



# Windy Willow 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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk) or contact the Woodland Trust ([wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto: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.

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## 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](http://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

<b>Site name:</b>	Windy Willow Wood
<b>Location:</b>	Runcorn
<b>Grid reference:</b>	SJ565837, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 108
<b>Area:</b>	1.35 hectares (3.34 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Community Forest

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

Windy Willow Wood is located in the Sandymoor Valley in an increasingly urban area. Whilst it is only a small woodland it has a nice mix of mature broadleaf trees including beech, sycamore and oak with several which are veteran status. The understorey contains hazel and hawthorn and in spring the woodland floor is carpeted in ramson and bluebells. Keckwick Brook passes along the eastern boundary of the woodland.

## 2.2 Extended Description

Windy Willow Wood is a small (1.35ha) urban woodland in Sandymoor, about 4 miles to the east of Runcorn in North Cheshire. It is located off Calmington Lane and is sandwiched between the Daresbury Expressway (A558), Pitts Heath Lane and housing estates. The wood is on flat ground in an area that was once part of Halton Moss/Sandymoor Moss. The surrounding landscape has been intensively developed in recent years with new housing estates, roads and business parks and it is now part of the expanding urban area to the east of Runcorn.

The site has two sub-compartments which are separated by a section of road that is closed to traffic (but open for pedestrians and cyclists) that runs between Calmington Lane and Pitts Heath Lane. Keckwick Brook flows along the eastern boundary of the southern section of woodland then cuts through the northern section from southeast to northwest. There are some stone blocks on both river banks in the northern part of the site which are the remains of a sluice structure which was removed several years ago. The soils are predominantly sandy loam with poor drainage.

The land was formerly part of the Brooke Family estate (centred around nearby Norton Priory) and was purchased by the Runcorn Development Corporation in the mid-1970's as part of the future development of Runcorn New Town. It was given to the Woodland Trust in March 1996, along with a number of other woods in the area and together they form a Woodland Trust estate of twenty one woods covering a total of over 100ha in the Runcorn area. The wood was formerly called "Brook Plantation" and the name was changed to "Windy Willow Wood" at the behest of the children of Moore County Primary School who used the wood extensively during the late 1990's.

It is mature secondary broadleaved woodland and the canopy is made up of sycamore, alder, oak, beech, lime and willow with a mix of younger underplanting (from the 1980s), natural regeneration and coppice regeneration which includes oak, hazel, sycamore, alder, elm, lime, hornbeam, beech, goat willow, rowan, downy birch, hawthorn, blackthorn, holly and elder. The ground flora is sparse under the main canopy areas with most variety in the open ground and woodland edges where bluebells and ramson can be found. Other notable features on the site include areas of permanently wet ground in the north west corner of sub-cpt 1a; Keckwick Brook and subsidiary drainage ditches, plus a number of veteran trees. Secondary Woodland is a key feature of the site.

There is public access to both sub-compartments although there are no surfaced paths and usage of the wood is low. At times the wood suffers from misuse in the form of fly tipping, fires, and vandalism. Informal Public Access is a second Key Feature of the site.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

Both woodland compartments have permissive public access with pedestrian squeeze gap entrances from the closed road, near to the bridge at the end of Calmington Lane. The footpaths are not well defined on the ground and are unsurfaced so they can become wet and muddy in winter months. There are no significant gradients within the site, but there are steps in the southern compartment leading from the entrance down into the woodland.

There is no official parking area for this site, however Calmington Lane leads to the bridge adjacent to the site and is bollarded to prevent vehicular access past that point. There is limited on street parking next to the bollards or further along on the road.

The nearest bus stops are on Newmoore Lane, less than 5 minutes walk from the wood. Visit the traveline website for more information and location of bus stops [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk)

There are no public toilets within the immediate vicinity of the wood.

### 3.2 Access / Walks

## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term intention for Windy Willow Wood is to secure the regeneration and continuity of mixed broadleaved high forest and associated woodland edge habitat. 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 and footpaths. Tree safety work will create gaps in the canopy for natural regeneration to develop. Regeneration of both natives and non-native species will be accepted. Coppicing along paths and woodland 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 is a single access point into both sub-compartments from the closed road by the bridge at the end of Calmington Lane. The entrances are pedestrian access squeeze gaps in the boundary fencing and there is a set of steps down into sub-cpt 1b. The paths in both sub-compartments are not well defined and are not surfaced footpaths so they can become wet and muddy in winter. The site is relatively quiet and mostly used by local people for dog walking and for children to play in the summer months.

#### Significance

Increasing access to and enjoyment of woodland is one of the Woodland Trust's key outcomes and Windy Willow Wood provides local people with easy access to enjoy woodland and nature in the urban environment. The wood is a prominent landscape feature in the local area and is visible from the Daresbury Expressway. It provides a range of amenity benefits, including helping to "soften" the surrounding urban landscape, absorption of pollution and acts as a barrier against noise from nearby roads. In addition the local area is under intense pressure from development making sites like Windy Willow Wood valuable green spaces for the public to enjoy. The wood is near other nearby Woodland Trust sites such as Sandymoor, Brook and Bog Woods and is well connected to other green spaces in the area via the local path network.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

The small size and limited management requirements of Windy Willow Wood mean that opportunities for community involvement are limited. The footpaths are not surfaced which may limit access for some visitors particularly in winter, however the current access provision is appropriate for the level of public usage of the site. The close proximity of a large population means that the site is subject sometimes to misuse (fires, vandalism, fly tipping).

#### Factors Causing Change

Increases in recreational use causing damage to woodland plants.  
Misuse of site (fly tipping, vandalism, fires).

#### Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long-term objective is to maintain the current level of public access to the site to ensure it is welcoming and accessible for visitors all year round. Access infrastructure including the 2 entrances, permissive footpaths, signage, fencing and steps will be maintained in good condition. The wood 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. Threats to the wood arising from public recreation or misuse will be monitored and appropriate measures taken to deal with them where it is practical and achievable.

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

Maintain entrances and footpaths by cutting back encroaching vegetation and trees; inspect signs, fences; remove accumulations of litter & fly tipping as necessary- to be done annually via the EMC. Coppicing along path edge and roadside boundaries to be carried out to improve sight lines and visibility by the end of the current plan period.

Carry out 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.

## 5.2 Natural Secondary Woodland

### Description

Windy Willow Wood is mature secondary broadleaved woodland, approximately 50% (0.65ha) is mature canopy made up of sycamore, alder, oak and beech and 40% (0.58ha) is a mix of young underplanting, natural regeneration and coppice regeneration and includes oak, hazel, sycamore, alder, elm, lime, hornbeam, beech, goat willow, rowan, downy birch, hawthorn, blackthorn, holly and elder. Ground flora is sparse under the main canopy areas with most variety along the open ground and woodland edges. Approximately 10% (0.093ha) of the site is open ground mostly along the river edge and next to woodland boundaries in sub-cpt 1a where coppicing has been carried out. There are areas of permanently wet ground in the north west corner of sub-cpt 1a and subsidiary drainage ditches which flow into Keckwick Brook. The site has a number of veteran trees.

### Significance

The Sandymoor Valley and Halton Moss are under intense pressure from development, which is affecting the existence and quality of natural habitats in the area. This makes mature secondary woodland such as Windy Willow Wood important in a local context. The wood is a significant landscape feature visible from the Daresbury Expressway. It provides a valuable habitat for a range of urban wildlife, and along with other nearby Woodland Trust owned woodlands (Sandymoor Wood, Bog Wood, Brook Wood, Pitts Heath Wood) it is part of the local ecological landscape in the area. The wood is part of a cluster of Woodland Trust owned sites in the area forming a local estate of 101.3 ha of woodland, and consequently these sites together form a significant feature within the local landscape creating a wooded feel to the local area.

### Opportunities & Constraints

At present much of the oak regeneration is becoming suppressed by more vigorous species such as sycamore, so there may be opportunities to support the development of existing young oak trees. At present the levels of veteran trees and dead wood are reasonably good and probably appropriate for the size and location of this site.

The key constraints at Windy Willow Wood are its small size and misuse. Even small woodland operations have an impact on the site and will be highly visible. Misuse on the site makes it necessary to chip any brash to reduce the risk of fires.

### Factors Causing Change

Dense canopy & shading by mature sycamore is suppressing development of other broadleaves. Fly tipping, vandalism, fires.

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long term objective is to maintain the continuity of broadleaved high forest as a landscape and conservation feature. The wood will be largely managed by a minimal intervention approach with mature trees retained into senescence and standing columns of dead wood kept as important deadwood habitat where there is no compromise to public safety. The main reason for management intervention is likely to be for tree safety which will create opportunistic gaps in the canopy promoting natural regeneration and enabling the understorey to be more diverse. Threats to the wood from pests, tree disease and invasive species will be monitored and appropriate action taken to control them where it is practical and achievable.

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

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.

Carry out small scale selective removal of sycamore to create gaps in the dense canopy to promote natural regeneration by the end of the plan period.

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 and to take appropriate action where necessary.

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## 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	0.81	Sycamore	1950	High forest	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site, Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, People issues (+tve & -tve)	Informal Public Access, Natural Secondary Woodland	Community Forest
<p>This is the northern sub-cpt of the wood and is bounded by a closed section of road the south (defined by post &amp; rail fence). To the west the boundary is defined by marker posts and abuts an area of amenity / roadside planting (owned by Halton BC). The north boundary abuts further roadside plantings and is defined by post and rail fencing. The eastern boundary abuts seven properties in Bayswater Close and is defined by garden fences. Keckwick Brook enters the compartment in the southeast corner and exits through a culvert in the northwest corner. The compartment is flat with waterlogged ground in the north western corner, and a strip of open ground (0.093ha) following the eastern bank of the Keckwick Brook. Approximately 0.32ha or 47% of the canopy is mature dominated by sycamore and alder. The remaining 53% (0.36ha) of canopy is a mix of semi-mature / young alder, hawthorn, rowan, beech, hornbeam, hazel, sycamore, goat willow, and oak. The ground flora under the canopy is sparse with bramble, ferns, and grasses. The riverside (open ground) flora is more diverse and is dominated by nettle, Himalayan balsam, a variety of Umbeliferae, bedstraw, willowherb and red campion.</p>							
1b	0.54	Mixed native broadleaves	1950	High forest	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site, Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, People issues (+tve & -tve)	Informal Public Access, Natural Secondary Woodland	Community Forest

Roughly triangular, this southern sub-compartment abuts a closed section of road to the north (defined by post and rail fence). To the east the boundary is the western bank of the Keckwick Brook. The south western boundary abuts properties in Selby Close and Furness Court and is defined by garden fences. The compartment is flat with a deep ditch in the southern corner. The canopy is approximately 60% (0.32ha) mature trees, and 40% (0.23ha) a mix of semi-mature under planting from the 1980's and coppice regrowth. The mature canopy is dominated by sycamore, oak, beech and lime. The younger canopy by hazel, lime, oak, elm (coppice) elder, rowan, hawthorn, sycamore, birch, holly, and hornbeam. The ground flora is occasional and includes bramble, foxgloves, ferns, grasses, ivy nettles and bluebells (towards the north boundary).

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**Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)**

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2018	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.05	20	1
2019	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.05	20	1
2021	1a	Thin	0.05	100	5
2025	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.05	20	1



## 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.