



# Conegar Hill

## Management Plan 2012-2017

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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>	Conegar Hill
<b>Location:</b>	Wootton Fitzpaine
<b>Grid reference:</b>	SY379955, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 193
<b>Area:</b>	3.54 hectares (8.75 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

A mixed woodland of broadleaf and coniferous trees with rich ground flora such as bluebells, red campion, honeysuckle and violet. A quiet site with a bridleway running along the eastern path and Iron Age hill forts to the north.

## 2.2 Extended Description

A small secondary wood set on the north east slope of Conegar Hill, and prominent on the landscape. Heavily damaged by the 1990 gales the wood currently has a more mixed age range than other similar woods. Species are a mix of conifer and broadleaf, and many of the trees on site are less than 40 years old. However, some remnant mature Monterey Pines and Beech stand out on the upper slopes, and there are some mature feature oaks and ash along the line of the bridleway (although some of these are on neighbouring land).

The area would appear to have been originally rough pasture. A small plantation is mapped in 1903 with the wood appearing in its current shape between then and 1929. Despite the apparent lack of woodland continuity, the ground flora is rich with species recorded at the site including wood sorrel, yellow pimpernel, primrose, violet, bluebell, foxglove, red Campion, dog's mercury and honeysuckle. However the ground flora is dominated by bracken and bramble.

Surrounding land use is almost entirely permanent pasture, but a small area of woodland (Little Pitt Coppice, established woodland in 1890) touches on the eastern boundary, and leads into a small ring of woodland to the east.

The villages of Whitchurch Canonicorum and Wootton Fitzpaine are within a mile of the wood, but there is little population in the immediate vicinity. This coupled with a lack of parking and no road frontage restricts use of the wood to locals and those prepared to walk/ride longer distances. Those that do venture in are rewarded with fine views over the surrounding countryside to the north, south and east.

A bridleway runs along the eastern edge and now forms a Holloway in parts. To the north are various Iron age hill forts such as Coney's Castle and Lambert's Castle. Further historical interest is provided by the wood's identification in the Second World War as a potential look out point and dug out location for resistance fighters, should the country be invaded.

The wood lies in the Dorset AONB, and in the Wessex Vales Natural area and Marshwood & Powerstock Vales Countryside Character area. The area is characterised by Upper Greensand ridges which have been eroded to form a complex of distinctive hills, of which Conegar Hill is one. The land is predominantly in pastoral use with woodland, as at Conegar Hill, being confined to the steeper slopes.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

The northern entrance to Conegar Hill is approximately 150m from Bakers Cross on the road running between Wootton Fitzpaine and Whitchurch Canonorum. This road is on a narrow country lane with no pavements, and nowhere to park. From Bakers Cross a bridleway runs up a narrow section and across a pasture field to the wood. Although the true line of the bridleway is believed to follow a sunken track across the field, in reality this has scrubbed over and walkers and riders use the adjacent higher ground. Reaching this higher level involves negotiating a short, sharp and rough slope at each end. From Bakers Cross visitors pass through a bridle gate and vehicle gate to enter the wood, and leave the wood via another vehicle gate. All 3 of these gates can be tricky to negotiate, particularly for mounted riders, due to stiff catches and dropped hinges. On leaving the wood the bridleway runs steeply south west downhill towards Charmouth which is approximately 3km away.

The bridleway follows the line of what is thought to be an old drover's route, and generally has the profile of a sunken track between higher banks. Despite this, being on the eastern edge of the wood it provides magnificent views across the surrounding countryside. There are no other paths maintained in the wood. The natural surface of the bridleway can get very boggy throughout its length and this is particularly the case immediately to the north of the Woodland Trust entrance gate.

The nearest parking is either 3km away (across fields) to the south at Lower Sea Lane or Barrs Lane, Charmouth, or at the National Trust site Coney's Castle approximately 2.5km to the north along a narrow country lane with no pavements.

Nearest toilets - Foreshore and Village Car park (daytime only in winter) Charmouth - approximately 3km away across the fields, approximately 6km by road. These include toilets accessible by RADAR key. Information gathered by personal observation March 2006 and confirmed November 2006 from [www.westdorset.com](http://www.westdorset.com) and [www.directenquiries.com](http://www.directenquiries.com)

Nearest bus stop: the Church, the Street, Charmouth - approximately 3km away - Information gathered November 2006 - [www.travelinesw.com](http://www.travelinesw.com)

Nearest train station: Axminster - approximately 9km away

For further information on transport see the Traveline website [www.traveline.com](http://www.traveline.com) or phone 0871 200 22 33

### 3.2 Access / Walks

## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long-term vision is for Conegar Hill to be attractive and mature predominantly broadleaf woodland of a diverse age and high forest structure maintained as a feature on the local landscape. Feature pine and larch trees will be retained to over maturity where safe to do so as a remnant of the original plantation.

To encourage public access the bridleway will be managed in line with expected low key access by locals, using it as part of a longer route. The combination of the historical interest, improving broadleaf woodland habitat, and views across the wider landscape will give opportunities for appreciation of the natural environment both in and adjacent to 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 Local Woodland Habitat

#### Description

Although secondary woodland it has a diverse ground flora, including wood sorrel, yellow pimpernel, primrose, violet, bluebell, foxglove, red campion, wild daffodil, dogs mercury, honeysuckle & ferns. However, where the canopy is open bracken and bramble dominate. Larch dominates the main slope and the outline of the remaining Monterey Pines are prominent. Internally mature oak and ash line the bridleway and beech, sycamore and woody shrubs are present across the wood. Laurel is present in the woods and is seeding from a mature stand in the north of the site. The wood sits on the eastern side of Conegar Hill, and is prominent in the local landscape particularly from the north and east.

The wood is bordered by a public bridleway which is relatively well used by the local population, particularly riders as a through route. The main area of woodland is very steep and is little used by visitors.

#### Significance

The Woodland Trust believes that native woodland cover should be increased and protected across the country and this is fulfilled in conversion of Conegar Hill to native broadleaf woodland. Conegar Hill is in the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The landscape in this area of West Dorset is typified by small woodlands, often on hilltops, in a pastoral landscape and Conegar Hill forms a part of this. The wood also forms part of a larger ring of woodland, and is part of a mosaic of small woodlands, mostly linked by hedgerows, although these are secondary they are taking on the characteristics of ASNW.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints - Lack of parking discourages access.

#### Factors Causing Change

Squirrel Damage, Deer Damage, Wind damage, spread of Laurel

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

Vision is for the wood to become predominantly mixed broadleaf woodland with an understorey of native trees, shrubs and natural regeneration providing age & species diversity. A healthy & diverse ground flora should be flourishing in the wood. Public access will remain a feature along the bridleway with the bluebell wood a feature of a longer spring time walk.

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

Operational objective is to ensure that the woodland remains healthy and safe for people to visit. This will be done by removing the Laurel and treating any regrowth or seedlings in the following years. Initial cutting and stump treatment in 2014 with follow up in 2015 & 2016. Check biennially for browsing on natural regeneration and if it is preventing the wood from developing then take relevant steps to protect seedlings  
Tree safety checks - every 3 years, along bridleway, Clearance along the bridleway sufficient to keep the route clear for users - cut once a year with additional work as necessary to ensure legal obligations are met.  
Maintenance on northern gate to remedy dropped hinges and installation of a more easily used latch suitable for use by mounted riders during 2014.

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## 6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By
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## APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	0.90	Mixed conifers	1900	High forest	Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Local Woodland Habitat	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast
<p>Area on top of the hill where original planting dates back to 1900 but which suffered extensive windblow in the 1990 gales although occasional mature beech &amp; Monterey Pine remain especially on the boundary. Re-planted in 1995 with oak, ash, beech and woody shrubs. The understorey is dominated by bracken and bramble, although bluebell and other spring flora are also present. The planted trees have generally outgrown the bracken, although establishment is patchy and there is some squirrel damage present on younger beech and sycamore.</p> <p>There is a large badger sett close to the centre of the site - numerous sett entrances and uneven ground some of it hidden by dense vegetation.</p>							
1b	0.50	Beech	1900	High forest	Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Local Woodland Habitat	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast
<p>Western corner of the top of the wood. Mature beech, with occasional Monterey pine, larch, oak and ash. The western half was damaged in the 1990 gales, but natural regeneration of native species is established. The understorey has occasional hazel, hawthorn, holly and some laurel near the northern boundary. Little recent natural regeneration due to the action of the laurel. Ground flora is sparse, but dominated by bracken &amp; bramble where the canopy is open.</p>							
2a	2.10	European larch	1970	High forest	Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Local Woodland Habitat	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast
<p>The eastern half of the wood as it slopes down to the bridleway. Predominantly drawn up larch with occasional beech, ash and sycamore. Specimen oak and ash are found along the length of the bridleway on the eastern edge. On the northern edge of the wood a band of mixed broadleaves shields the larch. The understorey is generally sparse with occasional hazel. Following thinning in 2001 there is regeneration of beech, ash, sycamore and elder. Ground flora includes bluebells, foxglove, enchanter's nightshade, red campion, primrose, wood sorrel, violet, dog's mercury and ferns, but also bracken and bramble in areas where there is more light. Some browsing damage is evident and this may be having an effect on development of regeneration.</p>							

## 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.