



# Bisham Woods

## Management Plan 2018-2023

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## THE WOODLAND TRUST

### INTRODUCTION

The Trust's corporate aims and management approach guide the management of all the Trust's properties, and are described on Page 4. These determine basic management policies and methods, which apply to all sites unless specifically stated otherwise. Such policies include free public access; keeping local people informed of major proposed work; the retention of old trees and dead wood; and a desire for management to be as unobtrusive as possible. The Trust also has available Policy Statements covering a variety of woodland management issues.

The Trust's management plans are based on the identification of Key Features for the site and setting objectives for their management. A monitoring programme (not included in this plan) ensures that these objectives are met and any necessary management works are carried out.

Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

### PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATING

The information presented in this Management plan is held in a database which is continuously being amended and updated on our website. Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations. Please either consult The Woodland Trust website [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](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>	Bisham Woods
<b>Location:</b>	Cookham Dean, Maidenhead
<b>Grid reference:</b>	SU852844, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 175
<b>Area:</b>	152.63 hectares (377.16 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Landscape Value, Grade two listed ice house built around 1760's, Green Belt, Local Nature Reserve, Planted Ancient Woodland Site, Priority Habitat Inventory - Lowland Calcareous Grassland (England) Important Wildlife Site, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Area of Conservation, Tree Preservation Order

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

This large and colourful ancient woodland contains a diverse mix of broadleaf species and conifer. Its rich ground flora, interesting archaeological features including an old ice house, and extensive network of footpaths and bridleways, ensures Bisham Woods has something to interest every visitor.

### 2.2 Extended Description

Bisham Woods are a series of nine woods, recognised as ancient semi natural woodland, that dominate the skyline between Marlow and Maidenhead. The woods sit on the clay cap at the top of a chalk escarpment that rises south from the flood plain of the River Thames, in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead in Berkshire above Bisham and Marlow. The Woodland Trust purchased Bisham Woods with considerable support from local fundraising in 1990, before which they were in private ownership.

Bisham Woods, located just south of the Chiltern Hills, share similar characteristics with Chiltern woodlands such as underlying geology and associated tree species. Bisham woods are significant

because they form a large mass (over 150 hectares) of ancient woodland in the landscape which has substantial ecological value. The site is recognised as one of the top 20 sites in southern England for its ground flora, and is home to some exceptional and rare fungi, signifying a continuity of trees for a very long period of time. They are comprehensively designated including SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and SAC (Special Area of Conservation) by virtue of important beech forest on neutral to base-rich soils, semi-natural dry grassland over chalk, exceptional and rich associated ground flora and rare beetle and mollusc species.

The woods are also important by virtue of their history. Historical records evidence the site as continuously wooded for the past 500 years, and likely much longer as very little large scale deforestation occurred prior to this. The diverse, patchy, woodland habitat would have provided feudal communities with timber, fuel, minerals, game and coppice rods and valuable grazing and pannage land. The site was part of the great Bisham estate owned by the Knights Templars of Bisham Abbey in the 13th century, before passing into the private ownership of the Earls of Salisbury in 1308, and then the Hoby family 200 years later. Part of the site was once in the Royal Forest of Windsor, one of Queen Elizabeth I's favourite rides. Quarry Wood is the site of Bisham Quarry, an important medieval source of stone, much of which was used to build Windsor Castle. It was towards the end of the Hoby's occupancy that the ice house was constructed in the 1760's. The small brick ice house is still present and is physical acknowledgment of this part of the site's history and would have been used to supply ice to the residents of Bisham Abbey. The building is in good condition, is Grade 2 listed and underwent restoration in early 2003. The building is open on the first Sunday in the months of June, July, August, and September. Bisham Woods are also said to have been the original 'Wild Wood' in Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows*, which he wrote in the nearby village of Cookham Dean.

During the last 100 years, the woods have been largely felled and re-planted with a mixture of broadleaves and some conifer with the dominant species planted being beech, (planted ancient woodland site - PAWS). On the scarp slopes (mainly to the north) the woods are a mixture of mainly beech and ash. This part of the site (all of compartment 1) is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in recognition of having one of the most diverse woodland ground flora in Berkshire. The wooded slopes were extensively damaged during the storms of 1987 and 1990 leading to a major loss of mature beech on the slopes. After clearance the woods were planted with a mixture of cherry and beech but there has been much natural regeneration of ash and sycamore along with some beech. The woodland here has been managed as high forest over many years.

Elsewhere on the clay plateau, at the top of the slopes, oak becomes much more common, and these areas have impressive drifts of bluebells. Here there are also some small stands of conifers remaining together with rhododendron. Although the woodland here is now a high forest structure, there is evidence of historic coppicing of ash and hazel.

Carpenters Wood and Dungrovehill Wood is an isolated block of woodland to the south of the main area of Bisham Woods. It was also badly storm-damaged in the early 1990's and has been extensively replanted. The trees in this part of the wood have also been managed with a high forest structure.

There are several ponds which have originated from the removal of clay for the brick making industry. On the eastern splinter of the site is an open semi-natural chalk grassland field which rises

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up on the scarp slope.

The woodland complex is important for the recreational opportunities it provides locally. There is much public access within the wood for pedestrians, horseriders and cyclists due to an extensive network of permissive paths and public rights of way. No formal car park exists at the wood but there are a number of small pull-ins around the site and the possibility of parking at nearby pubs and National Trust car parks.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

By bus:

There are few buses passing close to the wood, the nearest being the M1 (pre-booking needed) bus service between Marlow and Maidenhead which stops at Cookham Dean about one mile away.

From there, some road-walking along country lanes will be necessary to reach the wood.

By train:

Nearest train station: Maidenhead is on the line to London Paddington and is about three miles from the site.

For further information on public transport, contact Traveline on 0871 200 2233 or visit [traveline.org.uk](http://traveline.org.uk)

By car:

Bisham Woods is sandwiched between Maidenhead to the south and Marlow to the north. It is about 15 minutes drive from Windsor and 30 minutes from Heathrow, and near the M4, M40 and M25 motorways.

There is limited parking off a track running from the A308 Marlow Road, with further parking at Bisham roundabout, on the A404 heading towards the M4, where there is a picnic area.

There are also further car parks at Winter Hill (SU870860) and Cookham Dean Common (SU861843).

By boat:

The closest moorings are located at Cookham Meadow and Marlow.

### 3.2 Access / Walks

Bisham Woods contains eleven public rights of way, including restricted byways, bridleways and footpaths, serving pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists.

At the public footpath entrances there may be squeeze gaps to negotiate. Some of the paths follow the contours while others take routes down the valley slopes which can be steep in places. The path surfaces can be muddy during periods of wet weather and remain muddy under dense shade from the tree canopy, though there has been some path surfacing in places.

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## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term intentions for Bisham Woods will seek to realise two of the Woodland Trust's three key aims:

- to protect native woods, trees and their wildlife
- to restore damaged ancient woodland for the benefit of wildlife and people

The following proposals have been itemised to mirror Bisham Wood's key features.

### Ancient woodland management:

Management within the plantation broadleaved component of the woodland will take place where assessment indicates intervention is necessary in order to alleviate threats, such as from changes to composition due likely colonisation by ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*), and to diversify the structure and composition to improve woodland resilience and bolster niche habitats. Management will take place under irregular silvicultural systems to ensure there will always be a continuous canopy cover and a distribution of mature and maturing trees over the whole site. Where beech is dominant and the natural climax species it will be encouraged, where other species predominate a wider range of species will be used for regeneration.

### Management of old trees:

Old growth trees (those older than 200 years) will be allowed sufficient growing space to ensure they live as long as possible and do not become dominated by younger surrounding trees. The trees will be allowed to age and become over-mature (apart from in high risk areas, and on or near historic features and open ground habitats). Specimen conifer trees will also be managed in the same way, so they remain strong features in the wood. Allowing natural processes to take place where storm damaged trees, accumulation of deadwood and retaining fallen and standing dead trees will also bolster conditions for fungal communities and invertebrates to succeed which are significant and strongly associated with the site.

### PAWS restoration:

The planted conifer areas of the woodland will be restored in line with best restoration and reversion practice, to address the threats to the semi-natural components, (in particular the flora and the older broadleaved trees), and to attain a largely broadleaved woodland over time. Restoration of PAWS provides the only opportunity to increase the area of ancient woodland with semi-natural characteristics.

Practically this means that the remaining conifer stands and broadleaf plantation component, where identified after assessment as a threat to diverse broadleaf regeneration and/or forming dense shade suppressing ground flora, will be gradually thinned. The aim is to achieve more semi-natural broadleaved conditions over time. In subsequent operations to thin stands to robust levels, and where the threat from plantation species to remnant features is minimal, the management will consider practice which may provide an economic return. A component of plantation conifer will be retained long-term to provide increased biodiversity and woodland resilience, and specimen conifer planting such as the giant sequoia will be retained as a feature of the woodland's history. Broadleaved trees will develop within the stands via natural regeneration.



Observations will be carried out to record any factors causing change that may be detrimental to the vitality and structure of the woodland. For example there should be no damaging invasive species present on the site, (Rhododendron ponticum will be eradicated from within the stands in the woodland and the pond complex areas to remove the threat it poses to flora and broadleaf regeneration) and the likely colonisation by ash dieback (Hymenoscyphus fraxineus) and other pests and diseases monitored and managed where necessary. The wood will continue to meet the definitions of 'favourable condition' for this SSSI, as set out by Natural England (see Appendix 3: Reference information and surveys).

**Management of open ground habitat:**

An element of semi-natural chalk grassland habitat (around 2ha) will be retained within the woodland. The major part of this will include a managed meadow in Bradnam Wood (Cpt 3b), plus smaller viewpoints and steep chalk slopes in Inkydown and Fultness Woods (Cpt 1).

**The ice house:**

This important historical feature will be preserved and it will be routinely monitored to ensure there is no deterioration in its condition or damage from surrounding vegetation. Public access will be restricted and only be allowed as part of organised events.

**Management for public access:**

The public's enjoyment of the woodland will be enhanced by maintaining an accessible and safe network of paths and rides. Well used paths will be made open and sunny in parts with viewpoints available at some high elevation points.

Entrances, boundary fences, and benches will be maintained as necessary and the access provision will be monitored and provided in line with best practice. Good information will be made available on and off the site to enable visitors to explore and navigate around the wood and to appreciate its inherent qualities. High quality and prominent signage will greet visitors on their arrival to the wood. The wood will be made as safe as practicable through regular safety inspections. Bisham will be promoted in the local area as one of largest accessible woods for people to visit and enjoy.

## 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

Bisham Woods are actually a complex of nine historically named woods: Quarry Wood, High Wood, Fultness Wood & Inkydown Wood (compartment 1); Park Wood and Goulding's Wood (compartment 2); Bradnam Wood (compartment 3); Dungrovehill Wood and Carpenter's Wood (compartment 4).

Together they comprise an extensive area of predominantly broadleaved woodland, of which over 90% of the woodland area is classified as ancient woodland in the National Inventory.

Most of the site lies on the thin, freely-drained soils of the chalk escarpment, which is dissected in places by dry valleys with sunken tracks, but the upper part of the wood is situated partly on wet clay soils and partly on base-poor glacial sands and gravels. Because of this diverse geology, the woods are a remarkable varied complex with a National Vegetation Classification (NVC) type ranging from W10 (Pedunculate oak - bracken - bramble woodland) on the higher acid plateaus to W12 (Beech - Dogs Mercury woodland) on the steep chalk scarp slopes.

On the chalk slopes beech and ash are the dominant trees together with sycamore. The mature beech trees were severely affected by the 1987 and 1990 storms, leaving large canopy gaps which have since been filled with abundant ash, sycamore and some beech. Cherry, wych elm, whitebeam, field maple, yew and holly are present on the chalk slopes and oak, ash, wych elm, birch, sweet chestnut, and cherry on the more acid soils on the plateau. Due to the storm damage the age structure of the trees is now quite diverse. Some oak is known to be suffering from acute oak decline (AOD).

There are small blocks of conifers scattered over the woods as well (European larch, Corsican pine, Scots pine, western red cedar and Norway spruce) which occupy no more than 5% of the woodland as a whole. The conifer stands were all thinned in the period 2009 to 2013 and all are in advanced stages of reversion to mainly broadleaved woodland. *Rhododendron ponticum* is present, especially in compartment 2 and overall this occupies an area of at least 5 Ha.

The ground flora is one of the richest recorded on any Berkshire woodland site, and include yellow bird's nest orchid, bird's nest orchid, thin-spiked sedge, wood barley, tutsan, nettle leaved bellflower, wood goldilocks and four species of helleborine orchids. Because of this part of the woodland is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) - all of compartment 1.

There are many woodland archaeological features throughout the wood from relatively recent features like quarries and sawpits, as well as much older features such as sunken lanes and woodbanks.

The deadwood habitat is also very rich, and this is supported by the fungus survey from 1999 where 289 species were recorded of which 19 are considered rare, and the stag beetle records which is partly why the site has SSSI status.

## Significance

Bisham Woods complex together comprise an extensive ancient woodland area. Ancient woodland is a nationally important and threatened habitat which is home to more species of conservation concern than any other habitat in the UK, and is a unique habitat that has preserved irreplaceable ecological and historical features. These woods have a remarkably rich ground flora and deadwood habitat plus records of stag beetle. Part of the site has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) primarily because of the flora.

Restoration of ancient woodlands by removing the shading effects from plantation species is the only way the area of ancient semi-natural woodland can be increased. The larger a woodland is, the more species it will be able to support, and as one of the largest ancient plateau beech woods in the area, Bisham Woods is an important site. Old growth woodland (woodland containing trees over 200 years old and with a continuity of old trees reaching into the past) is rare and declining worldwide. A substantial number of specialist woodland species are almost wholly confined to old growth stands.

### Opportunities & Constraints

#### Constraints:

- Wet soils, steep slopes, lack of hard tracks and limited areas to stack timber present a challenge to forestry operations
- Potential compaction of poorly drained soils and damage to tracks/paths through the use of forestry machines. Programme timing and extraction routes need to be carefully planned
- Damage to archaeological and historic features when implementing forestry operations
- Protected species present such as hazel dormice that require strict conditions on working practices and timing of operations

#### Opportunities:

- Increasing the area of ancient semi natural broadleaved woodland through restoration practice
- Retaining the old growth trees well into the future to enable them to become veteran and ancient trees
- Providing continuity of old growth characteristics through increasing the number of old trees on the site by recruitment from the 19th century broadleaved stands
- Improvement of tree age range, structure and species diversity
- To improve habitat diversity to favour the continued presence of the rare species populations

### Factors Causing Change

- *Rhododendron ponticum* is present within the stands
- Open areas within the wood succeeding to scrub and woodland thickets, dominated by birch, ash and beech
- Increasing shade and loss of coppice structure in minimum intervention stands
- Mammal damage (deer; 3 species are present - muntjac, roe and fallow)
- Changes in structure and gaps in canopy due to wind-blow and disease/dieback e.g. Acute oak decline (AOD) *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* in ash

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

Bisham Woods will have become predominantly semi-natural in composition and structure and the majority of the woodland will be composed of existing and naturally regenerating broadleaved trees (typically beech, oak, cherry, sycamore, rowan and birch) with a minor percentage of conifers (European larch, Scots pine) in the mixture (unlikely to comprise more than 10%). Rhododendron will have been eradicated. The high forest structure will be being managed on a continuous cover silvicultural system to produce uneven-aged, self-regenerating stands of high conservation and amenity value.

In the long term all other major ancient woodland components will be in a secure and improving condition, including old growth trees, ground flora, archaeological features, and a diverse deadwood component. There will be no invasive exotic species within the restored stands of trees, or open ground habitat.

Older trees, predominantly beech and oak, will be retained for as long as possible and allowed to senesce - except in high risk safety zones such as the roadsides. There will be wide sunny rides in places along the more popular paths, especially the bridleways, where lower structured edge habitats will be created and maintained. The several ponds in the wood will be open to sunlight through the management of the edge trees.

The population of deer in the wood will be monitored and managed to minimise their impact on flora and natural regeneration. Deadwood will be allowed to accumulate wherever possible, with all windblown trees and the majority of trees felled for safety reasons left to decompose naturally. In this way the deadwood habitat will continue to support a viable population of stag beetles, as well as many other invertebrates and fungi.

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

Active management within this plan period will focus on improving woodland condition and resilience through controlling non-native invasive species, continued restoration of rides and ponds, and management of decline of ash, which will be largely ad hoc in response to the spread and severity of the impact.

- Rhododendron control - hand cutting remaining rhododendron (C.2.5ha) in woodland complex as mapped - 2018
- Rhododendron control - treatment of all previously cut and regenerating rhododendron (C.5ha) across site - 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022
- Ride management - re-cut edge structure adjacent to main rides (1500m) in previously cut areas throughout the wood - 2021
- Further coppicing of ride edge trees with a view to retaining views, drying paths and improving edge habitat (1ha) - 2021
- Pond restoration - coppicing of edge trees around 3 main ponds - 2020
- Deer control - undertaking deer impact assessments, on-going deer control to reduce numbers by culling and monitoring of existing deer exclosures - annual
- Formal woodland condition assessment of the site, prior to management plan review, will monitor changes in stand structure and diversity. Completed in 2018. Next due in 2022.

## 5.2 Building Of Interest

### Description

This small brick building is suggested to date back to the 1760's. It has a link to the former Bisham Abbey (located directly on the other side of the A404 dual carriageway) and would have been used to supply ice to its residents, with the ice probably gathered from the River Thames. It is dug into the side of a steep bank, close to the collection of houses known as Bisham-under-the-wood. The building is in good condition and is Grade 2 listed. Renovations were carried out to it in 2003.

### Significance

This building is a physical link to Bisham Woods' past and the connection with the abbey. Its importance is underlined by its status as a Grade 2 listed building.

### Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:

- The ice house presents an opportunity for visitors, local people and schoolchildren to learn about the past
- Its location close to woodland and water presents an opportunity for it to be used as a bat hibernacula

Constraints:

- Any silvicultural works should be carefully planned to avoid damage to the structure

### Factors Causing Change

- Vandalism
- General deterioration over time
- Damage from roots or collapse of surrounding vegetation

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

The building will be maintained into the future, in recognition of its status and its importance for revealing the history of the local area. Access into it will be restricted to planned events to minimise the risk of vandalism.

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

Within this management period no unacceptable deterioration of the structure will be permitted, and it will be continued to be made available to interested groups.

- The building will be inspected to identify any threats or deterioration of its structure. If there are concerns then a report by a qualified building surveyor will be commissioned - 2018, 2022
- The building will be made available for planned opening events with local community groups, such as the parish council - annual

### 5.3 Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat

#### Description

Open grassland field called 'Hogs Trough' which is contained in compartment 3b and forms part of Bradnam Wood, a Local Nature Reserve, with a total open area of almost 2.5 hectares. The grassland is unimproved and species rich.

The meadow contains a number of plants characteristic of chalk grassland including pyramidal orchids and bee orchids on the south facing slope. Scrub (elder, sycamore, privet and bramble) is colonising the meadow from the woodland edge. Mature beech trees are present on the northern boundary, together with field maple, hornbeam and ash.

The grassland is locally dominated by creeping bent and red fescue with Yorkshire fog, hedge bedstraw, germander speedwell, glaucous sedge, wild strawberry, perforate St John's-wort, sweet violet and rough meadow-grass. There are smaller amounts of barren brome, false brome, meadow fescue, common gromwell, agrimony, wild parsnip, wild basil, field forget-me-not, bird's-foot trefoil, hairy violet, barren strawberry, creeping cinquefoil, creeping buttercup, common milkwort, white clover and cut-leaved crane's-bill.

#### Significance

Semi-natural chalk grassland is a rich and diminishing habitat; it is estimated that 80% of this habitat has been lost nationally in the last 60 years. This is a priority habitat in the Chilterns, where there is a nationally important concentration of sites and the possibility of further chalk grassland restoration in the landscape. Open space in this large wood helps to provide views over the surrounding landscape.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

- Grazing management is challenging for such a small area of grassland, where access is also difficult from the main road

Opportunities:

- Potential to manage and improve the species-rich area of grassland through grazing, which would especially benefit wildflowers and invertebrates

#### Factors Causing Change

- Encroachment of scrub in the grassland

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

The northern half of the field will be kept open and grassy, but with a component of scrub habitat (no more than 20%) and managed as chalk grassland glade. A greater abundance of lower-growing plants such as marjoram, pyramidal orchid and lady's bedstraw should develop over time. The lower southern half of the field will revert over time from scrub to woodland via natural processes. Species such as elder and bramble will colonise first followed by birch and sycamore.

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

Within this plan period the improvements made to the grassland since tenure will be maintained, and threats to structure change controlled to meet objectives.

- The northern half of the field (at least 1ha of compartment 3b) will be maintained by cutting to ensure it does not revert to scrub arisings raked and removed by volunteers - annual
- A small scrub component will be allowed to develop, but this will not exceed more than 20% of the managed area - monitoring scheduled and action taken if necessary
- The southern half of the field will receive no active management during this plan period and scrub will be allowed to develop within it.



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## 5.4 Connecting People with woods & trees

### Description

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Bisham Woods are located near the settlement of Cookham Dean in Berkshire. Combined with the surrounding Cookham, Cookham Rise, and Bisham the local population is approximately 6,900. The towns of Maidenhead (pop 73,000) and Amersham (pop 133,000) are 5 miles (8km) south east and 9 miles (15km) north of the wood respectively.

Bisham Woods are part of the Woodland Trust's Welcoming Sites Programme (WSP), which aims to improve the visitor experience to this site. The WSP will lead to a series of lasting upgrades that will improve the visitor experience and will likely increase the number and range of visitors to the wood. The site will be managed to meet the required high standards of WSP and will provide a clear welcome: well-maintained entrances, furniture, signs and other infrastructure. Improved access will better facilitate use by a wider range of visitors. An engagement plan will set out a plan for engagement activities, further enhancing public visits to the site.

The woods have an extensive network of paths and bridleways which allow for good exploration on foot, horse or bicycle along the legally permitted routes. Permissive paths and bridleways are provided as well as statutory ones, which aid the linking up of the footpath network to the surrounding countryside. There is approximately 3 miles (5km) of bridleway and at least another 6 miles (10km) of footpath. No paths are surfaced and some are steep, due to the nature of the underlying geology.

The Trust has given this site a category B access designation (regular usage, 5 - 15 people using one entrance per day) in recognition of its high recreational use.

There are information boards and signs at the main entrances to help people find their way and enjoy the woods. Individual signage for the woods is present at all entrances and now reflects the historic names.

Car parking is very limited but available nearby, with laybys present at the Cookham Dean end (north), along the track between compartment 1 and 2, and along Dungle Hill Lane next to compartment 4. The wood is within walking distance from the large village of Cookham Dean. The National Trust owns a number of commons and car parks close to Bisham Woods and visitors to Bisham are known to use National Trust parking areas.

Bisham Woods is a diverse site with many natural features that may be of interest to visitors. There are many archaeological features across the site including saw-pits, banks, holloways, quarries and ditches. Natural features of interest include ponds, old growth trees, colourful and often rare displays of native flora, stands undergoing PAWS restoration and open areas of grassland.

The site is well used by locals and visitors. School groups from Cookham Dean are known to make use of the wood for 'Forest School' outdoor education. The site has opportunities for further volunteering and for engagement activities through volunteer days with new groups or developing relationships with current groups.

With so many visitor options in the area, the visitor experience offer at Bisham Woods will continue to focus on communicating the Woodland Trust's 'Protect' message, to engage visitors in the importance of native woodland and the habitat it provides and show how they can help. Promoting access to other nearby sites for visitors is also a key part of Bisham Woods's development.

## Significance

Bisham Woods provide a significant natural and peaceful area of free access in a busy part of the country for visitors to enjoy. The woods are a popular destination for walking, cycling and horse-riding. Bisham Woods also form part of a wider network of publically accessible land with National Trust sites in the local area also of high amenity value.

### Opportunities & Constraints

#### Constraints:

- Formal car parking is extremely limited
- Enhanced signage/ information and activities at the site need to be balanced against preserving its natural qualities
- Some paths can be very wet during the winter, especially bridleways
- The age and quantity of the mature tree stock along the roadsides (especially the beech) presents a high risk and requires significant resources for the Trust to manage
- Anti-social behaviour such as mountain biking away from permitted routes, horse and BMX incursions and fly tipping continue to be a significant issue

#### Opportunities:

- Increased partnership working with the National Trust locally could help to enhance visitor experience in the local landscape and help with issues such as car parking
- Increased community involvement in management of the wood through volunteering opportunities
- Continuation of relevant events to deepen local engagement, encourage respectful site use and increase membership opportunities
- Further develop relationships with local partners e.g. Wild Cookham for cross-promotion and joint working on engagement activities

### Factors Causing Change

- Horses and bicycles using non-designated paths leading to risk of injury to walkers, damage to ground flora and tree regeneration
- Fly tipping and associated damage
- An increase in visitors is likely to occur through better facilities and greater promotion of the wood. This could also lead to more antisocial behaviour and more conflicts between different user groups
- Economic changes as funding ends will impact opportunity to develop and enhance the site
- Government adopted local housing targets will lead to increased development in the area and further pressure on the wood through increased visitor numbers
- Changes in vegetation along rides

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

Bisham Woods will provide an extensive area of quiet informal recreation to a wide range of users both from the local community and from further afield. The use of the site by visitors will be promoted through positive relationships with neighbouring sites, with good quality signage and interpretation. We will work with The National Trust and other partners locally to create a more joined up accessible landscape for visitors.

Open access will be retained at the wood in perpetuity and there will be a well-managed network of paths. Well used paths will be made open and sunny in parts to add variety and interest for the visitor, as well benefitting woodland edge wildlife. The wood will be made as safe as practicable through regular safety inspection of trees in high risk zones and inspection of access furniture. Good information will be made available on and off the site to enable visitors to explore and navigate around the wood and to appreciate its inherent qualities. There will also be several viewpoints at prominent positions to look over the river Thames and the surrounding landscape.

The local community will continue to be engaged with the management of the wood. The Trust will continue to make the wood available for Forest School use by local schools and children's nurseries.

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

Within this plan period the site will be considerably improved for visitors, with replacement access signs and interpretation, easier to navigate routes that are more linked with the surrounding landscape, and continued efforts to reduce anti-social behaviour and encourage respectful interaction will be made. Measures taken will seek to make the site safer, more inviting and informative for the visitor, as well as providing further opportunities for more detailed interaction through guided walks.

- Replacement of 23 entrance signs to woods, depicting historical woodland names - 2018
- Cutting back vegetation and visibility splays around road signs on A306 boundary - annual
- Install leaflet dispensers to aid visitor navigation and interpretation of the site - 2019
- Improve quality of access track to aid residents / visitor access - 2018
- Vegetation along the main paths and around entrances will be cut back to keep them open and safe for use - twice annually
- Rubbish removal from entrances, paths along alongside road verges - annual
- Maintenance of permissive bridleway posts to ensure permitted routes are clear- annual
- Various entrance improvements, including removal redundant pedestrian signage, installation of bollards to prevent unauthorised vehicle access, improve / replace fencing & gates, install interpretation, production of site leaflet in conjunction with National Trust showing 2 x trails linking surrounding sites, and installation of more prominent signage to ensure permitted routes are clear 2018-2021
- Arrange and promote targeted guided walks and events to enhance positive local interaction - 2019/2020
- Ride management - vegetation control adjacent to main rides in strategic areas throughout the wood to create sunnier conditions along parts of the path network - 2021
- Tree safety surveys will be conducted along the high risk zones and path networks - annual
- Monitoring of access provision and installations - periodic throughout plan period
- Local volunteer wardens monitoring site and reporting issues - on-going throughout plan period

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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	42.50	Beech	1900	PAWS restoration	Archaeological features, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Woodland Site, Connecting People with woods & trees	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Local Nature Reserve, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Area of Conservation, Tree Preservation Order

Quarry Wood and High Wood. The major tree species is beech with minor components of ash and sycamore. Cherry, wych elm, whitebeam, field maple, yew and holly are present on the chalk slopes and oak, ash, wych elm, birch, sweet chestnut, and cherry on the more acid soils on the plateau. The slopes have experienced a great deal of storm damage and loss of mature beech, and there is now abundant regeneration of ash and sycamore which is approximately 30 years old. Mature oak is also present towards the Southeast of the compartment, away from the slopes. Several small plantations of European larch are present and these have been thinned and are now more mixed with broadleaved species. Scattered sweet chestnut trees are also present, especially near the eastern boundary.

Shrub layer includes wild privet, wayfaring tree, guilder-rose, elder, old man's beard, redcurrant and field rose. The ground flora is one of the richest recorded on any Berkshire woodland site, and include yellow bird's nest orchid, bird's nest orchid, thin-spiked sedge, wood barley, tutsan, nettle leaved bellflower, wood goldilocks and four species of helleborine orchids. This compartment is part of the SSSI, and also the SAC under the European interest of Asperulo-fagetum beech forests, for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK.

1b	36.80	Beech	1900	PAWS restoration	Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Woodland Site, Connecting People with woods & trees	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Local Nature Reserve, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Area of Conservation, Tree Preservation Order
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Fultness Wood and Inkydown Wood. This compartment has similar characteristics to compartment 1a, with beech being the major tree species. The slopes have experienced a great deal of storm damage and loss of mature beech, and there is now abundant regeneration of ash and sycamore which is approximately 30 years old. Similar to 1a, cherry, wych elm, whitebeam, field maple, yew and holly are present on the chalk slopes and oak, ash, wych elm, birch, sweet chestnut, and cherry on the more acid soils on the plateau. Mature oak is also present towards the south of the compartment, away from the slopes. Minor components of Scots pine, European larch and horse chestnut are also present, and a clump of box and privet towards the southwest corner.

Shrub layer includes wild privet, wayfaring tree, guilder-rose, elder, old man's beard, redcurrant and field rose. The ground flora is one of the richest recorded on any Berkshire woodland site, and include yellow bird's nest orchid, bird's nest orchid, thin-spiked sedge, wood barley, tutsan, nettle leaved bellflower, wood goldilocks and four species of helleborine orchids. This compartment is part of the SSSI, and also the SAC under the European interest of Asperulo-fagetum beech forests, for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK.

2a	33.60	Oak (pedunculate)	1900	PAWS restoration	Archaeological features, Site structure, location, natural features & vegetation	Ancient Woodland Site, Connecting People with woods & trees	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Local Nature Reserve, Tree Preservation Order
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Park Wood and Gouldings Wood. This part of Bisham is on the flat clay plateau. Oak is the major tree species together with beech. Ash, silver birch and field maple and hazel are also present. Rhododendron ponticum covers large patches of the ground, and this has been cut and managed recently. Small blocks of conifers are present (western hemlock, western red cedar and larch) and these have all been thinned during the period 2010-2013. Several large specimen Giant Sequoias are present in Park Wood. The oak in this compartment is known to be suffering from Acute Oak decline.

Ground flora has a patchy abundance of bluebell, dog's mercury, cleavers, bramble, enchanter's nightshade and some bare ground. Other species associated with ASNW include goldilocks, wood sedge, wood anemone, wood speedwell, sanicle, wood spurge, remote sedge, yellow pimpernel, three-nerved sandwort and primrose. Old pits support groups of ponds and damp hollows where alder is abundant. There are also a number of prominent woodbanks.

3a	10.67	Beech	1991	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access to the site, Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Woodland Site, Connecting People with woods & trees	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Local Nature Reserve, Tree Preservation Order
<p>The southern finger of Bradnam Wood. This part of Bisham Woods has been extensively storm damaged with the loss of many of the mature beech trees. The woodland was been replanted with beech, cherry and ash and this has been supplemented by much natural regeneration of sycamore and ash; the plantation is now over 30 years old. Shrub layer includes hazel, hawthorn, spindle, wild privet, guilder rose and field maple.</p>							
3b	2.48	Open ground		Non-wood habitat	No/poor vehicular access to the site, Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site	Ancient Woodland Site, Connecting People with woods & trees	Local Nature Reserve
<p>The northern part of Bradnam Wood. The majority of this compartment consists of a small meadow (called Hogs Trough) surrounded on three sides by woodland. The meadow contains a number of plants characteristic of chalk grassland including pyramidal orchids and bee orchids on the south facing slope. Scrub (elder, sycamore, privet and bramble) is colonising the meadow from the woodland edge. Mature beech trees are present on the northern boundary, together with field maple, hornbeam and ash.</p> <p>The grassland is locally dominated by creeping bent and red fescue with Yorkshire fog, hedge bedstraw, germander speedwell, glaucous sedge, wild strawberry, perforate St John's-wort, sweet violet and rough meadow-grass. There are smaller amounts of barren brome, false brome, meadow fescue, common gromwell, agrimony, wild parsnip, wild basil, field forget-me-not, bird's-foot trefoil, hairy violet, barren strawberry, creeping cinquefoil, creeping buttercup, common milkwort, white clover and cut-leaved crane's-bill.</p>							
4a	22.31	Beech	1900	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access to the site, Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site	Ancient Woodland Site, Connecting People with woods & trees	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Local Nature Reserve, Planted Ancient Woodland Site, Tree Preservation Order



Carpenters Wood and Dungrovehill Wood. This compartment is separated from the main block of the woodland by agricultural land and lies further to the south. This wood was extensively damaged by the storms of the late 1980's but there is still a good component of mature beech woodland in the northern section (Dungrovehill Wood) on the flat top of the slope. On the sloping ground to the south there are occasional mature beech but the majority of the woodland here is young (30 years old) planted beech and cherry with abundant natural regeneration of ash. Small plantations of European larch and Scots pine are also present, and these have been thinned and are now quite mixed with broadleaves species.

Flora typically includes slender St John's-wort, three-veined sandwort, sanicle, wood spurge, wood speedwell and wood melick. White helleborine is abundant in scrub fringing and species such as eyebright are found in the largest open area.

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**Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)**

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2021	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.25	60	15
2021	1a	Ride edge Coppice	1.00	20	20
2021	2a	Ride edge Coppice	0.25	60	15
2021	2a	Ride edge Coppice	0.50	70	35

## 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.