



Mary Ann Plantation

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Mary Ann Plantation
Location:	Warrington
Grid reference:	SJ575902, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 108
Area:	4.10 hectares (10.13 acres)
Designations:	Community Forest, Local Wildlife Site

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

This small urban woodland provides a great opportunity to combine a trip to the shops with some exercise and enjoying nature. Mary Ann Plantation is located right next to Westbrook shopping centre, is easy to access from the shopping centre car park and has a surfaced, mostly flat footpath in the wood. It has some magnificent mature trees, a stream flows through the wood and there is abundant birdlife to seen and heard.

2.2 Extended Description

Mary Ann Plantation is a 4.1ha secondary woodland located in the Westbrook district in north-west Warrington. It forms a linear woodland shelterbelt approximately 900m long by 50m wide and runs parallel to the south side of Westbrook Way between Burtonwood Road and Cromwell Avenue. The woodland is split into two compartments by Westbrook Crescent. The surrounding landscape is urban with roads, a local shopping centre, a primary school, medical centre, pub and playing fields adjacent to most of the boundaries. The plantation occupies a prominent and visible roadside location seen by many people driving by.

The wood was originally planted as a shelterbelt and was purchased by the Commission for the New Towns (CNT) in the early 1980's. The CNT carried out under planting and woodland edge planting with a mix of broadleaves including ash, oak, cherry and hawthorn. The plantation along with several other small woodlands in the area was then gifted to the Woodland Trust in December 1995.

The site is flat and lies approximately 20m above sea level and has mostly undisturbed sandy-clay-loam soils.

Secondary broadleaved woodland is a key feature for the site. It contains a mixture of broadleaves including many mature beech, lime, sycamore, oak, horse chestnut, willow, cherry, ash and elm. The western sub-compartment contains more recent broadleaved plantings of ash, English oak, birch, damson, hawthorn and wild cherry. A small river, North Brook, flows through the woodland from west to east. The ground flora is quite sparse due to the dense canopy, but includes bluebell, bramble, nettle, ferns, ivy and a variety of grasses. The eastern compartment (1A) of the site is designated as a Local Wildlife Site.

Informal Public access is another key feature with a surfaced footpath running through the wood linking the nearby housing estates to the Westbrook Shopping Centre, medical centre, primary school and library. As with many urban woodlands and green spaces it suffers from issues such as litter, fly tipping, vandalism and fires.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Mary Ann Plantation is in the Westbrook district of Warrington, approximately 3 miles to the north west of the town centre. There are six entrances into the wood from adjoining roads and from a tarmac footpath that runs to the rear of the Asda store delivery yard to the side of the Westbrook medical centre.

A linear surfaced footpath runs through the wood for nearly 1km through both compartments from the Westbrook Centre, crossing Westbrook Crescent and carries on to Burtonwood Road. The path is surfaced with stone and flat apart from a slight gradient into the western part of the wood by the entrance from Westbrook Crescent. The path crosses over a stream at different points via three footbridges.

By car: From Warrington, head north on the A574 (Cromwell Avenue). Drive past Twenty Acre Park and then turn left on to Westbrook Crescent. There is parking at the shopping centre and the wood lies to the rear of the Asda store and medical centre. There is parking at the shopping centre.

By bus: There is a bus stop on Westbrook Crescent, opposite Asda. Bus numbers 17, 18 and 18A from central Warrington stop here.

By train: The nearest train station is Sankey station (3.7km/2.3 miles).

For up-to-date information on public transport, visit traveline.org.uk.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term policy for Mary Ann Plantation is to maintain a high forest broadleaved woodland, of predominantly native species with oak, beech, sycamore, alder and horse chestnut in the canopy and diverse shrub and ground flora layers. It will be managed primarily as a landscape feature, woodland habitat and amenity for local people to enjoy.

Guided by the Woodland Trust's woodland management approach, conservation and access policies long term management will aim to seek a balance between conservation and public enjoyment. The wood will be managed to maintain a diverse structure and mix of species to ensure that it is as resilient as possible to future threats such as climate change, pests and tree disease. Mature trees will be retained for as long as safe to do so and natural regeneration will be promoted. Public access, safety and long term stand stability will be key drivers for woodland management operations, particularly focussing on areas bordering roads, buildings and footpaths.

Open public access will be retained at the wood in perpetuity and visitor access maintained with approximately 940 metres of surfaced footpath and 6 entrances. 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, non-native species, human impacts and 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 is approximately 940m of surfaced permissive footpath through the length of the wood with open access points at the western and eastern ends of compartments 1A and 2A and another access point from Mary Ann Meadows in compartment 2B. The main path forms an important link between the areas green space network, and is a key pedestrian corridor linking housing with the Westbrook Shopping Centre. There is a small river, North Brook, which flows from west to east through the site with three footbridges along the main footpath where it crosses over the river. Another footbridge crosses over the river where the path enters the wood from Mary Ann Meadows.

Significance

Increasing access to and enjoyment of woodland is one of the Woodland Trust's key outcomes and Mary Ann Plantation 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 Westbrook Way, the Westbrook Shopping Centre and nearby housing estates. 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. The wood is part of the Mersey Forest which aims to promote public access to woodland in the region.

Opportunities & Constraints

The linear nature of the wood means that the existing access provision very much fulfils the sites potential offering little opportunity to increase the path network without having a detrimental impact on the woodland habitat.

The close proximity of a large population means that the plantation is subject to intense use and frequent misuse (fires, den building, vandalism, litter and fly tipping) are perennial problems that need to be taken into consideration when carrying out any management operations.

Factors Causing Change

Vandalism to signs, litter and fly tipping are on-going issues which can result in damage to the woodland and make the site less welcoming for visitors.

The local area is under intense development pressure with new housing and other developments nearby which could increase visitor usage and potential misuse of the wood.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long-term intention is to maintain the present levels of public access so that visitors can continue to enjoy the woodland. Guided by the parameters set out in the Woodland Trust's woodland management principles and access policy, management will continue to seek a balance between conservation and public enjoyment. 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 furniture. 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)

During this plan period the short term objectives will be to:

1. Carry out annual maintenance of the entrances, signs, footbridges, culverts and cut back any vegetation encroaching on the footpaths, remove litter/ fly tipping as necessary, and clear debris from the stream to reduce flooding risk.
2. 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.
3. Carry out coppicing along path edges and entrances to improve sight lines in 2020.
4. Monitor public use of the site to review the current standard of access provision in 2020 and identify if there are any issues/ threats to the wood from public usage, taking appropriate action to address them if necessary.

5.2 Secondary Woodland

Description

Mary Ann Plantation is a secondary woodland of predominately mature broadleaves (sub-compartments 1A & 2A) and (0.74ha) of semi-mature plantation established in the early to mid-1980's by the CNT (sub-cmpt. 2B). The mature canopy is dominated by lime, beech and English oak with some sycamore, ash, willow, alder and elm. There is an abundant understory dominated by field maple, rowan, hawthorn, elder, hazel and holly with limited regeneration of canopy species. The ground flora is sparse due to the dense canopy, although there are pockets of bluebell and other woodland flora. The younger plantation (2B) has very little structural variety in terms of canopy and understory, but delivers structural diversity in terms of species composition. The ground flora is sparse and suppressed.

Significance

This area of Warrington is under intense pressure from development, which is affecting the quality and existence of a number of valuable wildlife habitats, consequently the value of Mary Ann Plantation managed as a woodland feature for perpetuity within a local mosaic of habitats is very important. Compartment 1 is part of a Local Wildlife Site. The Woodland Trust owns and manages a further nine woodlands within 2kms of Mary Ann amounting to a local estate of 25.8 ha.

Opportunities & Constraints

Due to the predominantly single aged upper canopy, many stands in the woodland will advance into senescence, providing opportunities through the tree safety programme to create specialised deadwood and decay habitats whilst opening up coupes for natural regeneration.

The key constraints at this site derive from the levels of misuse particularly vandalism, fires and the destruction of regeneration and understory for den building. These factors need to be taken into consideration when carrying out any management operations.

Factors Causing Change

Loss of over mature trees, particularly beech through senescence, pests and tree disease. Vandalism, fires and fly tipping are regular issues affecting the site which causes damage to trees and can limit the establishment of natural regeneration and woodland flora.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long-term objective for the wood is to maintain a continuous high forest of mature, mixed broadleaved species with a diverse structure (in terms of species composition, age/size classification) with a mix of tree, shrub and ground flora species. The wood will be left to develop largely through natural process with mature and over mature trees retained where they remain safe, deadwood habitats and succession promoted through natural regeneration. However due to its urban location with buildings and roads along boundaries and a well used footpath through the wood, the Trust's duty of care to visitors and neighbours may require management intervention for public safety. This will be assessed through the regular programme of safety inspections and woodland condition assessment.

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

During the plan period the short term objectives will be to:

1. monitor the health and resilience of the woodland by carrying out a woodland condition assessment in 2020 to monitor levels of natural regeneration, identify any threats from tree disease, pests or non-native invasive species, and take appropriate action where necessary.
2. 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.
3. carry out thinning operations in 2019/20 focusing in areas bordering buildings, footpaths and roads 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	2.04	Beech	1930	High forest	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, People issues (+tve & -tve), Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site, Services & wayleaves	Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	Community Forest, Local Wildlife Site
<p>This compartment forms the whole of the eastern section of the wood. It abuts Westbrook Crescent to the west and Westbrook Way to the north (the Woodland Trust boundary stops approximately 10m short of the roadside with younger tree planting (1980s) and scrub in the land between which is owned by Warrington BC). The south and eastern boundaries are adjacent to the Westbrook Centre (Asda superstore, medical centre, school ground) and a surfaced public footpath with clearly defined fenced/ hedged boundaries. The compartment is dominated by mature beech, lime and English oak with alder, wild cherry, horse chestnut, birch, field maple, elm, sycamore, and crack willow. The abundant understorey is dominated by field maple, rowan, elder and ash, with elm, beech, oak, sycamore, wild cherry and hawthorn. The ground flora is restricted by dense canopy and understorey, but includes bluebells, bramble, nettle, ferns, ivy, and a variety of grasses and Umbelliferae. A stream and a well used surfaced footpath run the length of the compartment, the path crosses the stream at two points over a wooden and metal bridge. The western wooden bridge allows vehicular access to the compartment.</p>							
2a	1.26	Beech	1930	High forest	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, People issues (+tve & -tve), Services & wayleaves	Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	Community Forest

This compartment abuts Burtonwood Road to the west and Westbrook Crescent to the east and comprises the western section of the wood on the north side of the stream. The southern boundary is defined by the stream and the northern boundary stops approximately 10m short of Westbrook Way and is defined by the remnants of a thorn hedge and by wooden marker posts. The adjoining area of woodland up to the roadside is younger tree planting (1980s) and scrub regen. on land owned by Warrington BC.

The canopy is dominated by beech, lime, English oak with sycamore, horse chestnut, elm, ash, birch, crack willow, and wild cherry. The understorey is dominated by rowan, field maple, hazel and elder, with hawthorn, ash, beech, lime, and sycamore regeneration. The ground flora is restricted by the dense canopy and understorey but includes ivy, ferns, nettle, bramble, and a variety of grasses and Umbelliferae. The stream and a well-used surfaced footpath run the length of the compartment from west to east with a southern spur footpath linking the compartment with Mary Ann Meadows via a wooden footbridge.

2b	0.74	Ash	1985	High forest	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site, People issues (+tve & -tve), Services & wayleaves	Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	Community Forest
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This sub-compartment lies to the south side of the stream, in the western half of the plantation and comprises an area of planting established in the 1980's by the CNT. The sub-cpt boundaries are to the east it abuts Westbrook Crescent and a pub building, to the west Burtonwood Road, to the south Mary Ann Meadows playing fields, and to the north the stream and sub-compartment 2A. The planting mix is tightly spaced (between 1.5 & 2m centres) and too young to have developed a clear distinction between canopy and understorey. It has a sparse ground flora due to dense shading. The canopy composition comprises 20% ash, 20% English oak, 10% each of silver birch, damson/blackthorn, field maple, hawthorn, and wild cherry the remainder is a mix of crack willow, crab apple, elder, elm, holy, rowan and Scots pine. A short path across the western end of compartment 2A links the main path with Mary Ann meadows via a wooden footbridge to sub-compartment 2B otherwise the compartment has no formal paths.

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	0.15	13	2
2023	1a	Thin	2.00	5	10
2025	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.15	13	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.