



# The Wilderness

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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

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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>      | The Wilderness   |
| <b>Location:</b>       | Kinver   |
| <b>Grid reference:</b> | SO811838, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 138                                |
| <b>Area:</b>           | 7.50 hectares (18.53 acres)  |
| <b>Designations:</b>   | Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Site of Special Scientific Interest |

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

The Wilderness lies in a shallow valley through which Compton Brook flows. The site contains a variety of woodland types and habitats. The wood is bisected by a public foot path with a circular path network leading to the middle of the wood.

## 2.2 Extended Description

The Wilderness is a Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland lying in a shallow valley forming part of a larger block of woodland of local landscape importance. Compton Brook flows along the eastern edge of the site and approximately a fifth of the wood is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (The Wilderness and Vermin Valley SSSI). The SSSI extends outside land in Woodland Trust ownership onto neighbouring land the other side of Compton Brook. Surrounding land use is a mixture of pasture and occasional arable fields.

The site contains a variety of woodland types and habitats. The variable drainage and presence of base-rich springs has had a marked influence on the composition of the wood. Along the eastern boundary along the course of the brook are two former pond sites now colonising with Willow and Alder. The central portion of the wood (Subcompartment 1c), was replanted with a mixture of native broadleaves, following clear felling prior to Trust ownership in 1986. To the south of the site is a stand of predominantly self seeded 50 year old native mixed broadleaves (1b) and in the northern portion of the site, semi mature predominantly Oak with Ash woodland.

A public footpath bisects the site in a NE-SW direction. From this, two permissive semi-circular rides lead off to the north-west and south-east allowing visitors to explore other areas of the wood. The paths are relatively flat but the grey clays, shales and sandstones which overlie the site, give rise to coarse loamy soils prone to seasonal waterlogging. Long sections, particularly the Public Footpath can become very muddy in wetter periods of the year. There is no official parking on site. However, it is possible to park one vehicle a short walk from the site at the end of the Public Footpath to the east of the wood.

The Key Features for this site are Ancient Semi Natural Woodland and Informal Public Access.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

Public access is a RUPP, and the public footpath which runs straight across the middle of the site. From there visitors can walk around the oval shaped permissive path. The paths are not surfaced, reasonably flat, but wet for many months during the year which results in certain sections can get quite muddy underfoot.

Nearest bus stop - Kinver along Windsor Crescent approx 1.6 miles away.

Nearest railway station - Blakedown railway station - 3.7 miles.

Nearest toilet - Closest toilet located just a few miles away in the nearby town of Kinver and are open from 9am to 4pm. However these do not have disabled access facilities Highgate Common approximately 4.5 miles away is one of the closest toilets that does have disabled access facilities.

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

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## 3.2 Access / Walks

## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The Woodland Trusts objectives and long term intentions for The Wilderness are determined after balanced consideration of our Woodland Management Approach (WMA). These seek to conserve key features in relation to our outcomes. Where there is conflict, the interests of biodiversity take precedence over people. We do not intervene at our sites unless there is evidence that it will improve woodland biodiversity, resilience and/or public understanding and enjoyment.

In 50 years time The Wilderness will be a predominantly native broadleaved woodland managed as high forest where appropriate> there will be good structural and species diversity and the ancient woodland shrub and field layers will be well developed.

The existing ride system and on site facilities will be maintained and enhanced where appropriate and practical to meet existing . Ride-edge coppicing will also be undertaken to enhance visitor enjoyment where appropriate.

## 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

The Wilderness lies in the valley of Crompton Brook. The area overlies grey clays, shales and sandstones giving rise to coarse loamy soils prone to seasonal waterlogging. The variable drainage and presence of base-rich springs has had a marked influence on the community composition of the woodland.

Approximately a fifth of the site is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (most of Subcompartment 1a). Its notification is attributed to the example it provides of an ash, *Fraxinus excelsior* wood with hazel *Corylus avellana* understorey in association with one of the finest stands of ash and field maple *Acer campestre* in the County.

Outside the valley area, the southern portion of the site is dominated by NVC W8 *Fraxinus excelsior* - *Acer Campestre* - *Mercurialis perennis* woodland. The northern portion of the wood is dominated by NVC W10 *Quercus robur* - *Fraxinus excelsior* - *Lysimachia nemorum* woodland.

#### Significance

The amount of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) left in Britain has been drastically reduced over the last century. ASNW is very important due to the continuity of woodland cover provided over hundreds of years which allows for a diverse and specialist range of wildlife and vegetation to develop over time. Ancient woodland is irreplaceable and the prevention of its loss is a primary aim for the Trust. The type of wet woodland found in the Wilderness, has been identified as a target habitat under threat within the County with only 600ha remaining, most being in small, linear sites.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:-

No management access.

The site is very wet throughout the year making access within the site for management purposes very difficult and this increases the potential for surface damage.

Opportunities:-

To leave some or all felled material as part of any management work in association with the SNAW on site will boost the proportion of dead wood habitat currently available on site.

#### Factors Causing Change

Invasive Himalayan balsam, pests and diseases e.g. ash dieback, deer browsing.

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

In 50 years time , The Wilderness will be a predominantly native broadleaved semi-natural woodland exhibiting both species and structural diversity.

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

The Southern portion of the The Wilderness (1b) currently lacks structural and species diversity. To improve the wood's resilience and robustness in the face of a range of threats including climate change, pollution, pests and disease, some gradual high forest management will be required to encourage a greater native species range and a more diverse age structure.

2017 Two deer exclusion plots each measuring approximately 5m x 5m in size will be installed in compartment 1a and 1b prior to any silvicultural work taking place. This will allow a more detailed assessment and evaluation of deer browsing pressure on site and whether additional measures would be required to protect natural regeneration and coppice regrowth prior to future high-forest silvicultural intervention.

2017 - Coppicing of two hazel stools to the south of compartment 1a. One coppice stool to be included within a deer exclusion plot and the other outside of this.

2017 - 1c - Thinning of planted native mixed broadleaves to enhance woodland species diversity within final canopy species. This intervention will also improve both structure and form of retained specimens encouraging greater resilience and robustness in this stand long-term.

2017 - Himalayan Balsam pulling of outlier areas in 1b and 1c.

2018 - Removal/treatment of isolated rhododendron bushes in 1a.

2018 - Himalayan Balsam pulling of outlier areas in 1b and 1c.

2019 - Himalayan Balsam pulling of outlier areas in 1b and 1c.

2020 - 1b - Halo thin around native broadleaves of sound and good form. Favour development of a range of canopy species where possible and not solely ash which currently dominates both the canopy and regeneration layers.

## 5.2 Informal Public Access

### Description

The site is bisected by a Public Footpath in a NE-SW direction. There are also permissive paths guiding visitors through the interior of the site through two semi-circular paths which lead either side off the Public Footpath.

Pathways are generally flat and easy to negotiate. However, the wood is often wet in particular sections right through the year which can make the going underfoot quite muddy and difficult.

While there are no parking facilities on site, there is a wide verge at the end of the Public Footpath/RUPP which joins the road to the east of the site. At this point there is room for 1-2 cars to park at this point and visitors can walk down into the wood some 400 metres away.

The public entrance point into the Wood

### Significance

The Woodland Trust provides free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe. The Wilderness provides an interesting resource in terms of a woodland walk in beautiful picturesque surroundings but also has the benefit of linking into the wider Public Footpath network via Foot Path which runs through the site and links into the wider countryside.

### Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:-

Site conditions are very wet at certain times of the year which can make areas of the wood more difficult to walk through.

Opportunities:-

Various improvements in terms of drainage and boardwalks along the path in those areas worst affected, have been carried out by volunteers and via the Estate Maintenance contract annual programme of work covering the site.

### Factors Causing Change

Change in level and use of site. Deterioration of site surface conditions for walking.

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

A well managed Public and Permissive Footpath network which includes both linear and circular routes. The paths will vary in width and appearance so as to provide a more diverse range of habitats for conservation and visitor interest. The routes will also be developed where possible so that poorly drained sections are more easily accessible on foot but not to the detriment of existing wetter areas of floristic and conservation value.

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

To ensure the entrance footpath network remains in good order, paths will be mown annually as part of the Estate maintenance Contract twice a year to a minimum of 2 metres in width. Entrances will also be cleared and inspected as part of this work.

2016 - install boardwalk over ditch from public footpath into subcompartment 1c.

Other boardwalks and small scale drainage improvements will be considered where required as part of key feature observation visits at the site.

All footpaths routes will have tree safety surveys carried out annually along their course to ensure the safety of visitors to the site with any remedial work carried out as necessary.

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## 6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

| Year | Type of Work | Description | Due By |
|------|--------------|-------------|--------|
|------|--------------|-------------|--------|

## APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

| Cpt No.  | Area (ha) | Main Species | Year | Management Regime | Major Management Constraints   | Key Features Present                                  | Designations   |
|--|-----------|--------------|------|-------------------|--|---|--|
| 1a   | 1.20      | Ash          | 1970 | High forest       | Gullies/Deep Valleys/Uneven/Rocky ground, Mostly wet ground/exposed site | Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access | Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Site of Special Scientific Interest |
| <p>The majority of this subcompartment is designated as an SSSI. It consists of a strip of woodland along the valley bottom (W7) Alder, Ash and Yellow pimpernel community. The subcompartment follows the course of a stream and includes what was previously a pond area but which has is this has gradually become in-filled with silt and developed into an Alder/Willow carr.</p> <p>-</p> <p>Ground flora includes water horsetail, opposite-leaved golden saxifrage, pendulous sedge, marsh stitchwort, water mint, brooklime, hogweed, colt's foot and yellow pimpernel.</p>   |           |              |      |                   |  |   |  |
| 1b   | 3.60      | Ash          | 1950 | High forest       | Gullies/Deep Valleys/Uneven/Rocky ground, Mostly wet ground/exposed site | Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access | Ancient Semi Natural Woodland                                      |
| <p>Predominantly NVC class W8 ash-field maple woodland - dogs mercury community. The majority if self seeded 40-50 year old ash of poor, drawn up form with limited components of Oak, Birch, Rowan and Alder. A large concentration of field maple is located just inside the southern boundary of this compartment along the route of the mown path. Ground flora includes wood avens, wood sorrell, dog's mercury, enchanter's nightshade, tigers claw (moss), herb robert, male fern, bramble, broad buckeler fern, bugle, common nettle and wood sedge. There is a significant amount of dead wood, notably elderly silver birch.</p> |           |              |      |                   |  |   |  |
| 1c   | 2.00      | Ash          | 1988 | High forest       | Mostly wet ground/exposed site   | Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access | Ancient Semi Natural Woodland                                      |

Area replanted in 1988 with predominantly Ash, Oak, and Wild Cherry following clear felling in 1986 emulating NVC woodland type W10 oak-bracken-bramble community. Some mature standard trees, mostly oak, throughout the compartment. Much of the middle and west of this compartment was re-spaced in 2001.

Ground flora includes bramble, bluebell, common nettle, bracken, wood speedwell, hedge woundwort, herb robert, creeping buttercup, wood ruff, wood avens, wood sorrel, bugle, yellow archangel, ground ivy and fox glove.

This compartment is damper than other areas of the woodland. Himalayans balsam combined with bracken (some over 2m high) dominates the ground flora in places.

|    |      |               |      |             |  |   |  |
|----|------|---------------|------|-------------|--|---|--|
| 1d | 0.30 | Alder species | 1970 | High forest | Gullies/Deep Valleys/Uneven/Rocky ground, Mostly wet ground/exposed site | Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access |  |
|----|------|---------------|------|-------------|--|---|--|

Former pond site now heavily silted and occupied by Alder/Willow Carr. Ground flora includes water horsetail, opposite-leaved golden saxifrage, pendulous sedge, marsh stitchwort, water mint, brooklime, hogweed, colt's foot and yellow pimpernel.

|    |      |     |      |             |   |   |                               |
|----|------|-----|------|-------------|---|---|-------------------------------|
| 1e | 1.00 | Ash | 1950 | High forest | Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access to the site, Site structure, location, natural features & vegetation | Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access | Ancient Semi Natural Woodland |
|----|------|-----|------|-------------|---|---|-------------------------------|

Consist of NVC W8 Semi-mature Ash woodland in the northern most corner dominated by Sycamore in both the tree and shrub layer. The ground flora is sparse but includes dog's mercury, wood speedwell, hart's tongue fern, male and scaly fern, herb robert, wood sorrell, yellow archangel, wood ruff, wood avens, common nettle, tigers claw (moss) and wood sedge.

The remainder of this compartment is semi-mature NVC W10 oak-bracken-bramble community. Ash is also present and an understorey of Crab apple and Hazel with rare Wild pear. Sycamore is present in the canopy and regenerating through out.

The stream bed along this compartment is mostly dry but adjacent ground is very boggy in places, with a thin band of NVC W7 present along the stream.

## Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

| Forecast Year | Cpt | Operation Type | Work Area (ha) | Estimated vol/ha | Estimated total vol. |
|---------------|-----|----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 2020          | 1b  | Thin           | 1.00           | 15               | 15                   |

## 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.