



The Plantation & Bluebell Field

Management Plan

2018-2023

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 Historic Landscape	
5.2 Informal Public Access	
6.0 Work Programme	
Appendix 1: Compartment descriptions	
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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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 Plantation & Bluebell Field
Location:	Uphill
Grid reference:	ST317590, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 182
Area:	5.11 hectares (12.63 acres)
Designations:	Conservation Area, Tree Preservation Order

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

The Plantation and Bluebell Field is a 19th century plantation of predominantly beech well known for its display of bulbs, particularly bluebells in springtime. The main entrance to the wood is through a squeeze point off Uphill Road North.

2.2 Extended Description

The Plantation and Bluebell Field is a plantation wood and parkland field with scattered mature trees, situated between Weston Super Mare and the village of Uphill. It lies within The Somerset Levels and Moors National Character Area Profile 142 (NCA). It is situated between the roads and housing of Uphill Rd South and Old Church Rd to the south and east, and a golf course to the north and west, close to the coastline of the Severn Estuary. The whole site is an important landscape and historic feature for Uphill village and Weston-Super-Mare, and is a popular part of recreational green space in the area. The mature veteran trees and parkland of wood pasture are an important part of the former historic landscape of Uphill Manor.

The site comprises a mid-19th Century plantation of predominantly mature beech, with sycamore, oak, yew and horse chestnut with a holly dominated understorey (Cpt 1a), and The Bluebell field (Cpt 1b) - a parkland field of wood pasture rich in spring flowers, particularly bluebells and snowdrops which carpet the field in springtime, and contains scattered mature veteran trees. The field is managed by late summer and autumn grazing with cattle. It was also known locally as the Donkey Field as it was used to over winter the donkeys from Weston Super Mare beach.

The soils are marine alluvium, and so mostly sandy and free draining. A linear sand bank within the wood was created by sand drifts piling up against old hedgerows. This now provides the only relief across the otherwise flat site.

Before acquisition by the Woodland Trust the site had not been open to the public. After consultation it was agreed that the wood would be opened up for quiet informal recreation, but the field would remain closed principally to protect the displays of spring flowers from damage. The wood is now well used with a network of small paths leading from an adjoining public footpath and the public highway. The field is grazed from late summer to autumn by Dexter cattle, with the pavement and highway of Uphill Rd South and Old Church Rd offering good views of the field, which is bordered by traditional Victorian wrought iron railings.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Overview

Situated between Uphill and Weston Super Mare, the eastern boundary of the woodland and the Bluebell Field border onto Uphill Road South and Old Church Road which are both public highways with footpaths. The main entrance to the wood is through a kissing gate on Uphill Road South. The north boundary of the wood adjoins a public footpath which leads towards the beach and there are two minor entrances here across small bridges over a ditch. A management gate allows vehicular access to the field through the railing fence, but this is not for public access

The networks of paths within the wood are well used, and consist of un-surfaced permissive paths. Some traverse sandy banks and can be steep in small sections, but generally remain in good condition even after heavy rain.

Parking

Suburban on-road parking is available on the roads around the wood.

Public Transport

There is a bus stop in Uphill Village which forms part of the main route from Weston Super Mare to Bridgewater. The train station at Weston Super Mare is a 2km walk through the town. For up-to-date information on public transport, visit traveline.org.uk, or telephone 0871 200 22 33

Facilities

There is a public toilet on Links Road in Uphill. <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/services/links-road/>

3.2 Access / Walks

Situated between Uphill and Weston Super Mare, the eastern boundary of the woodland and the Bluebell Field border onto Uphill Road South and Old Church Road which are both public highways with footpaths. The main entrance to the wood is through a kissing gate on Uphill Road South. The north boundary of the wood adjoins a public footpath which leads towards the beach and there are two minor entrances here across small bridges over a ditch. A management gate allows vehicular access to the field through the railing fence, but this is not for public access

The networks of paths within the wood are well used, and consist of un-surfaced permissive paths. Some traverse sandy banks and can be steep in small sections, but generally remain in good condition even after heavy rain.

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The integrity of the historic landscape will have been preserved for future generations to enjoy. The Plantation will be a self-sustaining, well-structured, diverse woodland, ensuring continuity of the historic wooded landscape. Veteran specimen trees will have been retained as far as possible, and where appropriate new ones will have been planted for future generations. The Bluebell Field will remain a visually attractive area of open grassland rich in spring flowers with large veteran trees complementing the adjacent woodland as part of the wider historic environment.

The site will remain a high quality recreational resource valued by local users and visitors alike. The Plantation will be enjoyed by local people through a network of well-maintained paths and welcoming entrances. The Bluebell Field will remain closed to protect the spring flowers from damage and to prevent disturbance to grazing animals, however the whole field and the display of flowers will be easily viewed from the surrounding pavement and historically important Victorian wrought iron railings.

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 Landscape

Description

The site comprises a mid-19th Century plantation of broadleaf woodland (Cpt 1a), and The Bluebell field (Cpt 1b) - a parkland field of wood pasture rich in spring flowers that was formerly part of Uphill Manors grounds and farmland.

Plantation Wood is a predominantly mature beech wood planted 1850-1900. Mainly beech in the eastern half, over abundant holly. The western half of the wood is more mixed with sycamore, yew, oak, Holm oak, beech and aspen, with a mixed understorey, dominated by holly but with some elm, young horse chestnut, hawthorn and sycamore.

The Bluebell Field is a parkland field of wood pasture with scattered mature veteran trees. It is rich in spring flowers, particularly bluebells which carpet the field in springtime. Other spring flowers starting with snowdrops, primroses and cowslips also provide stunning displays throughout the Spring. The more general grassland flora is that of largely unimproved to semi-improved neutral grassland with birds foot trefoil, vetches and grasses. Occasional ragwort has flowered each year but is generally pulled before it can seed. The field was also known locally as the Donkey Field as it was used to over winter the donkeys from Weston Super Mare beach and holiday town. The scattered mature and veteran trees in the field include large beech, sycamore, horse chestnut, yew, maples and oak trees, some regenerating aspen, with large amounts of fallen deadwood from old specimen trees left around the bases of trees. Some new elm and horse chestnut trees have been planted since the 1990's.

The field has been grazed regularly, first as wood pasture and farmland from Uphill Manor, then by the over-wintering donkeys, and now by The Woodland Trust with Dexter cattle and occasional topping of the grass and bramble. It is grazed through late summer and autumn to allow grass to be reduced prior to the spring and early summer flowering display and in keeping with the historic usage, and animals removed when the field starts to get too wet in early winter.

The metal railings around the roadside boundary were replaced in 2008, using close replicas of the original Victorian wrought iron railings.

Significance

The site is locally important for its rich historic landscape, and the field forms a rare feature in a semi-urban setting. It has a strong historic and cultural links both with the Manor House and the Donkeys from regularly holiday makers to Weston Super Mare pleasure beach. The site is highly visible in Uphill village, and local residents value it highly both historically and for recreation. The mature open grown trees in an urban setting allows them to be enjoyed by many people.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities

Opportunity to re-start planting of future specimen trees.

Periodic grazing to control dense scrub and vegetation and increase the botanical interest of the field.

Constraints

TPO on whole site.

Occasional mis-use and vandalism of trees and fences.

Factors Causing Change

Suckering poplar, bramble and scrub encroachment on grassland

Dense stands of abundant holly in woodland

Long term decline of specimen trees causing loss or history, and health and safety hazards in and around the site.

Damage from adverse weather particularly windblown trees.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The integrity of the historic landscape will have been preserved for future generations to enjoy. The Plantation will be a self-sustaining, well-structured, diverse woodland, ensuring continuity of the historic wooded landscape. Veteran specimen trees will have been retained as far as possible, and where appropriate new ones will have been planted for future generations. The Bluebell Field will remain a visually attractive area of open grassland rich in spring flowers with large veteran trees complementing the adjacent woodland as part of the wider historic environment.

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

Ensure continued existence of the woodland historic landscape, allowing a diverse structure with a broad range of species to be maintained through largely natural process.

Holly will be controlled (cleared or thinned) where it is prohibiting natural regeneration and thus the sustainability of natural processes.

Ensure the retention and integrity of historic parkland/wood pasture through annual summer-autumn grazing of The Bluebell Field, supplemented by occasional cutting of bramble and developing scrub.

Plant 2 X specimen trees to continue history of the parkland planting where gaps in canopy allow away from road.

- Annual grazing with cattle from late summer to late autumn. Graze with a low stocking density of 4 to 8 cows, ideally conservation graziers such as Dexter cattle.

Other invasive weeds (e.g. ragwort) or excessive poplar regen will be checked for annually and controlled as necessary to comply with relevant legislation and UKWAS standards.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

The site is an important recreational green space for residents of Uphill village and Weston-Super-Mare. The wood is surrounded by housing, public roads, and a golf course. There are numerous paths with access points from the road and public footpath running along the eastern and northern boundaries. It is frequently used for walking, dog walking and as a play area for children and young adults, and occasional visits by regular holidaying visitors to the area. A circular path with a network of smaller paths means that all parts of this small wood are well visited. The extent of paths and variety in the internal landscape means the site maintains interest for daily visitors despite its relatively small size.

The site is also accessed by the Volunteer Warden and Uphill Village Society who support the management of the site. It has also been used by Uphill Primary School and Broadoak secondary school for educational activities.

The Bluebell Field has no internal footpaths and is closed to walkers to protect the spring flowers from damage and to prevent disturbance to the grazing animals. However the whole field and the display of flowers are easily viewed from the surrounding pavement and historically important Victorian wrought iron railings that surround it, with many amateur photographers visiting the field to photograph the Spring displays of flowers.

Significance

Public access is vital to ensure on-going support for the Trust's work. Inspiring everyone to enjoy and value woodland is a fundamental aim of the Woodland Trust. Plantation and Bluebell Field provides an important local amenity for people living in the area, and it is well used by local walkers, dog walkers and young adults, and is an important amenity to the surrounding area.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities

There are numerous active local groups who occasionally use the site. Some encouragement will increase the amount of public engagement at the site.

Constraints

The high level of public use and proximity to roads and housing combined with the loose sandy soils makes tree safety an important issue.

The high levels of public interest mean that the site needs to look 'tidier' than a more rural site, however this must balance with the benefits of the site for wildlife, which generally thrives in less tidy areas.

Factors Causing Change

Erosion and deterioration of paths

Mis-use and vandalism due to the urban nature of the site.

Loss of trees or woodland through pests/diseases E.g. Ash die-back, Sweet chestnut blight etc.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The site will remain a high quality recreational resource valued by local users and visitors alike. The Plantation will be enjoyed by local people through a network of well-maintained paths and welcoming entrances. The Bluebell Field will remain closed to protect the spring flowers from damage and to prevent disturbance to grazing animals, however the whole field and the display of flowers will be easily viewed from the surrounding pavement and historically important Victorian wrought iron railings.

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

The short term objective is to maintain the site as easily accessible, attractive, well maintained and safe woodland.

The path network and entrances should remain in good condition and appropriate for level and type of use and in accordance with access category B.

Entrance furniture will be maintained as required to keep them welcoming and in good condition during path cuts and allow access to walkers.

Litter will be regularly collected to maintain a welcoming feel to the site, and other anti-social activity will be monitored and rectified as appropriate.

Cut encroaching vegetation along the pavement and railings annually.

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	3.60	Beech	1900	High forest			Conservation Area, Tree Preservation Order
<p>Plantation wood was created around the turn of the C19. The eastern part of the wood is predominantly mature beech c P1850-1900 over abundant regeneration. Understorey species include dense holly, with elm, and sycamore. The western half of the wood is more mixed with sycamore, beech, yew, oak, horse chestnut, Holm oak, and aspen in the far west corner. Although generally flat there is a large sandbank in the western half of the wood that gives additional interest.</p>							
1b	1.40	Open ground	1900	Wood pasture			Conservation Area, Tree Preservation Order
<p>Bluebell Field (also known as Donkey Field) is a parkland grass field with scattered mature open grown trees including oak, beech, horse chestnut, yew, and maples with a patch of regenerating aspen/poplar. Replacement trees have been planted since 1990 to replace the specimens as they fail. In the last plan period one large beech blew and several large oak branches split out, whilst one elm and a horse chestnut were planted. A variety of deadwood specialist species have been identified on the deadwood available here, including woodpeckers and numerous fungi. Ground flora is mostly grass but with abundant spring plants of snowdrops, bluebells, cowslips and vetch which turn the field white, blue, yellow then purple in turn through the first half of the year. The site is flat. It is surrounded by metal railings to the east and south that were replaced in 2008 with replicas of the original style, and stock fencing to the north and west.</p> <p>A small pond marked on OS Map in the SW corner of the Bluebell Field no longer exists as it is now filled with mud and leaf litter and no longer holds water. A water trough for cattle is in the SW, the meter is on the pavement of Old Church Rd.</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.