



Marshgate Wood

Management Plan 2016-2021

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THE WOODLAND TRUST

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATING

The information presented in this Management plan is held in a database which is continuously being amended and updated on our website. Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations. Please either consult The Woodland Trust website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk or contact the Woodland Trust (wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk) to confirm details of the current management programme.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and a summary of monitoring results can be obtained on request.

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The management of our woods is based on our charitable purposes, and is therefore focused on improving woodland biodiversity and increasing peoples' understanding and enjoyment of woodland. Our strategic aims are to:

- Protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future
- Work with others to create more native woodlands and places rich in trees
- Inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees

All our sites have a management plan which is freely accessible via our website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk. Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) under licence FSC-C009406 and through independent audit.

In addition to the guidelines below we have specific guidance and policies on issues of woodland management which we review and update from time to time.

We recognise that all woods are different and that the management of our sites should also reflect their local landscape and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives. Guidelines like these provide a necessary overarching framework to guide the management of our sites but such management also requires decisions based on local circumstances and our Site Manager's intimate knowledge of each site.

The following guidelines help to direct our woodland management:

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.
2. We establish new native woodland using both natural regeneration and tree planting, but largely the latter, particularly when there are opportunities for involving people.
3. We provide free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe.
4. The long term vision for our non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites is to restore them to predominantly native species composition and semi-natural structure, a vision that equally applies to our secondary woods.
5. Existing semi-natural open-ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained and new open ground habitats created where appropriate.
6. The heritage and cultural value of sites is taken into account in our management and, in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.
7. Woods can offer the potential to generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We will therefore consider the potential to generate income from our estate to help support our aims.
8. We work with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders in developing the management of our woods. We recognise the benefits of local community woodland ownership and management. Where appropriate we allow our woods to be used to support local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.
9. We use and offer the estate where appropriate, for the purpose of demonstration, evidence gathering and research associated with the conservation, recreational and sustainable management of woodlands. In particular we will develop and maintain a network of long-term monitoring sites across the estate.
- 10 Any activities we undertake will conform to sustainable forest management principles, be appropriate for the site and will be balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

SUMMARY

This public management plan briefly describes the site, specifically mentions information on public access, sets out the long term policy and lists the Key Features which drive management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site - their significance is outlined together with their long (50 year+) and short (5 year) term objectives. The short term objectives are complemented by a detailed Work Programme for the period of this management plan. Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. A short glossary of technical terms is at the end. The Key Features and general woodland condition of this site are subject to a formal monitoring programme which is maintained in a central database. A summary of monitoring results is available on request.

1.0 SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Marshgate Wood
Location:	Runcorn
Grid reference:	SJ552838, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 108
Area:	0.82 hectares (2.03 acres)
Designations:	Community Forest

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Marshgate Wood is in the Manor Park Industrial Estate in north-east Runcorn. It is a small mature broadleaf woodland, a remnant of the former wooded landscape of the Norton Priory estate. Tree species include sycamore, oak, birch and beech with understorey of holly, rowan and yew. Ground flora includes bramble, fern, bluebell, ivy, willowherb, red campion and nettle. There are no footpaths or formal access points into the wood, although a tarmac footpath runs along the south western and southern eastern sides.

2.2 Extended Description

Marshgate Wood is a very small (0.82 hectare) broadleaved woodland in the Manor Park Industrial Estate in north-east Runcorn. The surrounding landscape is urban with a mix of light industrial and business estates, roads and footpaths. Its position in the heart of the industrial estate makes it a visible local skyline feature helping to soften the background of industrial and office units. The site is flat with generally undisturbed soils containing a deep layer of organic matter over a sandy substrate.

Formerly the wood surrounded Marshgate Farm (now demolished) and is linked to the Norton Priory estate by a shelterbelt of woodland and red sandstone ha-ha, the bank of which remains in the wood today. It was managed through the 1980s and early 1990s by the Runcorn Development Corporation and gifted to the Woodland Trust in 1995.

It is secondary broadleaved woodland, with sycamore dominating the canopy (over 50%) along with beech, birch, oak and horse chestnut being the main other species present. The developing understorey consists of naturally regenerating and under-planted rowan, beech, oak, yew, holy, and hawthorn with brambles, elder and areas of bracken. The ground flora is mixed and dominated in the open areas by bramble, willow herb, nettle, bedstraw, dock and in the eastern older block of woodland contains bluebells, ivy, ferns, and red campion.

Public access is permitted although there are no formal access points or footpaths in the wood. Due to the surrounding land use (business estates and offices) and small size of the wood it is estimated to have very few visitors.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

The wood is located on Longbenton Way, off Manor Park Avenue in the Manor Park area of north east Runcorn and can be easily reached from the Daresbury Expressway.

There are no formal public access points or footpaths in the wood.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term intention for Marshgate Wood is to maintain it as high forest of mixed broadleaves with a diverse structure, species and age composition. It will be managed primarily as a landscape feature and wildlife refuge in this urban setting.

This will be achieved by minimal management intervention, allowing mature and veteran trees to thrive and young trees to regenerate where there are losses, and retaining fallen and standing deadwood if safe to do so.

The main driver for woodland operations will be tree safety due to the close proximity of the road, footpath and buildings and to make the woodland more resilient to cope with future pressures from climate change, pests and tree diseases.

Public access will be maintained at the current level with low key signage at boundaries and no formal access points or footpaths within the wood.

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 no formal entrance points or footpaths in the wood although public access can be gained along the western boundary from a surfaced footpath that runs next to the boundary of the wood. It is located in the middle of the Manor Park Industrial Estate with office and light industrial buildings directly alongside the north and eastern boundaries and Longbenton Way along the southern eastern boundary.

Significance

In accordance with the Woodland Trust's general aims the site is open to the public for quiet informal pedestrian activities. Cheshire has less than 5% woodland cover, therefore sites like Marshgate Wood managed for perpetuity serve as important landscape features and provide the opportunity for the public to access and enjoy nature in a woodland.

Opportunities & Constraints

The very small size of the wood means that opportunities for public access are limited.

Factors Causing Change

No significant factors currently affecting the wood. Occasional litter and rubbish is found in the wood but most of it is blown in from the nearby footpath.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain the current level of low key public access with no formal access point or footpaths maintained within the wood.

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

During the plan period Woodland Trust signs at site boundaries will be maintained annually. Litter and fly tipping levels will be monitored and removed annually as part of the EMC work programme.

5.2 Secondary Woodland

Description

Marshgate Wood is a mature broadleaved secondary woodland with approximately 86% of tree cover and 14% open ground. The wood is dominated by sycamore, with oak, birch, beech and horse chestnut also present. The under storey is developing and comprises of naturally regenerating and under planted rowan, beech, oak, yew, holy, and hawthorn, with brambles, elder and areas of bracken. The ground flora is mixed and dominated in the open ground by rank grass with bramble, willow herb, nettle, bedstraw (*Gallium* sp.), dock and a variety Umbellifererae. To the east in the older block of woodland the ground flora includes bluebells, ivy, ferns, and red campion. The composition of the wood is in two distinct blocks, west of the Ha-ha is dominated by sycamore and open ground whilst to the east of the Ha-ha the canopy and understory is more mixed.

Significance

The wood provides an important habitat for wildlife in an urban location as well as acting as an amenity feature in the local landscape. Cheshire is one of the least wooded counties in England with only 4% woodland cover and small woodlands such as this are important landscape features and as wildlife refuges. Some of the mature trees, notably oak, sycamore and beech are becoming veterans.

Opportunities & Constraints

The very small size of the wood is a constraint. Natural regeneration is plentiful with numerous young birch, oak, beech, rowan, holy, elder, and hawthorn which provides the opportunity to ensure the continuity of a varied structure in terms of species composition / age structure and canopy heights.

Where safe too do so, mature trees can be retained as long as possible to create "veteran trees" including standing dead poles and fallen decaying wood which are of particular value to a wealth of invertebrates.

Factors Causing Change

Sycamore regeneration could out compete other species and impact on natural regeneration of other species.

Occasional anti social issues on site (fires, fly tipping and vandalism) causing damage to trees and the woodland ground flora although this is not a significant problem.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain a high forest of mixed native broadleaves (diversely structured in terms of species composition, age/size classes) through minimum intervention other than for public safety and so it is as resilient as possible to cope with future changes.

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

The health of trees will be monitored at least once per plan period through the woodland condition assessment for any diseases, pests or threats.

Tree safety inspections will be undertaken biannually as part of the site risk assessment process for public safety in high risk zones (i.e. roadside and buildings) and statutory obligations for highway clearance.

No silvicultural management work is planned during the plan period.

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	0.82	Sycamore	1945	High forest	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site, Services & wayleaves, Site structure, location, natural features & vegetation	Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	Community Forest

The compartment is on flat ground with a mix of broadleaved species consisting of sycamore (52%), oak (20%), birch (16%), beech (9%) and horse chestnut (3%) with a developing under storey of birch, rowan, beech, oak, yew, holy, hawthorn with brambles, elder and areas of bracken. The ground flora is mixed and dominated in the open areas by bramble, willow herb, nettle, bedstraw (*Gallium* sp), dock and a variety Umbellifererae. To the east in the older block of woodland the ground flora includes bluebells, ivy, ferns, and red campion. Approximately 14% (0.12ha) of the compartment is open ground. Dead wood from past tree work has been retained on site to form an additional component of the woodland floor.

It abuts industrial and business units to the north and east with fencing defining the boundary on the north side but it is unmarked and open on the east next to a business unit. The boundary on the south east side abuts Longbenton Way and is defined by a hedge and fence, with the boundary to the south west defined by wooden marker posts and abuts a surfaced public footpath and an area of mown grassland. Management access is to the northern point of the western boundary across the highway verge off Stuart Road or from Longbenton Way. There is no formal access points into the wood but access can be gained from a public footpath along the western boundary.

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.