



Beech Wood

Management Plan 2017-2022

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Beech Wood
Location:	Runcorn
Grid reference:	SJ539799, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 117
Area:	1.56 hectares (3.85 acres)
Designations:	Community Forest

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

The woodland is one of a series of steep sided incised cloughs that run into the River Weaver, with mixed broadleaf species consisting of sycamore, rowan, horse chestnut, ash, elder, hazel and hawthorn. Ground flora include bluebells, herb robert, brambles and nettles.

2.2 Extended Description

Beech Wood is a small (1.56ha) urban woodland located in the Beechwood district in the south west of Runcorn in North Cheshire. It lies just to the north of the M56 motorway and the surrounding landscape is intensively urban. The site is bordered by a housing estate to the west, the motorway to the south and local roads adjacent to the northern and eastern boundaries. It is in a steeply sided valley with a southern aspect and has a small stream that flows the length of the woodland from north to south.

It is one of several deeply incised cloughs that run from higher ground down into the River Weaver, including Clough Wood and Floodbrook Clough which are also owned by the Woodland Trust. It was given to the Woodland Trust in 1991 by The Commission For New Towns as part of a package of several woodlands covering approximately 100ha in Runcorn.

The woodland consists of mature mixed broadleaves including sycamore, ash, oak, rowan, horse chestnut, elder, hazel and hawthorn. It was under planted in 1988 with ash, oak, Scots Pine, field maple, yew, alder and larch. Ground flora includes localised concentrations of bluebells (which the site is locally noted for), herb robert, dogs mercury, brambles and nettles.

The site is regularly used by local people as a short cut from the neighbouring housing estates and for dog walking, although visitor numbers are low. There is a surfaced footpath (with two sets of wooden steps) through the woodland from Wood Lane across the stream via a culvert to Beechwood Avenue.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Beech Wood is situated in the Beechwood district of Runcorn in the borough of Halton. Three entrances lead into the wood from the neighbouring housing estates on Wood Lane, Beechwood Avenue and Rosemary Avenue. All the entrances have open access with no gates and there is a surfaced footpath through the wood. There are four steps at the entrance from Rosemary Avenue and there are two sets of steps, each of approximately 20 steps, leading down into the clough near to the entrance from Wood Lane.

Parking is available on nearby roads to the wood.

The nearest bus stop is on Wood Lane, immediately by the entrance into the wood. For more information on the bus routes and location of bus stops visit the traveline website <http://www.traveline.org.uk/index.htm>

There are no public toilets in the vicinity, the closest available toilets would be at the Halton Lea Shopping Centre, approximately 1 mile away, for more information visit www.halton-lea.co.uk

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term intention is to manage Beech Wood as a high forest canopy of mixed native broadleaves providing a landscape feature and amenity to the local population, and ensuring the continuity of woodland habitat as an integral part of the wider ecological landscape of the area.

Management objectives will aim to seek a balance between conservation and public enjoyment. Public safety, amenity and access will be the key drivers for woodland management work. Where safe to do so the we will retain older trees as long as possible to encourage the development of veterans and the decline of mature trees will be allowed to develop naturally. Gaps created by trees gradually reaching senescence, or by trees being felled for safety reasons will also create opportunities for natural regeneration and structural change. In consideration of neighbouring residents and properties, we will where necessary undertake thinning work for long term tree safety and stand stability.

The wood will be made as safe as practicable through regular safety inspections, and corresponding remedial work.

Public access will be maintained at its current level with three pedestrian entrances and approximately 280 metres of surfaced footpath.

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

Beech Wood has approximately 280m of surfaced footpath and three pedestrian entrances leading from Wood Lane, Beechwood Avenue and Rosemary Avenue, all of which are open access with no barriers. Due to the steep sides of the clough valley, there are two sets of approximately 20 steps leading down to where the path crosses the stream leading to the Wood Lane entrance. There are also 4 steps at the entrance from Rosemary Avenue. The site is designated as Access category B by the Trust, which equates to moderate usage, with 5-15 people using one entrance per day.

Significance

Increasing access and enjoyment of woodland and trees is one of the Woodland Trust's key outcomes. Beech Wood provides the opportunity for local people to enjoy informal recreation in woodland which is often very limited in urban areas. It also provides a landscape feature alongside the M56 motorway and acts as a buffer from light, noise and exhaust pollution to local residents in the Beechwood area.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: A lack of car parking provision at the site will always limit the amount of visitors to the woodland.

Opportunities: The urban location of the site and surfaced paths means it is visited and enjoyed by people all year round and provides the opportunity to engage local people in the woodland.

Factors Causing Change

None at present.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The Trust will continue to maintain the present level of low key public access to the wood, with the footpath, entrances and steps maintained regularly to provide a good standard of public access with clear signage. 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 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 furniture.

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

During this plan period the short term objectives are to provide good quality access for visitors, which is safe and enjoyable. Any threats to the wood arising from public access will be monitored and managed. This will be achieved by:

1. Carrying out annual maintenance of the entrances, footpaths, and steps to ensure they are easy and safe to use. Vegetation encroaching on the paths will be cut back. Signage will be clean and visible, and replaced if they deteriorate. Litter will be removed as part of the EMC.
2. Conducting regular safety inspections of trees in high risk zones (e.g. the edges of the roads, next to houses and along the footpath) and inspections of site hazards and access furniture to ensure the wood is as safe as possible for visitors, neighbours and road users.
3. Carrying out monitoring at least once during this plan period to assess whether the access provision is adequate and to determine if there are any threats to the wood from public usage. Appropriate measures to lessen any recorded threats will be undertaken.

5.2 Natural Secondary Woodland

Description

Beech Wood is a small woodland in a steep sided clough running north to south with a stream running along the bottom and draining into the River Weaver. It is surrounded by urban development with housing and roads adjoining all boundaries including the M56 motorway along the southern boundary. It comprises a mix of broadleaved species with the main canopy species being sycamore with ash, horse chestnut, oak and under planting of field maple, yew, alder, oak and rowan. The shrub layer is mainly elder with hazel and hawthorn. Ground flora is reasonably diverse and includes bluebells and ramson.

Significance

The wood provides an amenity feature in the local urban landscape and is visible to thousands of people driving by on the M56 motorway every day. The wood helps to act as a barrier screening nearby housing from noise and air pollution from the motorway. It is one of several woodlands owned by the Woodland Trust locally which contribute towards the ecological value of the wider area and provides an important woodland habitat for a variety of mammals, birds and other wildlife. It also provides people with the chance to enjoy nature close to where they live.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: The small size of the site and steep slopes is a limiting factor to undertaking any significant silvicultural management work to enhance the woodland.

Factors Causing Change

Sycamore if it becomes too dominant will cause shading of ground flora and natural regeneration resulting in loss of diversity in future.

The impact of trees disease, particularly ash dieback could result in the loss of several mature trees in the woodland.

Squirrels are causing some minor damage to trees by bark stripping although it is not having a significant impact at present.

A small stand of Japanese Knotweed alongside Wood Lane has been controlled with herbicide treatment, however it is very persistent and invasive and will need to be monitored and further control undertaken if necessary to stop it spreading.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain a high forest of mixed native broadleaves with a diverse structure in terms of species composition, age/size classes. The wood will be allowed to develop as naturally as possible and dead wood will be retained where safe to do so. Tree safety will be a priority and the key driver for management intervention and may provide opportunities for natural regeneration of desirable species to develop as future canopy trees and to encourage the development of woodland ground flora.

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

During the plan period the woodland will be managed through minimal silvicultural intervention and the main short term objectives will be:

1. Carrying out a woodland condition assessment once during the plan period to monitor the health and resilience of the woodland and identify any threats from tree disease, pests, mammals or people.
2. Monitoring sycamore regeneration as part of the woodland condition assessment to ensure it is not dominating the species composition.
3. Undertaking regular tree safety inspections and carry out any identified work necessary for public safety.
4. Monitoring for Japanese Knotweed regrowth or new occurrences in the wood.

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	1.56	Sycamore	1945	High forest	Gullies/Deep Valleys/Uneven/Rocky ground, Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site, Services & wayleaves	Informal Public Access, Natural Secondary Woodland	Community Forest

The compartment is roughly rectangular shaped, approximately 300m long by 120m wide. It is a steep sided valley (approximately 20m deep) with a southern aspect and has a small stream running from the northern to the southern boundary where it flows into a culvert under the motorway. The north and east boundaries are adjacent to roads, the western boundary abuts garden fences and also post and rail fencing and the southern boundary is next to the M56 motorway and is fenced with post and rail fencing.

The canopy is dominated by sycamore, with occasional beech, rowan, ash, alder, horse chestnut. There shrub layer contains elder, hazel and hawthorn. Ground flora consists of general woodland species such as herb robert, red campion, bramble, bracken and is also noted for a good cover of bluebells and ramson in the spring.

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2017	1a	Selective Fell	0.50	8	4
2017	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.10	10	1
2023	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.10	10	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.