WOODLAND TRUST

Stoke Wood

Management Plan 2019-2024

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MAPS

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Stoke Wood
Location:	Stoke Lyne
Grid reference:	SP554277, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 164
Area:	35.52 hectares (87.77 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Woodland Site, Local Wildlife Site, Planted Ancient Woodland Site

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

This delightful ancient wood contains a mix of native broadleaf and exotic conifers, carpets of bluebell in the spring and a wide variety of bird and butterfly species. With several open glades and a small meadow, it provides important habitats for invertebrates and its prominent position on an otherwise flat landscape makes it a landmark that can be seen for miles around.

2.2 Extended Description

Stoke Wood is a 35 hectare / 87 acre site located approximately 6 kilometres / 3.5 miles to the north west of Bicester in north Oxfordshire. It is signposted with a brown sign from the B4100. The wood was originally part of the estate of Swift House owned by the Peyton family from 1820 until 1993. In 1993 the estate was broken up in lots and sold, with the Woodland Trust purchasing the majority of Stoke Wood with the help of local people and Cherwell District Council. Apart from the motorway service station immediately to the north, the wood sits in a relatively flat open farmed landscape and is unconnected to other woods. Cherwell district is 3% wooded with only 0.7% comprised of ancient woodland, and so Stoke Wood represents a significant area of ancient woodland in the district.

Stoke Wood is an ancient woodland site that has been managed in the past by coppicing, largely hazel coppice with oak standards. This has not been worked for at least 50 years and there are now some very large over-stood coppice stools of ash, hazel and field maple throughout the wood, indicating that the coppiced trees were cut over many centuries before this management ceased. There are also coppiced oaks as well as mature oak maidens (or standards). Half of the wood was planted with blocks of conifers in the 1950's and it is therefore classified as a planted ancient woodland site (PAWS). European larch and Corsican pine are the main conifer tree species present and these are being gradually thinned by the Trust, currently comprising less than 20% composition overall. Ornamental rides remain in the wood running north-south and east-west, lined with specimen conifers. The wood is especially important for its woodland flora and during spring there is an impressive ground cover of woodland flowers such as bluebell, wood anemone, early purple orchid and primrose.

Overall the wood approximates to a National Vegetation Classification (NVC) of W8-W10, a lowland mixed broadleaved woodland, The soil association is Aberford, shallow locally, well drained calcareous fine loam soils over limestone. Some deeper soils in colluvium. The soil type does sometimes lead to local waterlogging, and consequently parts of the site can be boggy for much of the year.

A very large old woodbank surrounds most of the perimeter of the wood, and there are also other internal earth banks of ancient origin which researchers believe may be connected with a burial chamber. An area of the wood was damaged in 1954, when an American B47 bomber plane crashed into the wood killing its crew.

The Woodland Trust has given Stoke Wood a Category A for public access which is the highest category, and this translates to a wood used at all times of year, with more than 15 - 20 people using one entrance every day. It also has been part of the Trusts' Welcome Sites Programme (WSP), meaning tailored work has been on-going to improve the site for visitors. Stoke wood is extremely well used and enjoyed by local people. There is a car park next to the wood (not owned by The Trust) and a good variety of pedestrian paths, including a way-marked 1km (3/4 mile) surfaced easy-access route which links to the car park, and a longer 3km (1.75 mile) way-marked route. A highly engaged local volunteer group meet every week and help The Woodland Trust to care for this wood.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

By bus:

Nearest bus stop: Occasional buses run to Stoke Lyne village from Bicester. From there it is just over a 1km walk to the wood along a single track road. Go past the church in a westerly direction out of the village and walk for just under 1km until you reach the crossroads. Cross straight over the B4100 and Stoke Wood is on the left hand side after a further 0.5km.

By train:

Nearest train station: Bicester, 6km (3.7 miles) from Stoke Wood. A number of bus services run to Stoke Lyne from Bicester – see above.

For further information on public transport, contact Traveline on 0871 200 2233 or visit traveline.org.uk

By car:

Leave the M40 at junction 10 and follow the signposts for the A43. At the roundabout, take the third exit onto the B1400. Follow this road for 1/2 mile and then turn right at the brown tourist sign for Stoke Wood and into the small lane. After approximately 140m the entrance will be on the left hand side, next to the car park (not owned by the Trust) which holds around 30 cars.

3.2 Access / Walks

Stoke wood is extremely well used and enjoyed by local people. The site is level and and there is a public car park right next to the wood. Rides run north to south and east to west and wood banks show the boundaries of the woodland.

There are approximately 4.5km of path in the wood. An all abilities entrance and surfaced path leads from the car park and is accessible all year round. A public bridleway (Old Stoke Lyne Lane) runs along the northern edge in an east to west direction. Most paths are well maintained and clearly marked though some of the internal paths can become muddy in wet weather.

Adjacent to the northern boundary of the wood is the Cherwell Valley service station which has full wheelchair access and amenities.

Maps: OS Explorer 191 and Landranger 164 Grid reference: SP554277

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term intentions for Stoke Wood will seek to realise two of the Woodland Trust's three key aims:

- to protect native woods, trees and their wildlife
- to restore damaged ancient woodland

It is intended that over time the wood is gradually restored to semi-natural broadleaved woodland which has a minor percentage of conifer and a good diversity of locally native broadleaved species. Ancient woodland is one of our most valuable terrestrial wildlife habitats, and in England is defined as woodland sites with evidence of continuous wooded cover since 1600 AD. Stoke Wood has areas of replanted ancient woodland, where in this case conifers have been planted in the early 1950's following felling. These areas have been gradually thinned since Trust tenure, and approximately 20% of the site now has mixed conifer / broadleaved plantation composition, some in scattered groups throughout much of the site and more rarely concentrated in smaller areas i.e. compartments 1b, 1e.

Restoration of PAWS provides the only opportunity to increase the area of ancient woodland with semi-natural characteristics. In general and in line with best restoration and reversion practice, the site has and will continue to be gradually converted to predominantly native broadleaf woodland, which will also provide suitable conditions for native and threatened ground flora to be safeguarded.

Practically this means that the conifer plantation component, where identified after assessment as a threat to diverse broadleaf regeneration and/or forming dense shade suppressing ground flora, will be gradually reduced. The intention is to achieve more semi-natural broadleaved conditions over time. In subsequent continuous-cover (where there will be no loss of woodland cover) operations to thin stands to robust levels, (where the threat from plantation species to remnant features is minimal) the management will consider practice which may provide an economic return. A minor component of conifer, no more than 20% and scattered distribution, will be retained long-term to provide increased biodiversity and woodland resilience.

As the woodland matures, any required operational management will aim to diversify the overall age and stand species structure, and some enrichment planting may be necessary to achieve this. Some broadleaved trees will be identified and left to reach old age and decline naturally. Deadwood, both standing and fallen will be maintained to provide important niche habitats within the wood, particularly for invertebrates and fungi, except if they pose a significant tree safety risk. Full restoration of the wood is not likely to occur until around 2050. The PAWS stands are then likely to be a mixture of oak, hazel, beech, birch, rowan and sycamore, with a minor component (10-20%) of conifer.

Away from the rides and woodland edges, the broadleaved-dominated component of the wood, the structure and age class is already quite varied and there is a diverse mixture of native tree species present. Ash will decline and possibly become absent from the wood, due to ash dieback, now endemic. This will leave some significant gaps in the canopy which will further diversify the woodland structure. The main tree species are likely to be oak, field maple and hazel, with some beech, birch and sycamore. The canopy gaps are likely to initially be filled with hawthorn, hazel and

some sycamore, and this species will increase over time as a proportion of the overall mix. Where viable conditions are available, coppicing of hazel will continue, largely carried out by volunteers. The older specimen conifer trees, planted alongside some of the ride edges in the early 20th Century, will be retained as feature trees and only felled if they become unsafe.

Ride / path management at Stoke Wood will help to create lighter conditions within the wood which will enhance the edge vegetation, as well as helping to dry out the surface for visitors which tend to remain damp. This management will also be aimed at the enhancement of habitat for butterfly populations such as silver washed fritillaries and white admiral that have been identified at the site. The areas of open grassland will continue to remain open and managed for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. In total open ground comprises around 10% of the site.

Observations will be carried out to record any factors causing change that may be detrimental to the vitality and structure of the woodland. For example there should be no damaging invasive species present on the site, and the likely colonisation by ash dieback (Hymenoscyphus fraxineus) and other pests and diseases monitored and managed where necessary.

In line with Stoke Wood's a Category A status, the public's enjoyment of the woodland will be enhanced by improving and maintaining an accessible and safe network of paths and rides. Entrances, boundary fences, and benches will be maintained as necessary and the access provision will be monitored and provided to a high standard. On and off-site interpretative material will be available to the public and the two easy to follow way-marked trails will be maintained to help visitors navigate around the wood. The wood will be made as safe as practical for visitors through regular safety inspections. Community involvement will continue to be supported at 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 Ancient Woodland Site

Description

Stoke Wood is comprised of approximately 29 hectares ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW) and 7 hectares planted ancient woodland (PAWS).

The PAWS areas were largely felled and re-planted with conifers during the 1950's. The main conifer species present is European larch, with smaller proportions of Corsican and Scots pine. Beech and oak are also common companion species in the plantations. There is also a very small (0.17ha) Norway spruce block, which is likely to be an outgrown Christmas tree plantation. All the conifer blocks have been thinned by felling or ring-barking in the past, and natural regeneration of broadleaves (oak, hawthorn, hazel, ash & sycamore) is evident together with much bramble. Previous thinning works within the site have removed the majority of planted conifer and the remaining conifer composition is mostly scattered. Where higher densities occur for example in Cpt. 1b, species characteristics, canopy height and narrow stand structure allow high light penetration and consequently coarse vegetation (bramble) is dominant. Therefore a gradual approach to reversion is adopted and although broadleaved natural regeneration is present and succeeding, enrichment under-planting is occuring as part of the restoration process.

The ASNW component has had a history of coppice management. There are very large coppice stools of ash, hazel and field maple which have been cut over many cycles, but are now over-stood. Oak is common as a standard and coppiced tree also. The woodland structure of the ASNW is very varied, with a strong understorey component and a good quantity of natural regeneration of birch, hawthorn and hazel. The woodland flora in this part of the wood is very abundant with specialist woodland species such as bluebell, early purple orchid, wood anemone and yellow archangel. Uncommon species include adders tongue fern, and a large mature wild service tree on the southern boundary. Large mature conifers (Norway Spruce, Corsican & Scots pines) are present along the main rides, and were probably planted sometime in the early 20th century.

The National Vegetation Classification for the wood is a mixture of W8 (ash-maple-dog's mercury) and W10 (oak-bracken-bramble). Stoke Wood has records for 31 species typical of long-established woodland. These include bluebell, primrose, wood anemone, yellow archangel, goldilocks buttercup, barren strawberry, pignut, wood spurge, wood speedwell, early purple orchid and pale sedge. There is an ancient and impressive woodbank around most of the perimeter of the wood, and several smaller internal earth banks which may be an ancient burial site.

Significance

ASNW is irreplaceable, and the amount in Britain has been drastically reduced over the last century. ASNW is very important due to the continuity of woodland cover over hundreds of years which allows for a diverse range of wildlife and vegetation to develop over time that cannot be found in new woodland creation sites, and a key aim of the Woodland Trust is to prevent any further loss of ancient woodland.

Restoration of ancient woodlands, by removing the shading effects from conifers, is the only way the area of ancient semi natural woodland can be increased. Stoke Wood is unconnected to other woods in the landscape, and it is therefore an ecological reservoir which conserves habitat and species not commonly found elsewhere in the local landscape. Cherwell district is 3% wooded with only 0.7% comprised of ancient woodland, and so Stoke Wood represents a significant area of ancient woodland in the district.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:
- Poor management access and a lack of wide hard tracks limit the use of forest machinery for management purposes. Forest machinery could also cause damage to the perimeter wood-bank, ground flora and soils
- Most of the rides/paths can be wet for much of the year round due to the local topography and soils, so any management work has to be carefully timed with drier site conditions
- Low timber quality and volumes make thinning works largely uneconomical

Factors Causing Change

- Mammal damage (deer, squirrel) - currently low risk; monitoring scheduled and impact evidence is low
- Increasing shade and loss of structure in minimum intervention stands - Low risk medium impact - monitoring and management scheduled
- Changes in structure and gaps in canopy due to wind-blow and disease/dieback e.g. Hymenoscyphus fraxineus in ash - High risk, medium impact due to ash comprising Circa 20% naturally regenerating composition

Long term Objective (50 years+)

In the long term the PAWS areas within Stoke Wood should all be predominantly broadleaved in character, with all other major ancient woodland components in a secure and improving condition, including old growth trees, ground flora, archaeological features, and a diverse deadwood component. The PAWS stands will then be a mixture of naturally regenerating native broadleaves such as beech, birch, oak, rowan and hazel, with only a minor component (10-20%) of conifer remaining. There is a high risk of excessive bramble growth if the conifers are thinned too quickly, so this will be a very gradual process of thinning to allow natural regeneration to succeed and not be out-competed, and some planting may be necessary to ensure this can be achieved effectively and that bramble does not dominate. Full restoration of the wood is likely to occur around 2050.

The broadleaf dominated parts of the site will continue to develop with all major ancient woodland components in a secure and improving condition including old growth trees, ground flora, archaeological features, and a diverse deadwood component. The likely colonisation by ash dieback (Hymenoscyphus fraxineus) will affect the species composition of the wood over time, and the resulting mixed stands (oak, beech, field maple, birch, sycamore, rowan and hazel being the most common species) of high forest will be being managed on a continuous cover silvicultural system to produce uneven-aged, self-regenerating stands of high conservation and amenity value. Ash dieback will ensure the deadwood habitat will become very well developed as ash and the old coppice stools in particular collapse and die.

Large sections of the main ride network will be open and sunny, with good woodland edge habitat created by coppicing and felling. There will be at least two open and grassy glades within the wood. The older specimen conifer trees, planted alongside some of the ride edges, will be retained as specimen trees and only felled if they become unsafe.

Any threats to the biodiversity or historic features of the wood will be monitored and resulting action taken, i.e. deer damage to the broadleaf trees will be monitored and action taken if the damage becomes unacceptable.

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

During this plan period approximately 2ha of PAWS woodland will be thinned by selective group / line removal of European larch within Cpt. 1b. Natural regeneration is occurring, and replanting will also take place with mixed native broadleaves grown on from seed collected from site by volunteers in order to enrich the species mixture. Ride development will also take place to improve habitat diversity in key areas; the felling/cutting will create a scalloped edge varying in width from 5 to 15m with specimen trees being retained at intervals. Local volunteers will help with this work by coppicing the hazel stools and smaller trees.

PAWS restoration:
- Development of approx. 500m of main east-west ride between Cpt. 1c and 1a from main central junction to glade junction to the west of the site, to improve conditions for ride-edge habitat, deal with ADB at the western intersection, deter desire lines intersecting the stand from the main ride, and re-introduce coppicing of hazel understory (to be cut by volunteer group) - 2020
- Group felling of marked larches within 1b, areas to be subsequently planted with mixed native broadleaves grown on by volunteers with seed collected from site – 2022
- Continued development of approx. 500m of main east-west ride within Cpt. 1a from main central junction to glade junction to the west of the site, to improve conditions for ride-edge habitat, deal with ADB at the western intersection, deter desire lines intersecting the stand from the main ride, and re-introduce coppicing of hazel understory (to be cut by volunteer group) – 2022
- Continued gradual group felling of marked larches within 1b, areas to be subsequently planted with mixed native broadleaves grown on by volunteers with seed collected from site – 2024

ASNW management:
- Continued coppicing of hazel by volunteers will take place in selected parts the rest of the wood where conditions will ensure successful regeneration – annual rolling programme
- Two glades, in 1c and another in 1a, will be maintained through annual cutting. In total this will account for approximately 1ha of open grassland habitat

Monitoring:
- Monitoring inspections will take place over the plan period to assess the success of the recent thinning works and ride development, and make recommendations for future management – 2022 / 2024 / 2026
- A full woodland condition assessment and PAWS assessment will be undertaken to inform 2024 management plan - 2023
- Deer impact assessment – 2021 / 2023

5.2 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

Stoke Wood is part of the Woodland Trust's Welcoming Sites Programme (WSP), which aims to improve the visitor experience to this site. The WSP will lead to a series of lasting upgrades that will improve the visitor experience for a wider range of visitors to the wood. An attractive and serviceable network of tracks and paths will further encourage the appreciation of the woodland on the site. The site will be managed to meet the required high standards of WSP and will provide a clear welcome: well-maintained entrances, furniture, signs and other infrastructure as well as sustainable path and track surfaces across the variable ground conditions. Improved access will better facilitate use by a wider range of visitors. An engagement plan will set out a plan for engagement activities, further enhancing public visits to the site.

Stoke Wood is in a relatively isolated location in the area of Stoke Lyne in Oxfordshire. The M40 runs north-south parallel with the western boundary of the wood, and the services are located immediately to the north. The town of Bicester (pop 28,672) is 8 miles (13km) south the wood. Apart from the motorway service station immediately to the north, the wood sits in a relatively flat open farmed landscape and is unconnected to other woods. Cherwell district is 3% wooded with only 0.7% comprised of ancient woodland, and so Stoke Wood represents a significant area of ancient woodland in the district.

Stoke Wood is a popular and well visited site, especially with local dog walkers. It has a car park next to the site (which is not owned by The Woodland Trust) and which holds approximately twenty cars. There is an orientation panel with information about the wood near to the car park. Approximately 4 kilometres of pedestrian paths criss-cross the wood and 1km of this comprises a surfaced easy-access route, which links to the car park. There are two way-marked trails through the wood installed in 2017. As well as the car park entrance it is possible to arrive at the wood via a public right of way linking to the bridleway on the northern boundary of the wood. There are no other public entry points.

Stoke Wood is a relatively diverse site with many natural features that may be of interest to visitors. The central avenue comprises a specimen conifer lined ride with mature feature tree planting dating to the early 20th century when the estate belonged to Sir Henry Peyton. There are archaeological features within the site including extensive wood banks, and a ditched earthwork probably dating to the medieval period. Natural features of interest include lapsed and returning coppice coupes, small areas of scrub and grassland, colourful and often rare displays of native flora, stands undergoing PAWS restoration and a distinctive area of acidic sand with birch, pine and bracken.

There is strong local volunteer support group who meet every week and help The Woodland Trust to care for this wood. The group have helped with ride edge coppicing, tree planting and carried out path improvements. The site has opportunities for further volunteering and for engagement activities through volunteer days with corporate groups or developing relationships with the current group.

Significance

In a busy part of the country Stoke Wood provides a relatively peaceful and accessible place for visitors to enjoy. There is known to be a lack of open access countryside sites within the local Cherwell district and Stoke Wood is one of the largest open access sites available in this area. The lack of surrounding woodland in the area also makes this an important ancient woodland site that people can enjoy and appreciate.

In private ownership and inaccessible to the public until 1993, the woodland now provides access to visitors for quiet informal recreation, and will do so in perpetuity.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:
- Enhanced signage/ information and activities at the site need to be balanced against preserving its natural qualities
- Formal car parking is limited at the wood to the existing car park, change of ownership may result in the loss of this facility
- The wood is several miles from the nearest village (Stoke Lyne) and therefore non-motorised access to the wood is not convenient, so the majority of visitors arrive by car to the wood
- New paths are often being created and this has led to trampling of flora in sensitive areas of the wood

Opportunities:
- Increased community involvement in management of the wood through volunteering opportunities
- The high level of visitor numbers to this wood offers the opportunity for The Woodland Trust to engage more fully with local people in this part of Oxfordshire

Factors Causing Change

- An increase in visitors is likely to occur through a lack of other publically accessible open space locally, and better facilities and greater promotion of the wood. This could also lead to more antisocial behaviour and more conflicts between different user groups
- Economic changes with funding will impact opportunity to develop and enhance the site
- Government adopted local housing targets will lead to increased development in the area and further pressure on the wood through increased visitor numbers

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Stoke Wood will offer a high quality visitor experience in line with its WSP designation (high usage with more than 20 people using one entrance per day). The woodland will provide an extensive area of quiet informal recreation to a wide range of users both from the local community and from further afield. The use of the site by visitors will be promoted through good signage and interpretation.

Open access will be retained at the wood in perpetuity and there will be a well-managed network of paths including provision for less-abled users. Well used paths will be made open and sunny in parts to add variety and interest for the visitor, as well benefitting woodland edge wildlife. The wood will be made as safe as practicable through regular safety inspections of trees in high risk zones and inspections of access furniture.

Good information will be made available on and off the site to enable visitors to explore and navigate around the wood and to appreciate its inherent qualities; the objective is that visitors should leave with a clear understanding of the value of ancient woodland and with knowledge of The Woodland Trust. High quality and prominent signage will greet visitors on their arrival to the car park.

The local community will continue to be engaged with the management of the wood and will be well supported in doing so.

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

Extensive visitor improvements in line with WSP assessment were carried out within the last plan period, including installation of two new way-marked trails, an A1 interpretation board and notice board, path surface improvements, installation of new signage, gates and fencing and vegetation management around entrance points to make the site safer and more welcoming to visitors. There are no further replacements proposed to main entrance infrastructure within this plan period.

Management objectives will include;
- Entrance condition improvements; de-cluttering and maintenance of 5 entrance points including new breadboard signs, installation of no cycling discs and removal of redundant infrastructure - 2019
- Approximately 4km of paths and all entrances will be cut back and managed to keep them in good condition and open for use all year around – June / August annually
- Annual safety inspections will be carried out on trees in high risk zones (e.g. car park edge)
- Annual tree safety inspections along high amenity areas and increased annual survey along zone b (path network) due to the presence of ash affected by dieback
- Approx. 1km of ride edge coppicing and felling works. The structured sunny rides will then create a more interesting and varied woodland experience for visitors to enjoy – 2020 / 2022
- Materials supplied to make repairs to path surfaces where required by volunteer group - 2020 / 2021 / 2024
- Monitoring will take place during this plan period to assess any adjustments required to improve the visitor experience, assess threats occurring as a result of public access, e.g. antisocial activities – 2020 / 2023
- The Woodland Trust will continue to support the local volunteer group by ensuring all volunteers are registered and receive training appropriate to their role as required, and meeting with them at least once per year to agree their programme of activity
- Provision of further volunteering opportunities for local community through engagement activities via volunteer days such as litter picking / care for Stoke Wood events
- Continue relationships with local conservation and volunteer groups for example with wildlife surveys and volunteer activities engaging the wider community

6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By

APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	16.51	Oak (pedunculate)	1900	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, People issues (+tve & -tve), Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site, Services & wayleaves	Connecting People with woods & trees	Ancient Woodland Site
The majority of this sub-compartment is a broadleaved mixture of oak, beech, ash, field maple and hazel which has been formerly managed as coppice-with-standards but is now predominantly over-stood. Some more recent coppicing of mainly hazel has been carried out along the main east-west ride and at the centre of the wood. Two restored blocks of PAWS plantations are present. Hence to the north there is a scattering of widely spaced Corsican pines with beech and other mixed broadleaves, and to the west there are scattered European larch and mixed broadleaves. Older specimen conifers (Norway spruce and pines) align the formal straight rides. An ancient medieval boundary bank encircles the wood boundary, and one mature hornbeam is present in the middle of the compartment.							
1b	2.01	European larch	1950	PAWS restoration	Archaeological features, No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, People issues (+tve & -tve)	Connecting People with woods & trees	Ancient Woodland Site, Planted Ancient Woodland Site
A plantation of larch originating from the 1950s, with a minor component of broadleaves (oak, ash). Thinning, by felling and ring-barking, has taken place in the past. The remaining larch canopy is high and there is plenty of light penetration, consequently bramble covers the majority of the ground layer, and broadleaves are naturally seeding in and under-planting will be carried out by volunteers using trees grown in and planted from seed collected from the site.							

1c	13.38	Beech	1950	PAWS restoration	Archaeological features, No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, People issues (+tve & -tve), Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site	Connecting People with woods & trees	Ancient Woodland Site, Planted Ancient Woodland Site
A mixture of plantations originating from the 1950's. The main conifer species present is European larch, with some Corsican and Scots pine present more to the far north and south. Beech and oak have also been planted with the conifers, and also sycamore to the centre which is regenerating. Other broadleaves such as field maple and hazel are also present. Thinning last took place in 2016.							
1d	3.45	Oak (pedunculate)	1900	High forest	Archaeological features, No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, People issues (+tve & -tve)	Connecting People with woods & trees	Ancient Woodland Site
A broadleaved mixture of oak, ash and field maple and hazel which has been formerly managed as coppice-with-standards but is now over-stood.							
1e	0.17	Oak (pedunculate)	1970	PAWS restoration	Archaeological features, No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, People issues (+tve & -tve)	Connecting People with woods & trees	Ancient Woodland Site, Planted Ancient Woodland Site
A small plantation of Norway spruce with mixed broadleaves (oak, ash, field maple & hazel). Thinning of the stand has taken place in the last 15 years, last operation 2016.							

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2020	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.50	80	40
2022	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.50	80	40
2022	1b	Thin	1.00	35	35
2024	1b	Thin	1.00	35	35
2026	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.50	80	40
2026	1c	Ride edge Coppice	0.50	80	40
2026	1e	Thin	0.17	47	8
2028	1b	Thin	1.00	35	35
2032	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.50	80	40
2032	1b	Thin	1.00	35	35
2032	1c	Ride edge Coppice	0.50	80	40
2038	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.50	80	40

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.