



The Seek

Management Plan 2017-2022

MANAGEMENT PLAN - CONTENTS PAGE

ITEM Page No.

Introduction

Plan review and updating

Woodland Management Approach

Summary

1.0 Site details

2.0 Site description

2.1 Summary Description

2.2 Extended Description

3.0 Public access information

3.1 Getting there

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 Long term policy

5.0 Key Features

5.1 New Native Woodland

5.2 Informal Public Access

6.0 Work Programme

Appendix 1: Compartment descriptions

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Glossary

MAPS

Access

Conservation Features

Management

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	The Seek
Location:	Braunston-in-Rutland
Grid reference:	SK839070, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 141
Area:	10.83 hectares (26.76 acres)
Designations:	No designations for this site

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Appropriately named The Seek, meaning 'a field running down to a stream', this young woodland occupies a prominent south east slope planted between 1992 and 1994 with oak, ash and hazel. Enjoy stunning panoramic views across local countryside.

2.2 Extended Description

The Seek is new native woodland on edge of Braunston-in-Rutland, 1 mile south-west of Oakham and Rutland Water with panoramic views over surrounding countryside. Prior to planting the area was arable land, which is still the dominant land use in the locality. However, is comparatively well punctuated with hedgerows and field corner planting, which proved regular island habitats and good potential permeability with our larger Brook Hill wood <1km north east. There is a small stream which runs along the eastern boundary of the wood, leading in from the SE, providing a ribbon of riparian shrubs and trees in that direction until it meets Booke Road.

In design stages, local school children were invited to put forward ideas for the design and creation of woodland. During National Tree Week in 1992, 400 local school children planted trees and shrubs on the site. The Rutland Natural History Society were also involved in monitoring the development of the woodland and as of 2004 recorded 20 species of butterfly, 95 species of moth and 64 species of bird.

The site name "The Seek" was proposed by local residents as a call back to the old local name for a 'field running down to a stream' which aptly fits the site as it occupies a prominent south easterly aspect. 7,500 native broadleaved trees and shrubs were planted 1992-94 (See compartment description for full details of tree species). The first phase of planting was in the winter of 1992-93, with the first tree being planted by the late Geoff Hamilton. The following winter, Rutland Natural History Society members, children, villagers and friends planted a further 2000 oak, ash and hazel saplings.

Notable components of the site include a 1.4 hectare area of grassland which has been left unplanted at the top of the site, initially left as an open meadow area and is currently grazed with sheep. Also The Friends of the Earth have a small community orchard planted on site adjacent to the braunston road boundary at the top of the hill.

Gentle slopes throughout the site make it an interesting place to walk, making use of the grassy ride network which can become slippery and even boggy as you get closer to the boundary stream.

Key Features are:

- Informal Public Access
- New Native Woodland

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

The Seek is 200 metres NE of Braunston-in-Rutland on the Oakham Road. It is 2.5 kms from the centre of Oakham itself. There is a lay-by, which was once the road, which is the best place to park. The main pedestrian access is off the lay-by. The small pull-off close to the SW management gate is not advised as the entrance is used by neighbouring landowners and road visibility is obscured because of the hill one way and the bend the other. There is a pedestrian entrance at this point which is suitable for those visitors who walk from Braunston.

Both pedestrian entrances link to the network of paths which allow access to all parts of the site. All the paths are grassed and have small sections which are both steep and muddy during wet periods. There is a train station in Oakham and there is a bus service from Oakham to Braunston which leaves St John Street at 12.50 each day. However there is no return service in the afternoon. There are no public toilets within 5 miles.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Diverse high forest structure, with deadwood retained where safe to do so and canopy trees managed as appropriate to encourage a range of predominantly native species of varying age classes. The balance of open space will also be appropriate for the setting and visitor levels, with the ride edges periodically coppiced to encourage desirable structure and the paddock at the top of the site will continue to be grazed / cut for hay while this remains cost effective and in line with WT management principles.

Paths, signage and entrances will be monitored and maintained in line with current WT brand and access standards. Ensuring a welcoming feel at all times and an appropriate visitor experience.

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 New Native Woodland

Description

7.9 ha (72%) of the site was planted in the winter of 1992/93 & 1993/94 with native mixed broadleaves with a high proportion of oak and ash (see compartment records for full species mix).

Significance

The Seek adds significantly to the habitat diversity of the predominantly arable landscape. A key site within an area where other woodland is present, but in isolated island habitats.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:

-To create a new native broadleaved woodland habitat

Constraints:

-limited size

-Species composition favours ash

Factors Causing Change

Climate change - stochastic weather events & tree disease/ pests (e.g. Ash Dieback)

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Diverse high forest structure, with deadwood retained where safe to do so and canopy trees managed as appropriate to encourage a range of predominantly native species of varying age classes. The balance of open space will also be appropriate for the setting and visitor levels, with the ride edges periodically coppiced to encourage desirable structure and the paddock at the top of the site will continue to be grazed / cut for hay while this remains cost effective and in line with WT management principles.

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

Balance of open space to be monitored/ assessed by SM every 5 years through woodland condition assessment along with levels of grazing in the top paddock.

Significant ash percentages through much of the planting poses a significant challenge within the immediate future. Decline is already evident amongst the stands, and will see loss of canopy cover in many areas. This decline should therefore be proactively managed through staged removal of infected ash in 2-3 operations over the next 5-6 years. It is desirable to minimise the deadwood liability within the canopy and so priority should be given to boundary trees as well as those along rides and path networks (see tree safety zones). Beyond this, an initial thin of the ash compartments will be undertaken, again to reduce deadwood liabilities, but also stimulate natural regeneration and secure non ash species where present in the first instance. Natural regeneration should be monitored closely through annual inspection in late spring by SM, considering protection from browsing and weeding as appropriate. Where natural regeneration is not forthcoming, under planting of Oak, hornbeam, cherry & field maple will be undertaken following the second wave removal of infected ash towards the end of the plan period. Browsing protecting and weeding to be undertaken as appropriate to ensure establishment of 1100 stems per Ha before 2027. (*see 2017 felling licence conditions).

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

Highly visible piece of land on the edge of Braunston-in-Rutland, 1 ½ miles south-west of Oakham and Rutland Water with panoramic views over surrounding countryside. Access to The Seek is easy with good parking facilities in the lay-by adjacent to the main entrance. Walking is easy with gently undulating slopes allowing access to the woodland throughout the year.

Significance

Attractive woodland site in close proximity to a significant population. Popular with dog walkers, the site provides a safe and enclosed environment to enjoy nature and trees in particular.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:

- site is close to people (Oakham & Braunston)
- relatively good parking for a small site

Threats:

- Tree disease creating site hazards & reducing visual attractiveness

Factors Causing Change

- Scrub encroachment of the rides & paths
- deterioration of signage & infrastructure

Long term Objective (50 years+)

An attractive and welcoming site, where permission to access is prominent and in line with WT brand and internal paths are safe, inviting and easy to follow.

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

Mow paths to minimum width of 2m at least three times through the growing season (in line with WT spec 2.01) SM to visually inspect entrances and paths/ rides biennially to ensure they are open, easy to follow & clear of obstructions as well as of a level appropriate to the visitor numbers and in line with latest WT standards. Action to be taken as required.

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	10.69	Mixed broadleaves	1993	Wood establishment	Diseases, Services & wayleaves	Informal Public Access	No designations for this site

This area is new plantation, planted in part by local volunteers and local school children, between 1992 & 1994. Species include sessile oak, ash, hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn and holly. The planting blocks are separated by rides. The bulk of the planting was enclosed by a deer fence and the planting outside that protection on the northern and eastern fringes was enclosed in tree shelters. The deer fence was removed in the late 1990s. A small paddock seeded with a grass seed / wildflower mix in the 1990s also exists on site and is currently grazed by sheep. The site contains a network of grassed rides. Friends of the Earth also have a small community orchard planted on site in the mid 2000's adjacent to the braunstone road boundary at the top of the hill, this is cared for and looked after by them.

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2017	1a	Ride edge Coppice	7.00	3	23
2020	1a	Selective Fell	7.00	25	175
2022	1a	Selective Fell	7.00	25	175

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.