak trees are dotted along the line of newly planted hedges that separate the fields and restored ditches aid drainage by channelling water down to Hartsbourne stream. There are a number of small field edge plantings of young native broadleaves and in the lower field an old farm pond has been restored which the cattle rely on.

A well used public footpath (footpath 25) runs along the northern edge of the top fields and is a particular favourite with dog walkers.

An underground water pipe runs directly through the compartment and an overhead powerline touches the eastern fringe.

6a	4.00	NULL		Non-wood habitat		Informal Public Access	Community Forest, Green Belt
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Sub-compartment 6a is a thin strip of open meadow sloping down to the north west. It's the highest point of Merry Hill and where fine views out towards Watford can be sought. Formerly an arable field, the area was sown with a wild grass mix in 1997. Since then the new grass sward has developed well and the field cut annually for hay until its quality diminished.

A mature hedge and ditch with mature oaks dotted along it separates the two fields of the sub-compartment. The typically clay soil means the fields remain very wet from early winter to late spring and much of the grass is dominated by rushes. Young plantation trees line either side and a restored pond can be found in the western edge.

6b	2.60	Hornbeam	1998	High forest		Informal Public Access	Community Forest, Green Belt
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Planted in 1998, the two thin strips of woodland contain a mix of native broadleaf species suitable for the moderately acidic poorly drained clay soils. Oak and hornbeam dominate, planted in groups amongst ash, the occasional cherry and woody shrubs. They have established well and are now providing cover for emerging natural regeneration. Improved grassland lies over the boundary of the western block and school's tree planting and open fields adjoin the eastern side.

7a	1.64	NULL		null		Informal Public Access	Community Forest, Green Belt
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A small area of unimproved, semi-natural grassland containing a reasonable diversity of old grassland species. These include Betony, Greater bird's-foot-trefoil, Blue Water-speedwell and Meadow Barley.

The field has a water supply and trough allowing the potential for summer grazing, but the enclosure fence had to be removed due to illegal grazing throughout much of the rest of the year.

7b	6.10	Hornbeam	1998	High forest		Informal Public Access	Community Forest, Green Belt
<p>Sub-compartment 7b was planted in 1998, much of it by volunteers and school children. Oak and hornbeam are the principle species, but ash, cherry, small-leaved lime and sweet chestnut are also noticeable. Hawthorn, blackthorn, guelder rose and bramble scrub are also beginning to add to the diversity. A well used easy access bridleway known as The Greenway runs through this part of the site linking Bushey in the east to Oxhey in the West. Numerous grassy paths also weave through the wooded blocks and grazed land lies directly over the hedge to the north west.</p>							
7c	7.44	NULL		null	Site structure, location, natural features & vegetation	Informal Public Access	Community Forest, Green Belt
<p>As with the majority of the grassland, these two fields were sown with a wild grass mix in 1997. Formally arable fields the clay soils are moderately acidic and very poorly drained. A newly planted hedge dotted with mature oak splits the field in two and a restored pond helps store water for much of the year. The large fields are popular play area for young children.</p>							
7d	0.85	NULL		Non-wood habitat		Informal Public Access	Community Forest, Green Belt
<p>A small field of improved pasture running along the start of the hard surfaced Greenway. There is a planted hedge along the northern edge. This is the main management access to the site.</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.