



Common Wood

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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 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:	Common Wood, Clayhill Wood
Location:	Stoke Row, Stoke Row
Grid reference:	SU682836, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 175 SU688834, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 175
Area:	3.84 hectares (9.49 acres) 4.06 hectares (10.03 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Tree Preservation Order Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Tree Preservation Order

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

These beech woods sit within in the Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Oxfordshire. There is a very good covering of woodland within the wider area and a good network of footpaths so it is ideal place for walking with lots of attractive alternative routes available.

2.2 Extended Description

Common & Clayhill Woods are located close to the village of Stoke Row in South Oxfordshire, and within the Chiltern Hills AONB. The woods are dominated by mature beech trees with only a small percentage of other species, such as oak, ash, birch and holly (in the understory). The northern half of Clayhill is the exception. This area was felled and replanted in the early 1980's with oak and beech (before the Trust's ownership).

Common Wood and Clayhill Wood were both gifted to The Woodland Trust in 1990 in 1985 respectively. The mature areas of woodland have been managed as high forest for many years, and the replanted area in Clayhill is likely to have been a conifer plantation before it was felled and replanted.

There is a complex of small seasonal ponds in the northwest corner of Common Wood, which are probably derived from former clay quarrying. Other historical features include old woodbanks on some of the boundaries.

Common Wood has a public footpath running through it and, being on the edge of the village, has more frequent use than Clayhill Wood. Common Wood also has a number of other permissive paths. There are no obvious paths in Clayhill Wood, but the wood is freely accessible from the adjacent Peppard Lane.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Getting there: Although there are no car parks, informal parking is possible alongside the two public highways (Busgrove Lane and Peppard Lane) which run adjacent to the western and eastern boundaries. Buses stop in Stoke Row, approx. 1/2 mile away from Common Wood, travelling from Wallingford, Henley on Thames and Reading. There is a public footpath running east to west through Common Wood which joins both public highways, and another public footpath joins this one and links to the rights of way network to the south. There are other more informal permissive paths around Common Wood. Clayhill Wood is located further down Peppard lane, past Common Wood, and approx. 1 mile from Stoke Row. The wood can be accessed directly from Peppard Lane and, although there are no managed paths in the wood, it can be walked through easily beneath the large beech trees and predominantly bare ground beneath.

There are no surfaced paths in either wood and the ground is relatively flat throughout.

There are no public conveniences within 5 miles of the woods.

Further information about public transport is available from Traveline - www.traveline.org.uk or phone 0871 200233.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Over time the woods will become more diverse in structure and in tree species, and move away from even-aged and beech-dominated woods. The rationale for doing this is to make the woods more resilient to future change (such as pests and diseases) and enhance their ecological diversity. Beech is likely to continue as the main tree species, but greater proportions of oak and birch are likely to develop over time through silvicultural intervention. The woods will be naturally regenerating and this will be the main mechanism to recruit younger trees. Threats to the development of the woodland habitat (especially deer browsing) will be minimised, and we will seek to work with our neighbours to tackle these.

The plantation in Clayhill Wood will develop to reach maturity and will be composed of a diverse mixture of tree species: oak, beech, cherry and silver birch. The few remaining conifers in Clayhill Wood will remain as specimen trees.

Non woodland habitats such as the ponds in Common Wood will be open to sunlight so they function ecologically and add further diversity to the woods.

The Woodland Trust has given Common Wood a category C for access (which translates to low usage sites where we do maintain paths), and Clayhill Wood a category D access (woods open to the public, but no maintained paths are required). Hence, our management for visitor access will be relatively low-key. We will maintain and keep open the public footpaths only in Common Wood and maintain welcome signage at the main entrance points.

The woods will be made as safe as practical for visitors, neighbours, and adjacent road users through regular tree safety inspections.

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

Common and Clayhill Woods are ancient semi-natural woodlands dominated by beech (at least 90%) with minor components of oak and birch. The soils are mildly acidic and composed of clay with flints, on the plateau of the Chiltern hills. The woods approximate to NVC (National vegetation classification) W15: Lowland acid beech and oak woods. Part of Clayhill Wood is a younger plantation (approx. 30 years old) of oak and beech, with an abundance of naturally regenerated silver birch. There is also a very small clump of young Norway spruce in Clayhill, towards the western boundary.

There is very little understorey to the woodland, with only occasional holly clumps and very little natural regeneration of trees. The ground flora is also very scarce, but does contain occasional patches of woodruff and enchanters nighshade. There are also occasional wet depressions containing sedge and rush species.

A complex of small ponds is present in the north of Common Wood, which are believed to be derived from historic clay quarrying. Other historic features include old woodbanks on some of the woodland boundaries, most notably on the southern edge of Common Wood.

Significance

Both woods are small components in a large and concentrated complex of ancient woodland in South Oxfordshire. The woods are also within the Chiltern Hills AONB, one of the most heavily wooded landscapes in the country.

Opportunities & Constraints

The small size of the woods, coupled with the low demand for beech sawlogs, means that silvicultural operations are not likely to be economic. Wet ground in the winter limits the number of months when timber harvesting can take place.

Factors Causing Change

Deer browsing. Squirrel damage.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The objective is to introduce more diversity into the woods so they become more varied in structure and in tree species, and move away from being even-aged and beech-dominated woods. Beech is likely to continue as the main tree species, but greater proportions of oak and birch are likely to naturally develop over time, through silvicultural intervention. Threats to the development of the woodland habitat will be minimised, especially deer browsing, and we will seek to work with our neighbours to tackle these. A steady enhancement of the deadwood habitat will occur as many of the beech trees reach over-maturity, with some dying or falling. The plantation in Clayhill Wood will develop to reach maturity and will be managed so that it is composed of a diverse mixture of tree species, including oak, beech, and silver birch. The few remaining conifers in Clayhill Wood will remain as specimen trees. Non woodland habitats such as the ponds in Common Wood will be made more open to sunlight.

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

During this plan period the short term objective is to begin the process of making the woods more diverse and to lessen the threats to them. This will be achieved by:

- Felling approximately 25% of the mature beech in the southern third of Common Wood (sub-compartment 1a). This should be done by a group felling system, so small glades are opened up to promote natural regeneration. At least 50% of the holly in the felling area should also be cut/coppiced as well, concentrating on the larger thickets. The operation will be carried out in 2018 and ideally the timber should be extracted. The work area is approximately 1.3 hectares.
- Thinning the young plantation in the northern half of Clayhill Wood (sub-compartment 2b) by approximately 20%. The operation will be focussed on the development of oak within the stand. Hence, young healthy oaks which are not heavily damaged by squirrels will be favoured and competing trees (typically birch) will be thinned around them to ensure the oaks succeed. This operation will be carried out in 2017 and the felled trees will be left on the ground to decompose. The work area is approximately 1.3 hectares. The small clump of Norway spruce should also be thinned (removal of approx. half the young spruce trees present).
- Coppicing the bankside trees surrounding the pond complex in Common Wood (sub-compartment 1a) to open it up to more sunlight. This work will also be carried out in 2017.
- Carrying out deer control at both woods, with the aim that in 5 years' time the level of deer browsing will not be impacting negatively on woodland ecology and preventing the woods from naturally regenerating. The cull level will be dictated and targeted by monitoring the level of damage. An enclosure will be placed in each wood during 2016 as a 'control' to aid this monitoring. The Forestry Commission and other neighbours will be contacted in 2016 with the aim of discussing and coordinating effective deer management in the local landscape; The Chiltern Woodland Project will also be consulted on this for further support and coordination.
- Carrying out interim woodland condition monitoring in 2017 to identify any general threats or unusual occurrences at the woods, and then conducting a full woodland condition assessment in 2020 to inform the next management plan review.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

Clayhill Wood does not have any formally maintained paths and does not receive many visitors, but it is easily accessible from Peppard lane, next to the wood. Common Wood is on the edge of Stoke Row village and, because it is within easy walking distance, it is more regularly visited by local people. It has a public footpath across it, which links the public roads on either side. There is further spur off this path, linking the wood to the rights of way network to the south of the wood. There are also other informal permissive paths around Common Wood. The full extent of paths in the wood is approximately 0.5km. Car parking next to the woods is difficult.

Significance

Although the woods are small in size they provide an important natural amenity on the edge of Stoke Row village.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: the small size of the woods limits their wider appeal to a greater number of visitors. Car parking opportunities close to the woods are very limited.

Factors Causing Change

There are no obvious anti-social activities at the woods at the present time.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Public access for informal and quiet recreation will be maintained in perpetuity. Visitor infrastructure at the woods will however be low-key in light of the relatively low visitor numbers. The main entrances will be visible and clearly signed, and the public footpaths through Common Wood will be kept accessible and open for use. The woods will be made as safe as possible for visitors, neighbours and road users.

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

During this plan period the short term objective is to provide low key public access which is safe and enjoyable. This will be achieved by:

- Annual management of the public rights of way in Common Wood (approx 325m in total).
- Maintaining signage at the 4 main entrances and ensuring annual cutting back as required.
- Annual tree safety surveys along the roadsides and property boundaries, and at least one survey along the public footpaths during this plan period.

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	4.04	Beech	1900	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Tree Preservation Order
Common Wood. A stand of mostly mature beech with occasional oak and ash. Clumps of holly present in the understorey, together with occasional beech regeneration.							
2a	2.94	Beech	1900	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access to the site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Tree Preservation Order
Clayhill Wood (South). A stand of mostly mature beech with a scattering of holly clumps in the understorey.							
2b	1.31	Oak (pedunculate)	1980	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Tree Preservation Order
Clayhill Wood (North). A plantation of mostly oak and beech which also contains a significant percentage of naturally occurring birch.							

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2020	1a	Thin	1.30	154	200
2020	2b	Thin	1.30	38	50

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.