



Ipsden Heath

Management Plan 2016-2021

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THE WOODLAND TRUST

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATING

The information presented in this Management plan is held in a database which is continuously being amended and updated on our website. Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations. Please either consult The Woodland Trust website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk 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:	Ipsden Heath
Location:	Ipsden
Grid reference:	SU664851, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 175
Area:	12.72 hectares (31.43 acres)
Designations:	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Many people visit Ipsden Heath during the spring to take photographs of the colourful flora. These include an abundance of bluebells, wood sorrel, enchanter's nightshade, herb robert, sweet woodruff and dogs mercury.

2.2 Extended Description

Ipsden Heath is a 13 ha / 32 acre woodland in the AONB of the Oxfordshire Chilterns between the villages of Nuffield and Stoke Row, and was acquired by the Woodland Trust in 1992. Ipsden Heath is part of a larger area of woodland and is bounded on two sides by minor roads, to the north by an access track and on the west side by a substantial earth bank and ditch separating it from neighbouring woodland.

The woodland composition is mature oak, ash, cherry, and beech trees, ranging from around 80 to 150 years in age, with natural regeneration of ash and beech. There is a scattering of yew trees over 200 years old throughout the woodland, with some hazel and whitebeam, plus some small blocks of non-native conifers (totalling around 1.2 Ha) which were planted during the 1960's and 1970's. The broadleaf / conifer component currently stands at around 90%/10%.

It is thought that this was an area of wooded heath used as common land until around the 1850's when the first beech would have been planted. Although the site is not ancient woodland, it is bordered by ancient woodland to the west and east and does harbour some characteristic ancient woodland species such as abundant bluebells, wood sorrel, enchanter's nightshade, herb robert, sweet woodruff and dog's mercury. These plants are visually appealing in the spring and many visitors come to view and photograph them. The woodland lies on clay with flint soils which become progressively thinner and more calcareous towards the east and the south.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Getting there: The nearest bus stops are at Checkendon (post office) and Stoke Row (Church View). From either stop, it is approximately 1.5 miles (2.4km) to the wood via minor roads and public rights of way. There are several places where cars can pull off the road around the woodland boundary. There is one public right of way (public footpath No.37) crossing the centre of the wood and a restricted byway skirting the northern boundary. Other paths are permissive. The land gently slopes towards the west and the ground conditions can become muddy in wet weather.

Public conveniences: The nearest public conveniences are at Wallingford (7 miles / 11.2km) in south Oxfordshire (www.southoxon.gov.uk or tel. 01491 82300) which are situated in a public car park and are accessible.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The management of this site encompasses several criteria of The Woodland Trust's management approach, and will be;

- Managed to maintain intrinsic key features and reflect those of the surrounding landscape
- Managed to provide free, welcoming, accessible and safe public access for quiet, informal recreation
- Managed to retain heritage and cultural value, and old-growth / ancient trees will be retained for as long as possible

Natural processes will help to shape the woodland so that it contains a range of different ages of trees, and have gaps in the canopy in which natural regeneration can develop. As the woodland matures, some broadleaved trees will be left to reach old age and decline naturally. Deadwood, both standing and fallen will be maintained to provide important niche habitats within the wood, particularly for invertebrates and fungi, except if they pose a significant tree safety risk.

Naturally regenerating species (excluding ash) include beech, English oak, cherry and yew, with some young rowan and a shrub composition of hawthorn, blackthorn, holly and hazel. These species will replace the declining beech and ash over time. After detailed assessment, the conifer composition within the woodland is not currently considered a threat to native flora regeneration, and offers some diversity to structure and habitat as well as canopy cover which will help shade areas should ash dieback diminish overall tree stock. The seeding and regeneration of species such as Western hemlock will be monitored and action taken should this become a threat to native broadleaf regeneration or native flora through shading.

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, and the likely colonisation by ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) and other pests and diseases monitored and managed where necessary.

The public's enjoyment of the woodland will be sustained by maintaining an accessible and safe network of paths and rides. Entrances, boundary fences, and benches will be maintained as necessary and the access provision will be monitored and provided.

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 Secondary Woodland

Description

Secondary woodland with examples of ancient semi natural woodland indicator plants such as bluebell, wood sorrel and enchanters' nightshade. Approximately 90% of the site is broadleaved woodland with three small conifer areas (cmpts 1b, 1c & 1d) totalling 1.2 ha, which have been thinned gradually over the last decade and now pose very little threat by shading to the broadleaf regeneration or ground flora. The remaining component provides a diversity of structure and habitat and may provide some canopy resilience if invasive pests and diseases affect the ash / oak / beech in the future. The woodland is thought to have naturally grown on the site of what was once a wooded common.

Significance

This woodland is important as it is characteristic of the Chilterns wooded commons that used to be worked for many years as a local source of wood products and grazing pasture for commoners.

This long-established site holds many plants which are more characteristic of ancient woodlands, and so should be treated as equally as important in terms of biodiversity. It is also surrounded by classified ancient woodland and so over time ancient native flora has spread to the site. It also forms an important secure buffer to this surrounding ancient woodland.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

There are some steep slopes and pits in the dry valley which are a challenge to forestry operations
Timber quality is low-grade and low-volume making operations uneconomic

Opportunities:

There are some mature to late-mature oak, beech and yew to be retained as future old growth trees

Factors Causing Change

Deer Damage

Change in species composition due to tree diseases e.g. ash dieback

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The secondary woodland should be predominantly broadleaved in character with a few stands of open-canopied, mature specimen conifers retained for enhanced diversity, structure and resilience. There will be a range of age-classes from scrub to maturing high forest. The woodland will be for the most part allowed to develop naturally towards more semi-natural ancient woodland characteristics with a range of native broadleaved tree species. All areas should be developing some natural characteristics with structural and species diversity, and planted compartments will have lost most of their original plantation characteristics.

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

- No silvicultural operations will take place in the woodland during this plan period.
- The conifer element will be assessed again at the end of this plan period in 2020 to determine whether another thinning operation is needed to further convert the woodland towards more broadleaved conditions.
- Deer assessments will continue to be carried out every two years in order to determine the long-term impact of deer browsing pressure on the woodland and whether the deer management contract should be continued.
- Tree safety inspections will be carried out annually within the Zone A tree safety zones and every three years in the Zone B.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

There is a one public footpath running north/south through the wood (public footpath No.37) as well as several permissive paths. The site receives only occasional visitors. The site is classed as an Access Category C site which entails one scheduled maintenance visit per year.

Significance

It provides a quiet area for walking and recreation for local people. One of the Woodland Trust's key objectives is the promotion of public access to, and enjoyment of, woodlands.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

Vehicular parking spaces on the boundaries are limited

The terrain is steep in places and some of the paths difficult to navigate, particularly in adverse weather conditions

Opportunities :

To provide formal and quiet access opportunities to a woodland with interesting flora

Factors Causing Change

Changes in vegetation along rides

Use of site by horse-riders / unauthorised vehicles

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The paths will be kept safe for quiet, recreational pedestrian access to the woodland

The site should be accessible and safe but not over-managed with excessive infrastructure and signage

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

The paths will be kept open all year around for pedestrian visitors to the woodland, and all paths will be cut back to approx. 3m in width ensuring overhanging branches are also dealt with

Marked entrances will have vegetation managed, signs cleaned minor repairs carried out

Litter will be removed from entrances and paths

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	11.85	Beech	1901	High forest		Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
<p>This compartment covers most of the site. It is made up of predominantly mature to over mature beech, oak, ash and cherry trees with some scattered old yew trees and holly bushes. Bramble, bluebell, bracken and dogs mercury are growing mainly at the eastern and southern ends of the compartment.</p>							
1b	0.36	Mixed conifers	1960	PAWS restoration		Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
<p>A small plantation of grand fir, planted around 1960. The ground flora is sparse, but has some typical ancient woodland indicator species.</p>							
1c	0.12	Norway spruce	1975	PAWS restoration		Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
<p>A small plantation of red oak and Norway spruce which was planted around 1975 amongst several mature oak trees.</p>							
1d	0.67	Ash	1975	PAWS restoration		Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
<p>A mixed stand containing ash and oak, with a component of conifers (Norway spruce and western hemlock).</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.