



# Lower Grass Wood

## Management Plan 2016-2021

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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.

## 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>	Lower Grass Wood
<b>Location:</b>	Grassington
<b>Grid reference:</b>	SD983651, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 98
<b>Area:</b>	8.52 hectares (21.05 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Area of Landscape Value, National Park, Planted Ancient Woodland Site, Tree Preservation Order

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

This mixed broadleaf site is part of one of Yorkshire's largest ancient woodland areas. Woodland flowers and herbs carpet the steep open slopes of the River Wharfe valley. Spot the two 'elling hearths', stone-lined pits once used to produce potash.

### 2.2 Extended Description

Situated just over one kilometre north-west of the popular Dales village of Grassington, Lower Grass Wood consists of 8.09 hectares of valley side Semi Natural Ancient Woodland. The woodland holding is long and narrow, following the north-east bank of the River Wharfe with a south-westerly aspect. Looking north-west from Grassington, and north-east from the B6160, Lower Grass Wood is very prominent in the landscape; it also forms an important part of the much larger woodland of Grass and Bastow Wood, which is composed of a mixture of semi-natural woodland and coniferised ancient woodland.

Together they form one the largest areas of ancient woodland within the Yorkshire Dales National Park. This much larger adjacent woodland is managed on very similar lines to the broad aims of the Woodland Trust, and is undergoing slow restoration towards native broadleaved woodland. Bounded to the north west and south east by semi improved pasture grazing land and by ancient woodland to the north east.

The woodland is composed of a mixture of planted sycamore, sessile and pedunculate oak, ash, and birch, with occasional planted larch and beech. The trees are mature and well spaced having been undergrazed for many years by sheep and cattle, prior to Woodland Trust ownership, which has resulted in extensive damage to the trunk bases on nearly all trees. The loss of almost all elm on the site has also had a huge impact on the tree spacing, with in the region of 60 trees lost since Woodland Trust took ownership. Probably nearer to 100 trees have been lost from the site due to Dutch Elm Disease, most of these removed from site prior to trust ownership for firewood. Regeneration is present throughout the woodland in dense patches - predominantly hawthorn, birch, beech, oak and ash. Two areas of approximately 0.2 ha each were rabbit fenced in 1996, with a double top wire to prevent rabbits/ hares and reduce the access for roe deer in an attempt to encourage regeneration, These areas are showing little sign of regeneration, with only the occasional ash and oak present. 3 further areas totalling 1.5 Ha were also fenced off in 1998/9 and planted with a random mixture of native broadleaves to further enhance the woodland regeneration, protected within rabbit fence, and chemically weeded annually for the first 5 years (until 2003) but without any form of tubed protection. Regeneration within these fenced areas is now prolific. The ground flora is indicative of both ancient woodland and of calcareous grassland, with over 70 recorded flowering plant species alone, and includes dogs mercury, a good bluebell population within the wooded areas, as well as orchids and a variety of wild herbs- thyme, marjoram and basil present on open, shallow soiled, steep south facing slopes down to the river. On the flatter (north eastern) part of the woodland are at least 2 'elling hearths' These are quite visible small stone lined pits, in which small diameter timber was 'kiln-dried' producing a very combustible product for the roasting of lead ores from mines further up the valley.

The wood is very accessible with parking available along Grass Wood Lane, limited car parking available on adjacent land (Yorkshire Wildlife Trust). Three management gates, two stiles and a kissing gate give access to the woodland and a Public Footpath and an extensive network of permissive paths, which are extremely well used by locals and visitors alike, being very close to Grassington, on a popular riverside walk and en-route to other local attractions such as Kilnsey Crag. Occasionally during the summer months, there have been problems with unauthorised camping, especially during times of public holidays - most notably the May and August bank holidays, using the flat riverside areas which are largely hidden from the road, which has associated problems with fires and vandalism especially of fences and tree branches for fuel, and litter problems, much of this is due to the site being associated with camping having been leased for scout camps etc during the 70's and 80's. These flat areas have (August 2006) been dug over creating a rough uneven surface to dissuade camping and has been (December 2006) planted with a further 2000 blackthorn, hawthorn and Dog rose to further reduce the available area for camping and to tie in with extensive thorn and rose regeneration already present close by. Grassington Angling Club retains the rights to the river, and access over the site to the riverside.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

Limited parking is available along the minor road north west from Grassington - Grass Wood Lane, with parking also available in a small car park owned by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, adjacent to the wood. Access is either via 2 step over stiles or a kissing gate, giving access to a network of paths (one public footpath - Dales Way, - the rest are permissive/ desire routes) through a mixture of broadleaved woodland and small areas of open grassland, limestone outcrops and riverside. The paths are in general narrow, all unsurfaced and uneven due to the shallow soils and outcropping limestone. A number of gentle paths close to the road become gradually steeper and narrower down to the riverside, where the public footpath leaves the site at the south east corner along the riverside to Grassington Village (1.5km).

Limited parking is available along the minor road north west from Grassington - Grass Wood Lane, with parking also available in a small car park owned by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, adjacent to the wood. Alternatively there is free parking in Grassington village square or pay and display parking at the National Park Car Park on Hebden Road in Grassington.

The nearest bus stop is in Grassington Village centre. Information from the traveline website as of January 2011, Further information about public transport is available from Traveline- [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk) or phone 0870 608 2608

Public toilets (inc. disabled) are available in the Yorkshire Dales National Park car park on Hebden Road, Grassington

### 3.2 Access / Walks

## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

As an important woodland in the landscape and associated with the largest SSSI semi-natural ancient woodland in the area (Grass and Bastow Woods), the intention is to maintain high forest broadleaved woodland on the site. The majority of the woodland will be managed through minimum intervention, allowing the on-going rapid senescence of mature trees. However with the onset of *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, intervention may be required to ensure that a healthy number of younger trees of a mixture of species to develop a healthy and resilient stand structure. Access will be maintained at the present high levels via the public footpath and un-surfaced permissive paths which allow access throughout the woodland.



## 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

Designated as an Ancient Woodland Site, dominated by planted sycamore dating to approximately 1890, with frequent mature ash and oak and a developing understory of regenerating thorn, ash, birch, oak and beech. Open grown woodland, previously dominated by elm, all but a handful of which has been lost to Dutch Elm disease. The woodland has been heavily under grazed by sheep and cattle in the past, recorded from the 1970's through to Woodland Trust ownership. Adjacent (separated by a minor road - Wood Lane) Semi Natural Ancient Woodland and Planted Ancient Woodland of Grass Wood and Bastow Wood to the north east, by the River Wharfe to the south west, with semi-improved grazing pasture to the north west and south east. The site does hold a large range of flora, associated both with ancient woodland and with open calcareous grassland.

#### Significance

Within the Yorkshire Dales National Park there is very little remaining ancient woodland - especially in a location such as this close to a much larger area of SSSI semi-natural woodland and Planted Ancient Woodland in restoration, managed by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, and with full and easy public access throughout.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunity to retain broadleaved woodland on an Ancient Woodland Site, encouraging natural regeneration to restock the woodland. Some constraint through the effects of rabbits and deer browsing, although due to the popularity of the site the effects are kept to a minimum and seem targeted against young establishing sycamore. The mature trees continue to die at a much faster rate than would be expected of trees planted in the late 1800's, probably as a result of heavily damaged trunks from previous grazing pressure. Regeneration in the woodland is increasing rapidly and has made a considerable difference to the understory and future woodland canopy composition and resilience.

#### Factors Causing Change

Deer Damage, Rabbit Damage, Regeneration of mixed broadleaves, Rapid senescence due to grazing damage, Ash dieback disease (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*), tree pests and diseases.

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

Maintain high forest broadleaved woodland on this Ancient Woodland Site. The woodland will be managed through minimum intervention towards a mixed broadleaved high forest of predominantly oak and sycamore with a variety of other native broadleaved species.

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

Undertake control of bracken within the fenced off areas, to help promote further natural regeneration where possible. Under plant the canopy gaps particularly where there is a lack of natural regeneration evident with a mixture of native broadleaved species to develop a resilient sub-story that can develop into the upper crown as the mature trees naturally senesce. In the next plan period following woodland condition assessment in 2021, assess the need for respacing of the existing regeneration.

## 5.2 Informal Public Access

### Description

Access available on foot via a single public footpath (Dales Way long distance footpath) and an extensive network of permissive routes giving access to all areas of the woodland, linking in with adjacent woodland to the north east and farmland to the north west and south east. Extremely popular with locals and visitors alike, with limited roadside parking along a narrow minor road and some car parking available on a small car park (Yorkshire Wildlife Trust) outside the Woodland Trust ownership boundary.

### Significance

Very accessible ancient woodland in an extremely scenic setting along the bank of the River Wharfe, well known and very well used, providing a very different woodland feel to the dense ancient woodland of Grass Wood and Bastow Wood adjacent. Made more popular due to its proximity to the village of Grassington (1 mile), and on the Dales Way long distance footpath, and adjacent to the Dales Way Cycleway, through to other notable local landscape features such as Kilnsey Crag (1.5 miles).

### Opportunities & Constraints

No opportunity for further creation of paths due to the already extensive network of routes, constraints include the visitor numbers and the damage done purely by the volume of traffic on the ground flora, and some, now limited camping/ fire and vandalism, especially on the riverside areas. Usually limited also to times of public holidays or very good weather.

### Factors Causing Change

High public usage, vandalism and unauthorised camping.

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

Maintain the existing quality and extent of path network - both public footpath and permissive route. No future path creation to be undertaken due to the already high levels of public pressure.

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

Maintain a number of routes through the wood (Approximately 2km), ensuring the Woodland Trust areas of ownership are marked with welcoming signs (x6), paths and routes maintained through at least annual inspection for tree safety, vegetation clearance and litter. Path cutting will be undertaken only on the designated permissive routes in an attempt to reduce the number of desire line paths and to concentrate the public's use of the site. Continue efforts to discourage camping on site.

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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	8.54	Mixed broadleaves	1890	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site, People issues (+tve & -tve), Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	National Park, Tree Preservation Order

Widely spaced mature broadleaves - predominantly sycamore, oak and ash on a gentle to steep south-west facing slope on the east bank of the River Wharfe. Understory of scattered dense regenerating hawthorn, ash, birch, oak and beech, Very thin calcareous soils over limestone bedrock supporting a rich herb layer, especially on the well drained steep slopes down to the river, with bracken and a dense layer of grasses dominating much of the rest of the site. 5 areas totalling 1.9 Ha have been fenced against rabbits (during 1995 and 1998) to promote regeneration.

## 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.