



The Highfields

Management Plan 2018-2023

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	The Highfields
Location:	Hinstock
Grid reference:	SJ688275, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 127
Area:	0.98 hectares (2.42 acres)
Designations:	

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

A small, rather remote woodland that was planted in the mid-1990s.

2.2 Extended Description

The Highfields is located on the northern edge of the village of Hinstock halfway between Newport and Market Drayton on the A41. This small woodland was planted in 1994 as part of a 'Licence Planting Scheme', an initiative funded and administered by the Woodland Trust supporting the creation of native broadleaved woodland on private land. The owner of this land later donated the site to the Woodland Trust in 1995.

The wood is located in a mildly rolling agricultural landscape with a slight northerly aspect. The surrounding area is a mixture of pasture and arable land with several ponds, hedgerows, a slow moving stream and numerous blocks of woodland including 'The Lees', a further licensed planting scheme (planted in 1993) located approximately 180m away to the north west.

The plantation forms a rough square with a single circular ride. The species mix planted include oak, ash, silver birch, lime, alder and wild cherry with mixed woodland shrubs and lower trees such as hazel, field maple, rowan and crab apple.

The Highfields is an isolated area of woodland and is reached at the termination of a dead-end track. There is no formal public to the site and the management access route provided as part of the official transfer is also sadly unusable due to the nature of the terrain.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Nearest town is Hinstock. Site located a short distance down a track that leads off the A41 travelling through Hinstock. Take a turn down a small dead end track to the right (if heading north on the A41). Follow this for about 150 metres and you will see a gate/stile to your right - go through here and over the field to then reach the main entrance point (stile) into the wood. There is a short circular ride through the wood which is mostly flat and tends to be dry for most of the year around. There are no surfaced paths. There is no parking available nearby.

Nearest bus stop - In the centre of the town of Hinstock on the Chester Road approx ½ mile away

Nearest railway - No Railway station within 5 miles.

Nearest Public Toilet - None within 5 miles

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

A native broadleaf, high forest woodland.

In accordance with the Trusts Woodland Management Approach (WMA) for Category 3 sites, the woodland will be allowed to develop naturally. It will remain a low input site or 'wild wood'. Intervention will be limited to carrying out essential tree safety work.

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 New Native Woodland

Description

Small plantation of native tree and shrub species, approximately 1235 plants; tubex mulch mats were used to reduce need for chemical weeding. The Highfields was planted in 1994 as part of the Woodland Trusts licensed planting scheme and subsequently donated to the Trust in 1995.

Significance

In accordance with the Woodland Trusts corporate aim to "increase or improve biodiversity" the creation of new woodland managed for long-term conservation objectives serves to add value. This is achieved by increasing the area of permanent habitat in which native flora and fauna can survive and develop in an otherwise changing agricultural landscape.

Opportunities & Constraints

The site is too small to make a significant impact on the areas ecology on its own but adds value to a larger mosaic of habitats in the locality. Opportunities to further diversify biodiversity could be achieved through encouraging increased conservation friendly practices and land use by surrounding land owners/users i.e. entering headlands abutting the site into countryside stewardship schemes. Increased biodiversity can also be served through the retention of standing and fallen dead wood and moribund trees that provide a wide range of habitat and food sources for numerous native flora and fauna.

Constraints - A factor that may effect the distribution of tree species is squirrel damage. This appears to be a spring occurrence particularly to the birch population but also amongst a few of the oak and field maple.

Factors Causing Change

Squirrel Damage - primarily to birch & oak.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Long term the intention is maintain this plantation as a mature block of native broadleaved woodland . It will serve as a permanent woodland habitat in a diverse mosaic of local habitats. Further value will be added to local biodiversity through the retention of standing and fallen dead wood.

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

The wood will be allowed to develop naturally with exception of essential tree safety work.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

In accordance with the Woodland Trusts general aims the site is open to the public for quiet informal pedestrian activities. Access is permissive and crosses land belonging to a third party; there is no public right of way on or to this plantation. Having reached The Highfields visitors can enjoy a short circular walk around the woodland.

Significance

The use of nearly all Woodland Trust owned sites for quiet, informal public recreation forms a core to the Woodland Trusts vision for the future. Managed for perpetuity as part of a larger mosaic of habitats The Highfields will attract (over time) a variety of permanent and transient flora and fauna. This site small though it is ,will be an ideal location for observing wildlife and gradual changes in local biodiversity.

Opportunities & Constraints

Two main factors affect the site as a public resource. Firstly public access is permissive and granted at the good will of the neighbouring landowner over whose land visitors must cross. And secondly the small size of the site and lack of specific features of interest mean that it is mainly of value to those who live within a close proximity to it and not a destination site.

Factors Causing Change

Lack of permissive access to the wood.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The existing level and quality of accessibility will be maintained and monitored.

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

The Trust will continue to advertise its properties in its own publications, the internet and through the local and national media. The paths and entrance points will be managed annually through an estate maintenance contract with the entrance points inspected and paths mown twice annually.

The safety of the site will be addressed through on-going tree safety and site risk assessment regimes.

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	1.09	Ash	1994	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site	Informal Public Access, New Native Woodland	

Compartment 1A encapsulates the whole site. It forms a rough square, with a circular ride starting and ending at the management gate on the western boundary, otherwise the whole site has been planted. The site has a slight northerly aspect with moister ground on the lower northern edge. The planting mix is dominated by oak, ash, birch, lime, wild cherry and alder with hazel field maple, crab apple, guilder rose and holy. The ground flora is dominated by ungrazed grasses with plantain and other low herbage, brambles are encroaching into the northern and eastern boundary zones. The north boundary is abutted by a line of mature alder and willows then arable farm land. The eastern boundary consists of an old hedge line that has been gapped up with thorn and wild rose and abuts pasture land. To the south and west is a thin shelterbelt abutted by pasture. The extreme NW boundary is abutted by a small block of mature mixed woodland.

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.