



# Gough's Coppice

## 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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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](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>	Gough's Coppice
<b>Location:</b>	Church Stretton
<b>Grid reference:</b>	SO457930, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 137
<b>Area:</b>	3.87 hectares (9.56 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Ancient Woodland Site, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Conservation Area, Planted Ancient Woodland Site

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

This hillside wood offers spectacular views of the surrounding countryside. Popular with ramblers, you can choose to walk through the wood or continue up Ragleth Hill and beyond.

## 2.2 Extended Description

Goughs Coppice and Philla's Grove is predominantly an Ancient Woodland Site which includes a small area of Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland. The site lies within the South Shropshire Hills AONB at the foot of Ragleth Hill to the south of Church Stretton. Whilst managed as one site they continue to be referred to by their separate names to reflect their different histories.

Gough's Coppice (2.3ha) forms an important landscape feature lying on a north west facing slope overlooking the town. It is an Ancient Woodland Site (AWS) and was formerly managed as coppice oak woodland. It has since been clearfelled and replanted with Poplar, Norway Spruce and Larch. In 1997 the start of a gradual programme to restore this area to native broadleaved species was undertaken with a proportion of the conifer and non-native species removed and restocking with a mixture of native broadleaves.

A small area of Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland (0.2ha) including a spring line lies on the boundary between Gough's Coppice and Philla's Grove.

Philla's Grove (1.2ha) was largely grassland at the time of acquisition but has subsequently been replanted with a mixture of native broadleaves and a scatter of specimen arboretum trees. There are two distinct charcoal-burning platforms within this section of the wood which reflect the ancient traditions of woodland management in this region.

There are two public access points; the first is via a squeeze entry post off Ragleth Road into Philla's Grove and the second over a low stile off Poplar Drive into Gough's Coppice. The management access point is also off Ragleth Road to the side of the squeeze post through double gates which extend to an opening of 12ft. A permissive linear footpath leads visitors through the site. The permissive footpath route is moderately steep but also can become wet in sections, particularly over the winter months

The lower section of the site is surrounded by quiet sub-urban development and the upper section by improved grassland and scrub woodland on the lower slopes of Ragleth Hill.

The Key Features of the site which inform its management are F1 Ancient Woodland Site, F2 Informal Public Access and F3 Ancient Semi-natural Woodland.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

Gough's Coppice overlooks the town of Church Stretton. Access is available direct from surrounding suburban roads via 2 entrance points off the eastern boundary (squeeze post - Ragleth Road and a stile off Poplar Drive). An unsurfaced path of approximately 420 metres stretches through the wood which includes a small loop. The entire route is on sloping ground, some quite steeply in places. Some sections of the path can get quite wet and muddy in the winter months as the wood has a number of spring lines appearing within it.

There is no official parking at the site but parking may be available in surrounding suburban streets.

Nearest bus stop - Crossways, Church Stretton approximately - 1/3 mile away

Nearest train station - Crossways, Church Stretton - approx 1/3 mile away

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

Further information about public transport is available from Traveline - [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk) or phone 0870 608 2 608

### 3.2 Access / Walks

## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The Woodland Trusts objectives and long term intentions for Gough's Coppice and Philla's Grove 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 public usage. We do not intervene at our sites unless there is evidence that it will improve woodland biodiversity and/or public understanding and enjoyment.

In 50 years' time Gough's Coppice and Philla's Grove will be a well structured, predominantly broadleaved species diverse woodland, resilient in the face of threats including climate change, pollution, pests and diseases.

In accordance with the Trust Management Approach, non-native conifer plantations on ancient woodland sites will be restored to a predominantly semi-natural composition and structure. Ancient Woodland is our most valuable wildlife habitat and the restoration of PAWS represents the only opportunity to increase the area of ancient woodland with semi-natural characteristics. As such in the long term, the intention will be to restore the PAWS area within Sub-compartment 1a to woodland dominated by mixed native broadleaved trees and shrubs. Non-native species (Norway spruce and Poplar) will gradually be removed. The felling will be sensitively phased taking into account the sites present value in the landscape. Where native natural regeneration isn't forthcoming, under-planting with native broadleaves will be undertaken. Without the gradual removal of the non-native species, native natural regeneration and any supplementary under planting would be heavily suppressed and unable to establish successfully.

Philla's Grove (Compt 2a) will be allowed to develop naturally in accordance with the Trusts WMA with exception of essential tree safety work and ride edge coppicing in selected areas to enhance visitor enjoyment and their experience while walking through the wood. The retention of some of the rare and exotic specimens collected by the previous owner will be acceptable to enhance visitor interest without compromising conservation value within this part of the site.

The wood has a simple but very pleasant linear path which will be maintained to ensure year round visitor access, with all public access points managed to ensure they continue to be safe and welcoming.



## 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 Woodland Site

#### Description

A large proportion of Gough's Coppice and Philla's Grove (subcompartment 1a) is an AWS. 50% of the canopy in Compartment 1a is comprised of non-native/conifer species (European Larch, Norway Spruce, Poplar).

The whole of this area lies on a slope and is very wet underfoot which makes it challenging to plan and execute any forestry/silvicultural work.

#### Significance

There is a lack of accessible woodland in the surrounding area and consequently this site has great potential to be enhanced through the removal of non-native species and planting of native broadleaves improving its value for conservation and a woodland resource.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:-

Compartment 1a is very steep in places with two wet flushes making the site very wet and difficult to work, often throughout the year.

The site is quite a prominent landscape feature such that silvicultural work will need to be phased and carried out sensitively in order to minimise disturbance and visual impact.

Silvicultural operations on this site are difficult because of very poor access, steepness, poor drainage and the lack of areas for stacking.

The site is closely surrounded by houses in a very quiet residential area and consequently sensitive to any disturbance.

#### Factors Causing Change

Invasive Rhododendron, Invasive Sycamore, Squirrel Damage

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

A well-structured species diverse native mixed broadleaved woodland, where ancient woodland characteristics are secure.

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

To reduce the dominance and percentage of non-native conifers in 1a  
Work programme to commence in August 2017. Fell to waste up to 20% NS.

The process of conifer removal will be slower and spread over a number of years. It will be more selective due to the absence of suitable access and extraction routes.

The light levels on the upper slopes, where larch is significant, are such that that the former under-planting is progressing well and no further larch need to be felled during this plan period. Site conditions will be examined further in the next WCA.

2019 /2020 Thinning of planted ash infected with ash dieback 2a

## 5.2 Informal Public Access

### Description

The site has a circular route leading in from the northern end of the wood , from Ragleth Road through the site with an access point approximately half way up the site to the east onto Poplar Drive.

There is a moderate slope for most of the path length. Ground conditions also often wet through out the year.

### Significance

The site lies close to the edge of Church Stretton and is very well used and appreciated by local people being an attractive wood to visit.

### Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

Portions of the ride on the boundary of Compt 1 and 2 can become very wet and muddy in the winter months.

Opportunities:

Site is very well used and enjoyed by local people. Paths including footbridges and steps are maintained and inspected as part of the Annual Maintenance Contract programme with improvements undertaken as necessary where required.

### Factors Causing Change

Change in use of the wood both in terms of footfall, type of user (both legal and illegal)

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

A well maintained linear route through the site with welcoming and inviting entrance points.

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

Paths to be mown to a minimum width of 2 metres twice annually and any overhanging vegetation within 2m vertically cut back.

Entrance points inspected a minimum of twice per year and any remedial work as necessary carried out.

Access Survey will be undertaken by 2016 with any remedial work and/or improvements undertaken as necessary. These are likely to include sections of path improvement work (boardwalk over the wet section of the upper E-W path). Re-filling of steps with stone close to the Poplar Drive entrance. Re-placement of wire mesh on footbridge.

### 5.3 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

#### Description

0.2ha lying on the boundary between Compartment 1 and 2 and containing a mixture of broadleaves, of which oak is dominant. Most of the trees are of coppice origin although there are a number of individual specimens up to 140 years old. Some sycamore and rhododendron is present throughout the area.

#### Significance

All SNAW is important and as such is recognised as one of Trust's primary objectives in terms of conservation and enhancement. SNAW is irreplaceable and while only a small portion of what would have been a far greater area now remains at this site, it is important to conserve what remains. The area also serves as important benchmark for restoration of the PAWS area to the south of the compartment.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints;

The site tends to be wet around the area of SNAW for much of the year as there are two spring lines nearby and most of the moisture from the slope drains towards this point.

Some sycamore and rhododendron is regenerating in this area.

Opportunities:

Site conditions can improve in the summer months such that any felling and extraction can be carried out with minimal disturbance providing the weather is dry.

#### Factors Causing Change

Invasive Rhododendron, Invasive Sycamore, Squirrel Damage, Rabbit Damage, Natural Regeneration of sycamore and other non-native species.

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

A species diverse, well-structured, predominantly native mixed broadleaved woodland.

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

Cut and treat rhododendron and laurel in 1a and 2a 2015/16. Follow up control of any further regeneration in subsequent years (17, '18, '19)

Remove tree shelters from established planting on upper slopes.

## 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	2.80	other poplar spp	1950	PAWS restoration	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Ancient Woodland Site, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Ancient Woodland Site, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
<p>Comprises Poplar (p1950), Larch (p1960) and Norway Spruce (p1970) with an area of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (0.2ha).</p> <p>At the extreme south of the site a band of Larch has been largely clear felled and replanted with a mixture of native broadleaves in 1997. Further north moving downslope a band of Norway Spruce is broken up by native broadleaved planting also carried out in 1997. Further down slope lies the band of Poplar followed by the area of Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland which lies between the boundary of Compartment 1 and 2.</p> <p>The ground flora is largely dominated by Bramble, Bracken and Yorkshire fog with Wood sorrell and Bluebell common throughout. Guelder rose is present. The north east corner is poorly drained with Meadowsweet and Soft Rush. Two wet flushes run down through the compartment. Ground flora species include Lesser Spearwort, Creeping Jenny, Valerian and Jointed Rush. Rhododendron is present in small quantities along the lower slopes.</p>							
2a	0.90	Mixed broadleaves	1988	Min-intervention	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Ancient Woodland Site, Informal Public Access	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
<p>Compartment 2a is mostly comprised of trees planted in 1988 as part of National Tree Week with a mixture of native broadleaved species including Oak, Ash, Beech, Small Leaved Lime, Hazel and Holly and the occasional ornamental/exotic specimen.</p>							

## Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2017	1a	Thin	2.80	35	98

## 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.