



Ladies Walk Wood

Management Plan 2018-2023

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THE WOODLAND TRUST

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATING

The information presented in this Management plan is held in a database which is continuously being amended and updated on our website. Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations. Please either consult The Woodland Trust website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk 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:	Ladies Walk Wood
Location:	Warrington
Grid reference:	SJ587899, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 108
Area:	6.20 hectares (15.32 acres)
Designations:	Community Forest, Local Wildlife Site, Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Ladies Walk Wood is a broadleaved woodland with a mix of trees including some veteran mature beech, lime, oak, sycamore and horse chestnuts. It is located in the Old Hall area of north west Warrington next to Gullivers World Theme Park and Shackleton Close. The wood is adjacent to Sankey Valley Park which has a mosaic of habitats including woodland, grassland and ponds with an extensive network of mainly surfaced footpaths. In spring there are some nice displays of bluebells in the wood and there is also a heronry by the large pond in the middle of the wood near to Bewsey New Hall.

2.2 Extended Description

Ladies Walk Wood is a small (6.2ha) urban woodland located in the Old Hall area of Warrington, approximately 3 miles to the north west of the town centre. It is situated on Shackleton Close and is bordered by housing, roads, Gulliver's World Theme Park and Sankey Valley Park. The site is split into two main compartments with the largest (5.4ha) compartment 2 being on the east side of Shackleton Close and a smaller (0.74ha) compartment 1 being on the west side of the road.

The site is flat and lies within in an urban landscape. The soils across much of the wood have been subject to disturbance and are typically sandy silt loam with a good humus and organic surface layer. It was formerly part of the Bewsey Hall Estate prior to the land being purchased by the Commission for the New Towns (CNT) in the late 1970's. It was gifted to the Woodland Trust in September 1995 along with several other woodlands in the area. The Woodland Trust owns a further nine woodlands within a 2 mile radius amounting to a local estate of approximately 26ha.

It is secondary broadleaved woodland which is a key feature of the site. The canopy includes a significant number of mature English oak, beech, horse chestnut, alder, pine with occasional sycamore, ash, Scots and Corsican pines. The under storey contains quite extensive areas of recent under planting (rowan, birch, cherry, alder, field maple, hazel) planted by the Development Corporation (circa 1980). Woodland and ride edge plantings were also introduced and include blackthorn, dog rose, hawthorn, hazel, holly. The ground layer includes bramble, dog rose, bluebell, ferns and ivy. The site is an important local habitat for wildlife and has been designated as a Local Wildlife Site by Warrington Borough Council.

There are three old marl pits on the site which have filled naturally with water to form permanent ponds. The largest pond in sub-cpt 2A is heavily silted up, although it has a breeding heronry in some of the mature trees nearby. Sub-cpt 1A contains two smaller ponds which are used for fishing and are leased to a local angling club.

Informal Public Access is a second key feature of the site with permissive footpaths from Shackleton Close through the main block of woodland (compartment 2A) to Sankey Valley Park and a separate path leading to the fishing ponds in compartment 1A. The wood is quite well used on a daily basis by local people. Due to the urban location of the wood it suffers from misuse from time to time including fly tipping, litter, vandalism and fire damage to trees.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

The main entrance to the wood is on Shackleton Close about 100 yards from Cromwell Avenue (A574) just after the road leading to Gulliver's World Theme Park (signposted from nearby roads). There is vehicle barrier on the roadside with open pedestrian access to the side which leads into the main block of the woodland. A permissive surfaced footpath runs through the wood to Sankey Valley Park at the far end of the wood which also has open access for pedestrians.

There is no car parking at the wood and the nearest car parking is at the Westbrook Shopping Centre which is about a 5-10 minute walk away along the pavement next to Cromwell Avenue towards Gulliver's World.

The nearest bus stops are located on Cromwell Avenue near to the Westbrook Shopping Centre. For more information on bus services and locations of bus stops visit the Traveline website www.traveline.org.uk

The nearest public toilets can be found at the Westbrook Centre, this is signed and is about 5 minutes walk north along the A574 Cromwell Avenue.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term intention for Ladies Walk Wood is to maintain a mixed broadleaved high forest as an integral part of the wider ecological landscape. It will be managed predominantly as a landscape and conservation feature to ensure the continuity of woodland habit and will continue to provide an amenity to the local population. Guided by the Woodland Trust's woodland management approach, the long term management will continue to seek a balance between conservation and public enjoyment. The woodland will be left to develop largely through natural processes, with mature and veteran trees retained and standing deadwood left on site where safe to do so.

Public safety and access will be the key drivers for woodland management operations with tree safety being a high priority in areas near to houses, roads and footpaths. Tree safety and other silvicultural operations will aim to reduce long term tree safety liability and create gaps in the canopy to promote natural regeneration and improve the woodland structure. Regeneration of both natives and non-native species will be accepted. Coppicing along paths and boundaries will be undertaken periodically to maintain path sight lines and create a more graduated woodland edge.

Existing levels of public access provision will be maintained and the Trust's duty of care to neighbours and visitors will continue to be addressed through on-going tree safety and site risk assessment inspections. The woodland will be regularly monitored for long term threats from tree diseases, pests, invasive non-native species and human impacts (particularly fly tipping and vandalism) to ensure the long term sustainability of the woodland.

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 Informal Public Access

Description

There are 4 entrances which provide public access to the site with approximately 850m of surfaced permissive footpath through the wood from Shackleton Close to Sankey Valley Park. The entrances are open access although there is a metal vehicle barrier on Shackleton Close which is the only management access onto site. It is relatively quiet and mostly used by local people for dog walking and to get to Sankey Valley Park. There are several open ditches in the wood with piped culverts where the paths cross the ditches. There is also a large pond in Compartment 2 and two smaller ponds in Compartment 1 which are leased to Penketh and Old Hall Angling Society.

Significance

Increasing access to and enjoyment of woodland is one of the Woodland Trust's key outcomes and Ladies Walk Wood provides local people with the opportunity to access and enjoy woodland and nature close to where they live. The wood is a prominent feature in the local landscape located next to Shackleton Close and is visible from the main road Cromwell Avenue. It provides a range of amenity benefits, including helping to "soften" the surrounding urban landscape, absorption of pollution and as a barrier against noise from nearby roads, and provides physical and mental health benefits for people in the local area.

Opportunities & Constraints

The woodland is quite small and bordered on the southern side by houses and gardens. The existing access provision very much fulfils the sites potential and there is little opportunity to increase the path network without having a detrimental impact on the woodland habitat. The site is flat and the existing paths make it accessible for all to enjoy.

Factors Causing Change

Misuse including vandalism, fires, litter and fly tipping.
Increased public usage may lead to greater wear and tear on paths and woodland flora being destroyed/ damaged by public access away from paths.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long-term objective is to maintain the entrances and footpaths at the wood to a suitable standard for visitors to use all year round. The wood should remain as an attractive landscape feature, and as a relatively natural woodland with urban wildlife. The site will be made as safe as practicable for visitors and neighbours through regular safety inspections of trees in high risk zones, site hazards and access infrastructure. Any threats to the wood arising from public recreation or misuse will be monitored and appropriate measures taken if necessary.

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

Maintain the 4 entrances, signage, approximately 850m of footpaths and culverts through the annual EMC. This will include cutting back of vegetation and trees encroaching on the footpaths and removing litter & fly tipping as necessary.

Undertake regular safety inspections of trees in high risk zones (i.e. next to buildings, roads and footpaths) and site hazards as per the Trust's safety inspection regime to ensure safety of visitors and neighbours, and undertaking any remedial safety work identified.

Carry out coppicing along paths, entrances and boundaries to improve sight lines and create a graduated woodland edge structure in 2020-22.

Monitor public use of the site during the current plan period to review the current standard of access provision and identify if there are any issues/ threats to the wood from public usage, taking appropriate action to address them if necessary.

Continue to liaise with Penketh and Old Hall Angling Society regarding the management of the fishing ponds and platforms.

5.2 Natural Secondary Woodland

Description

The wood consists of mixed native and non-native broadleaves dominated by English oak with sycamore, beech, birch, alder, willow, field maple, rowan, horse chestnut and a few scattered Scots and Corsican pines. The under storey and shrub layers comprise a mixture of natural regeneration and under planting (by the Commission for New Towns in the 1980's) including birch, alder, goat willow, ash, wild cherry, hawthorn, rowan, elder, sycamore, pear, beech and oak. Ground flora includes bramble, dog rose, bluebells, ferns and ivy. The woodland edge provides important roosting and nesting habitat for a wide range of birds, butterflies, moths and other invertebrates. The ponds contain significant number of amphibians, dragonflies and aquatic invertebrates and the large pond has herons nesting in the trees around.

Significance

Ladies Walk Wood is a significant landscape and conservation feature within an urban environment. It provides a valuable habitat for a range of urban wildlife and contains a range of common woodland flora species. Along with other nearby Woodland Trust owned woodlands it is part of the local ecological landscape in the area which includes ponds, streams and ditches, formal and informal scrub and shrubs, rough and managed grassland. The importance of the site for wildlife has been acknowledged by Warrington Borough Council who have designated it as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (Local Wildlife Site).

Opportunities & Constraints

The existing under planting and natural regeneration provides an opportunity to ensure a variable structure in terms of species and age class mixtures, and developing future trees to fill gaps in the canopy.

The close proximity of the woodland to housing brings with it greater tree safety risk which needs to be managed and has significant cost implications. To reduce the long term risks this will require tree safety work, stand stability thinning and boundary coppicing periodically which will provide opportunities for natural regeneration and to diversify the woodland structure.

Factors Causing Change

Tree disease, particularly Ash dieback disease will impact on the canopy/ structure/ species mix in the future.

Tree safety works in high risk zones will result in removal of some mature trees.

Fly tipping, fires and vandalism will impact on woodland flora and trees.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

In the long term the site will be managed to maintain a mixed broadleaf woodland with variable structure, mix of age classifications and species distribution. The wood will be left to develop largely through natural process with succession promoted through natural regeneration, mature trees retained into senescence and standing dead trees will be kept on site to provide important deadwood habitat where it does not compromise public safety. Tree safety and silvicultural operations will focus on maintaining stand stability and reducing long term risks along boundaries and footpaths for public safety. This will create opportunistic gaps in the canopy promoting natural regeneration and structural diversification. Boundary coppicing will be undertaken periodically to maintain a graduated woodland edge structure and to reduce the tree safety/ encroachment liability at the same time as enhancing the biodiversity value of the woodland. Threats to the wood from pests, tree disease and invasive species will be monitored and where necessary appropriate action taken to control them.

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

Carry out a Woodland Condition Assessment towards the end of the current plan period to assess the health and resilience of the woodland including the mix of species and natural regeneration, to monitor threats from tree disease, pests, non-native invasive species (e.g. rhododendron) and to take appropriate action where necessary.

Undertake tree safety inspections as part of the site risk assessment regime for public safety in high risk zones (i.e. by buildings, footpaths and roads) and carry out any remedial work identified.

Thinning operations will be carried out during the plan period focusing on areas adjacent to housing and footpaths for long term stand stability and public safety.

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	0.74	Oak (pedunculate)	1900	High forest	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Informal Public Access, Natural Secondary Woodland	Community Forest
<p>This small woodland compartment lies to the west of the main woodland block of Ladies Walk Wood. It covers 0.74 ha and contains two large connected marl pits which are now ponds used for angling and are leased to Penketh and Old Hall Angling Club (and have been for many years). The ponds have platforms along the edge for fishing and a surfaced track from Shackleton Close for public access. There is wooden sleeper footbridge that crosses the ditch between the two ponds. The woodland canopy is mostly mature broadleaves including oak, beech, alder and hornbeam with younger woodland edge planting from the 1980s including hazel, dog rose, blackthorn and hawthorn. A ditch feeds into and out of the ponds with the main outfall culvert being located in the north east of the sub-cpt 1 (adjacent to Shackleton Close).</p>							
2a	2.01	Oak (pedunculate)	1900	High forest	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site	Informal Public Access, Natural Secondary Woodland	Community Forest, Local Wildlife Site
<p>This sub-compartment forms the western part of the main woodland block and is adjacent to Shackleton Close. It contains the main vehicular and public access into compartment 2. It has been defined as a separate sub-compartment due to the large number of properties that lie alongside this part of the woodland. Management will need to reflect these special circumstances. A surfaced footpath/access track acts as the eastern boundary of the sub-compartment. In the north of this sub-compartment there is a ditch network that drains this part of the woodland into the main outfall ditch that runs parallel to the Gulliver's World theme park access road.</p> <p>The woodland is mature high forest comprising oak, beech, sycamore, alder with occasional Horse chestnut, common lime and Corsican and Scots Pines. The understorey of the woodland consists of rowan, ash, cherry, alder and along the woodland edge are shrubs including blackthorn, hawthorn, dog rose, hazel, field maple that were planted prior to the housing development in the late 1970's /early 1980's.</p>							

2b	3.45	Oak (pedunculate)	1900	High forest	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site, Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site	Informal Public Access, Natural Secondary Woodland	Community Forest, Local Wildlife Site
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Sub-compartment 2b is to the north/ east of the permissive footpath/ track next to Sub-Cpt 2a. It is bounded to the north by a grass verge with a wooden chestnut pale fencing (wooden markers) alongside the road to Gulliver's World Theme Park, to the west by an internal surfaced footpath, to the east by private land (gardens and field) and to the south by Sankey Valley Park (Warrington Borough Council). The woodland contains mixed broadleaved trees including oak, beech, sycamore, horse chestnut, lime, alder, cherry, birch, sycamore and rowan with scattered Corsican and Scots pine. The understorey varies from sparse pockets of thorn to more dense areas of thorn with under planting of rowan, cherry, ash, oak. Part of the woodland contains what appears to be the remains of a garden (adjacent to the recently rebuilt Coach House. In addition there is a large central pond with a heronry in the mature trees. This pond is heavily shaded and shows signs of eutrophication. A drainage ditch runs from west to east taking surface water from the northern section of the sub-compartment. A small area of planting (ash, oak, beech, hazel, hawthorn, dog rose) lies to the south of the sub-compartment and connects two areas of mature woodland. The surfaced footpath provides a link from Shackleton Close through Ladies Walk Wood to Sankey Valley Park and is used on a daily basis mainly by local dog walkers

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2021	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.25	8	2
2022	1a	Thin	5.50	4	20
2025	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.25	8	2

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.