



# The Gorse

## 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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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.

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## 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>	The Gorse
<b>Location:</b>	Runcorn
<b>Grid reference:</b>	SJ548804, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 108
<b>Area:</b>	1.69 hectares (4.18 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Community Forest

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

The Gorse is a small isolated urban woodland in the Brookvale district of Runcorn. The wood is on slightly elevated ground and overlooks a large housing estate and local roads. The woodland canopy includes some over mature and mature sycamore, oak, beech and ash and understorey of mixed broadleaves and shrubs. The ground flora is sparse. A surfaced footpath goes through the wood and splits into two paths, one remaining on the lower flat ground and the other rising up to the elevated ground via a flight of steps.

## 2.2 Extended Description

The Gorse is a small (1.6ha) isolated urban woodland in the Brookvale district of Runcorn, approximately 3 miles to the south-east of the town centre. The wood is surrounded by local roads, a busway route and housing. A railway tunnel passes under the woodland and there is a brick ventilation shaft in the middle of the wood. The site has a slightly raised elevation towards the northern boundary next to Brookvale Avenue South. The soils are sandy silt loam with a good humus and organic surface layer.

The wood was formerly farm woodland prior to the land being purchased by the Commission for the New Towns (CNT) in the late 1970's as part of the development of Runcorn New Town. It was gifted to the Woodland Trust along with several other urban woodlands in Runcorn in 1995. The Woodland Trust owns twenty one woods in the Runcorn area covering a total of over 100ha.

It is secondary broadleaved woodland which is a key feature of the site. The canopy contains a mix of broadleaves, including many mature and over-mature sycamore, oak, ash, beech and elm. A number of these trees are showing signs of decline largely in response to fire damage or vandalism. The understorey has a reasonable mix of shrubs (hawthorn, hazel, holly and elm) and mixed broadleaves that were under planted in the late 1980's by the Runcorn New Town Development Corporation. The ground flora is fairly sparse with some common woodland flora, but it is mostly dominated by areas of bare ground, bramble and ground ivy.

Informal Public Access is a second key feature of the site with a linear surfaced permissive footpath running the length of the wood from the eastern to western boundary. The wood is generally quiet with low levels of public usage mainly by local people. Due to the urban location of the wood it suffers from regular misuse including fly tipping, litter, vandalism and fire damage to trees.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

There is approximately 470m of surfaced footpath through the wood with the main route running east-west and a separate short section of path leading to the top of elevated ground via a flight of steps. There are four access points into the wood, two off Brookvale Avenue South, one from Brookvale Avenue North and another from the busway.

There is no official parking in the vicinity although limited on street parking is available on nearby residential roads.

The nearest bus stop is next to the Broome Court sheltered housing complex on the busway that runs along the southern boundary of the site. It is then a short walk along the pavement around the edge of the retirement home onto Brookvale Avenue North to an entrance on the left. For more information visit the traveline website [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk)

There are no known public toilets within the locality. The nearest ones would be at the Halton Lea Shopping Centre, for more information visit [www.halton-lea.co.uk](http://www.halton-lea.co.uk)

### 3.2 Access / Walks



## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term intention for The Gorse 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, 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 is approximately 480m of surfaced footpath running east-west across the site with four public entrance points - two with metal kissing gates and two pedestrian squeeze gaps. It is relatively quiet and mostly used by local people for dog walking and as a cut through from the housing to nearby shops and school. The site suffers from anti-social behaviour issues (vandalism including damage to fencing, signs, steps and regular fires often affecting mature trees) as well as litter and fly tipping.

#### Significance

Increasing access to and enjoyment of woodland is one of the Woodland Trust's key outcomes. Accessible woodland in the local area is limited and The Gorse 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 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.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

The woodland is small and surrounded on all sides by roads and houses resulting in it being isolated from other nearby woodlands and green spaces.

The footpath network is surfaced which makes it accessible all year round.

The close proximity of a large population means that the site is subject sometimes to misuse (fires, vandalism, fly tipping).

#### Factors Causing Change

Fly-tipping, litter, fires, vandalism.

Surfaced woodland paths become muddy over time due to accumulations of leaf litter.

#### 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 480m of surfaced footpath, 4 entrances, signage, fencing, gates 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, gates, fences and steps; remove accumulations of litter & fly tipping as necessary - to be done annually via the EMC.

Carry out path edge/ boundary coppicing 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.

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

## 5.2 Natural Secondary Woodland

### Description

The woodland canopy contains mature & over-mature sycamore, oak, beech and ash. A number of these trees are showing signs of decline largely in response to fire damage and vandalism. The understorey consists of under planted (late 1980s) mixed broadleaves (oak, ash, rowan, wild cherry, beech, hazel, hawthorn). The shrub layer contains hawthorn, hazel, holly and elder and the ground flora is quite sparse and dominated by areas of bare ground, bramble and ground ivy.

### Significance

The Gorse is a small isolated secondary woodland in the heart of Runcorn New Town and is a significant landscape and conservation feature within the local very urban environment. It provides a valuable habitat for a range of urban wildlife, and along with other nearby Woodland Trust owned woodlands (Murdishaw Wood and Stockham 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 Runcorn forming a local estate of 101.3 ha of woodland, and consequently these sites together form a significant feature within the landscape creating a wooded feel to the local area.

### Opportunities & Constraints

Management operations are limited due to the small size of the site, poor management access and its urban setting.

The close proximity of the woodland to roads and housing brings with it greater tree safety risk which needs to be managed and has significant cost implications. Tree safety and other silvicultural work will promote opportunities for natural regeneration and to diversify the woodland structure.

### Factors Causing Change

Fly tipping, fires and vandalism to mature trees and natural regeneration.

Tree safety works will result in the removal of mature trees.

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

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long term objective is to maintain the continuity of mixed broadleaved high forest with a diverse structure, age classifications and species mix. 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 retained to provide deadwood habitat where it does not compromise public safety. Woodland management will focus on maintaining stand stability and tree safety to reduce long term risks along boundaries and footpaths for public safety. This will create opportunistic gaps in the canopy promoting natural regeneration and encouraging a mix of species and ages, and enable the understorey to be more diverse in terms of species, age and size classification. 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)

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.

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

## 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	1.69	Sycamore	1900	High forest	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site, Mostly wet ground/exposed site, People issues (+tve & -tve), Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Informal Public Access, Natural Secondary Woodland	Community Forest

The compartment has a slightly raised elevation towards the northern boundary next to Brookvale Avenue South. It is bordered by local roads on all sides with a large sheltered housing complex on the south-east boundary. The canopy comprises a mix of broadleaves including many mature and over mature sycamore, oak, ash, beech and elm. The understorey consists of under planted (1986-8) mixed broadleaves (oak, ash, elm, rowan, wild cherry, beech, hazel, hawthorn). Ground flora is sparse with areas of bare ground, bramble and ground ivy. Public access is via a linear surfaced permissive path through the wood. There is a railway tunnel ventilation shaft sited in the middle of the woodland.

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**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	0.10	20	2
2025	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.10	20	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.