



Knavesmire 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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Knavesmire Wood
Location:	Dringhouses
Grid reference:	SE591488, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 105
Area:	4.81 hectares (11.89 acres)
Designations:	Tree Preservation Order

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

A broadleaf wood that likely began life as the wooded gardens of a stately house. A Victorian lime avenue shelters an attractive walk over hard surfaced footpaths through the centre of the wood. Good for bird and wildlife and spring flora.

2.2 Extended Description

The wood was acquired by the Trust in 1990 as a gift from York City Council. It included an endowment, shared with Acomb Wood, which was gifted at the same time. The wood is situated on flat land in a suburban location, adjacent to York Racecourse. Houses border the woodland on its west, and south western boundaries. The wood forms a prominent landscape feature, forming a backcloth to the racecourse and providing an attractive barrier between the residential development and the 'Knavesmire' grassland and racecourse. The wood is also very prominent from the A64 to the south and the surrounding area.

A strip of the woodland along the western boundary is not owned by the Woodland Trust, which is the subject of a Tree Preservation Order. It was originally owned by Arncliffe Holdings Plc of Harrogate. Evidently the company went in to receiverships with the sale of some sections to adjacent landowners who have extended their gardens. Matters relating to the remaining section are passed to York City Council.

The wood is extremely popular with local residents throughout the year as can be assessed by the level of wear on the paths. Its situation alongside the racecourse no doubt encourages visits from residents from other parts of the city as well as tourists / horse racing visitors from other parts of the country.

Alongside Knavesmire Wood, is an area of some 250 acres known 'The Knavesmire', which originated from an ancient common pasture. It was taken over by York Corporation in 1905 and is often referred to as a 'Stray'. The name stray, meaning to wander aimlessly, describes well the historic use of this area for informal recreation. In addition the racecourse based here since the mid 18th century has also attracted visitors to this area.

The wood itself is a broad-leaved plantation, possibly 18th or early 19th century parkland type planting which contained a very long lime avenue. It is likely that wood was originally planted as the wooded gardens of a large 19th century house which was situated at the northern end of the wood, now demolished, in the area of the estate houses of Bracken road. The lime avenue would have formed an impressive approach to what would have been a very prestigious house in its day.

The Victorian lime avenue is still present today and it makes a very attractive walk through the centre of the wood. It has been used by visitors for many years and in view of this popularity a new hard surfaced footpath has been made down the centre of the wood, which replaced a rather wet and muddy track.

The wood contained a mixture of species including lime, elm, oak, ash, chestnut, beech, sycamore and hornbeam. Several of the trees are notable mature specimens, which may be originals of this woodland. Given the ornamental avenue it could well have been that this wood had a much more open nature in the past with more individual trees in a parkland type setting.

However, the character of the ground flora species indicate a different tale, with a rich flora of Wood Anemone and Wood Sorrel, both of which are normally associated with ancient woodlands, unable to colonise woods on previously un-wooded sites.

In recent years natural regeneration of sycamore has occurred, with sycamore being the most dominant species on the site. Elm and lime suckers are also present in large numbers.

Grey Squirrel and Rabbits are common. Visiting foxes have been reported and small numbers of Pipistrelle bats have been observed on summer evenings.

Recent breeding birds include, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Stock Dove, Treecreeper, Bull finch, Yellowhammer, and possible Coal Tit and Gold crest

The wood is particularly of interest for cavity nesting birds, including Tawny Owl, Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Treecreeper and Nuthatch.

Gatekeeper and ringlet butterflies are present around the edges of the wood and Brown Hawker dragonfly was noted

(See York Green Site Survey No20, 1991 for further details)

The wood contains a number of common ground flora species including, wood Anemone, Wood Sorrel, Lesser Celandine, Goldilocks, Bluebell, Primrose and Common Dog Violet.

See York Green Site Survey No20, 1991 for further details)

The before the wood was acquired by the trust little management appears to have been undertaken. Given the age of much of the sycamore regeneration it would appear that several areas within the wood were felled during the 1950' but no documentary evidence is available at the present time to confirm this.

The alternative conclusion from the density and age of the sycamore natural regeneration is that the wood has been very much more open in the past, i.e. a woodland garden or well-treed parkland, connected with the old house, and then neglected. The age of the properties in Bracken Park where the original house would have stood corresponds with the time in which management ceased.

Following acquisition by the trust the lime trees in the main avenue were 'topped', as a safety measure due to crown dieback. This gave them the rather flat-topped appearance we see today. Several of the limes which were in a very poor condition were felled at that time.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

ACCESS TO THE SITE

Knivesmire Wood is situated on the southern boundary of the city of York on the western boundary of York Race Course. Access to the site from the A64 southern bypass is via the A1036. Follow the A1036 which forms the old Roman Road running north / south into the centre of the city. After 1 mile you will reach a roundabout, alongside a large supermarket. Take the third exit towards the city centre. Take the first turning on the right after this roundabout, about 150m from the roundabout. Follow this estate road for approximately half a mile and take the first junction on the right. The wood is clearly visible on the left hand side (east). Roadside parking is necessary with 3 access points to the wood from this estate road at the end of 3 short cul-de-sacs.

Parking around the woodland is on estate roads to the west the woodland. The wood is well served by a network of cycle paths which link in with the town centre to the north and the small villages to the south.

ENTRANCES AND FOOTPATHS

Within the woodland is a single main track following the lime avenue, which is wide and surfaced with limestone, this links Bracken Road to the north with the cycle paths to the south. Around the eastern perimeter of the woodland is an unsurfaced path - often quite muddy and wet but equally well used by locals, this links with the main track in a number of places, and also exits onto the 'Knivesmire' (York racecourse). To the west of the wood, the perimeter path is just outside the Woodland Trust ownership, but still within Knivesmire Wood, access is also available from here out to the estate to the west.

PARKING

There is excellent parking within the city at public car parks and also a very efficient park and ride scheme, giving easy bus access to much of the city.

PUBLIC TOILETS

None known within 5 miles of the site.

BUS STOPS

A bus drop is situated on Lycett road just 200 yards from the site entrance

TRAVEL INFORMATION

For train and bus information and timetables please access the traveline web link www.traveline.org.uk or phone 0870 608 2 608

3.2 Access / Walks

The footpaths through the wood link to the cycle and footpath routes to the race course and city centre as well as outlying villages and the sustrans cycle route to Selby.

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The woodland has developed from an 18th /19th century parkland type woodland with a formal lime avenue and a variety of broadleaved species. It is therefore intended to perpetuate this character by ensuring the continuity of the avenue, possibly by replanting if needed in the future.

Our long term intention for Knavesmire Wood is to promote and maintain broadleaved high forest, with a diversity of age structure and tree species. The woodland will be managed through minimum intervention, as on-going wind throw and senescence providing opportunity for the natural regeneration of trees, creating and maintaining a diversity of age structure within the woodland. Tree safety work will however be undertaken where appropriate.

Public access will be encouraged down the centre avenue and around the perimeter path. It should be noted that the path along the western boundary of the wood is outside the trusts ownership.

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 Historic Features

Description

A mature lime avenue runs the full length of the woodland in a north south direction and forms a main landscape and historical feature. The avenue is associated with the former mansion house that stood close to the northern end of the avenue, long since demolished.

Significance

A unique historical feature, especially as avenues are normally associated with parkland rather than a natural woodland setting. This a well know feature of the woodland and is well loved by local people.

Opportunities & Constraints

To ensure the continuity of the avenue as a feature new planting at some point in the future will be required, perhaps following a similar spacing. The date of the new planting will depend on the condition of the limes and this aspect should be monitored. However, given the current condition of the trees this will be a considerable time in the future

Factors Causing Change

Decline of trees through old age, wind damage, disease, water logging of the site competition from adjacent trees.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To ensure the continuity of the avenue as an historical and landscape feature.

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

The avenue trees to be inspected at 2 yearly intervals as part of the tree safety inspection for the wood. Where it is found necessary to remove trees on safety grounds due to their poor condition they will be replaced with new trees to maintain the avenue. The sucker growth around the base of the trees to be removed on a regular basis as part of footpath maintenance work.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

Public access on foot is available throughout the site. The main path is down the avenue with a circular footpath running just within the perimeter of the woodland. A number of informal paths cross the site.

Significance

The locality of the woodland, surrounded by a large residential development makes this one of the few accessible woodland in the area. It's close proximity to the racecourse and the ' Knavemire Stray' a significant area with open public access close to the racecourse and along the River Ouse adds to the popularity to local residents and from other parts of the city together with visitors and tourists from afar. The site is also bordered to the south by a cycle path, which is part of the Trans-Pennine Trail, and also links in with the superb network of routes which cross the city, allowing easy access without the additional demand on parking/ traffic congestion.

Whilst the site is not considered to be an ancient woodland the ground flora is rich and varied.

Opportunities & Constraints

The centre footpath along the lime avenue was significantly improved through resurfacing (1997), but the circular path to the east and west could be improved in places, especially along the racecourse side of the woodland, (east) where ground conditions are often wet and muddy. The path along the western boundary is outside Woodland Trust ownership, but working in conjunction with York City Council it should be possible to ensure all the routes are brought up to a reasonable standard. .

Factors Causing Change

The wood is at time very wet and makes paths very wet and muddy at specific times of the year.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Maintain the main avenue path through the centre of the wood and circular path and discourage the development of further informal tracks.

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

Annually maintain approximately 800m of footpaths and welcome signs at the 2 main entrances. The work will include the control of sucker growth from the lime trees down the main avenue and the control of vegetation to stop it encroaching on to the perimeter path.

5.3 Secondary Woodland

Description

Mature mixed broadleaved secondary woodland with an attractive and varied ground flora, of a similar quality to that of an ancient woodland site.

Significance

Whilst the site is not considered to be ancient woodland the ground flora is rich and varied. The site has an historic connection with the lime avenue and enjoys high visitor numbers which no doubt is due to its location and attractiveness.

Opportunities & Constraints

The wood contains a large number of informal footpaths which cross the site and as a result increases the trampling of ground flora. Trying to deter the use of these paths by scattering branches across the paths has proved to be futile with complaints received from local people in the past. The popularity of the wood linked to the desire for people to be able to move freely has resulted in some the loss of ground flora. However, the scale of the damage is not considered to be so extensive as to warrant more rigid control of public access.

Factors Causing Change

- 1) Further increases in public usage of informal tracks across the wood could reduce the extent of ground flora and reduce levels of fauna.
- 2) Loss of elm trees through Dutch Elm Disease has opened up small areas of the woodland for natural regeneration as the light levels increase. The loss of other species of trees will also have a similar impact.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Maintain as a high forest through natural processes.

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

Monitor any potential threats to the ground flora as part of the regular key feature and woodland observation/ woodland condition visits, on at least one occasion per 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	4.81	Mixed broadleaves	1980	High forest	Landscape factors, No/poor vehicular access to the site, People issues (+tve & -tve)	Historic Features, Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	Tree Preservation Order
<p>Mixture of mature broadleaved trees including, oak, ash, beech, lime, chestnut, hornbeam and sycamore. Beneath these trees and in more open areas sycamore natural regeneration has developed with a mixed age class structure, from 1-year seedlings to about 25-30 year old semi-mature specimens. Some ash and beech regeneration has occurred but on a much smaller scale. Regrowth of elm from stumps is present but unlikely to develop much beyond 10-15 years due to re-infection from Dutch Elm Disease. The compartment contains a small percentage of dead and dying small elm trees. The wood has an attractive and mixed ground flora but due to the high usage of the site bare ground occupies many areas.</p>							

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.