



Southcrest Woodland

Management Plan 2015-2020

MANAGEMENT PLAN - CONTENTS PAGE

ITEM	Page No.
Introduction	
Plan review and updating	
Woodland Management Approach	
Summary	
1.0 Site details	
2.0 Site description	
2.1 Summary Description	
2.2 Extended Description	
3.0 Public access information	
3.1 Getting there	
3.2 Access / Walks	
4.0 Long term policy	
5.0 Key Features	
5.1 Planted Ancient Woodland Site	
5.2 Informal Public Access	
6.0 Work Programme	
Appendix 1: Compartment descriptions	
Glossary	
MAPS	
Access	
Conservation Features	
Management	

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Southcrest Woodland
Location:	Redditch
Grid reference:	SP035672, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 150
Area:	1.72 hectares (4.25 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Woodland Site, Planted Ancient Woodland Site, Tree Preservation Order

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

A small mature woodland consisting of oak, ash, lime, beech and sycamore with a predominantly evergreen understorey: yew, rhododendron, laurel and holly.

2.2 Extended Description

A Planted Ancient Woodland Site in an urban setting located in Southcrest, Redditch. It is and accessible from Vicarage Crescent and Purshall Close. The wood is a remnant of a larger woodland recorded in the Worcestershire inventory of ancient woodlands. The site was purchased in accordance with the Woodland Trusts corporate vision that there be no further loss of ancient woodland. This small mature woodland is an integral part in a larger mosaic of open spaces including Redditch cemetery, golf course and two large blocks of semi-natural ancient woodland (SNAW) which lie to the south-west. It comprises predominantly of a single aged mature oak, ash, lime, beech and sycamore canopy, with an under-story dominated by evergreen shrubs - particularly laurel but also including holly, yew and rhododendron. The dense canopy and shrubs, particularly the rhododendron and laurel means that ground flora and natural regeneration are heavily suppressed. Some work has already been undertaken to clear the laurel in the past both by mechanical and chemical means and the effectiveness of this process will be monitored during this plan period.

The site is formed by a 1.35 ha northern block (Sub-compartment 1B) and a roughly 'L' shaped southern section 0.55 ha in area and about 300m long (Sub-compartment 1A). With a flat to eastwards aspect the site lies along the western ends of three minor folds that drain to the east and then northwards. The soil tends to be clay-rich in some areas with poor drainage. The wood is bounded to the north and east by housing and to the south by a Victorian cemetery. The Key features which guide the management of the site are F1: Planted ancient woodland site and F2: Informal public access.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Public access is available direct from the surrounding suburban roads via two entrance points; one off Vicarage Crescent to the north of the site through an opening into the wood and the other off Purshall Close to the south of the site through a squeeze post. There is a linear route running through the wood, approximately 300 metres in length which is un-surfaced and quite flat. The soil is freely drained and so the condition of the paths through the year is good with little water logging usually present. Parking is available in surrounding suburban streets.

Nearest bus top - 1/3 of a mile away at the bottom of Bentley Close where it meets Plymouth Road

Nearest railway station - Redditch station, approximately 1 mile away.

Nearest public toilet - Royal Square, Redditch Town Centre, disabled facilities (with radar key) approximately 2 miles away.

** Further information about public transport is available from Traveline - www.traveline.org.uk or phone 0870 608 2 608

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

In 50 years' time, Southcrest Woodland will be a predominantly broadleaved site with a diverse species and age composition and well developed structure typical of ancient woodland with well-developed shrub and field layers. In accordance with the Trusts Woodland Management Approach (WMA) this will be achieved through gradual restoration and a phased transition towards predominantly semi-natural composition and structure through removal of non-native species including Laurel and Rhododendron which currently dominates the sub canopy and ground layers. These non-native species are the most significant agents of threat here, reducing light levels and inhibiting natural regeneration of canopy and shrub species and ground flora.

The site will remain open to the public and maintained so as to encourage free and easy public use through the various entrance points and pathways.

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 Planted Ancient Woodland Site

Description

With the exception of the thin roadside strip in compartment 1A, the site is recorded in the Nature Conservation Councils, Worcestershire inventory of ancient woodlands (provisional) as being part of a woodland site cleared since the production of the first series Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 maps (e.g. since 1882 -1938). The age of many of the trees suggests that this thin strip of woodland either escaped clear fell or was replanted/regenerated relatively soon after clearance.

Significance

The site was purchased in accordance with the Woodland Trusts corporate vision that there be no further loss of ancient woodland. It is part of a larger mosaic of open spaces including Redditch cemetery, golf course, and is very close to two large blocks of semi-natural ancient woodland (SNAW). The SNAWs lie directly to the southwest of Purshall Close, and are near enough to Southcrest Woodland for the migration of the more mobile of woodland flora and fauna.

Opportunities & Constraints

The key constraints on managing this feature relate to its location within an urban environment. The woodland is protected by a preservation order that highlights local perceptions of its importance as an amenity. Perennial problems such as wear and tear on open spaces; fires; den building; vandalism; and fly-tipping, along with the duty of care to neighbours and site users are all factors that have to be considered in the management equation.

At present the wood has a tall single aged canopy with a dense under story monopolised by evergreen shrubs/trees such as rhododendron, laurel, holly, and yew. Structurally the wood is poor with very little natural regeneration occurring and heavily suppressed ground flora.

Factors Causing Change

Invasive Rhododendron and Laurel, High usage - including tipping & deliberate/casual vandalism

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain the current area of woodland and to manage it in such a way that the ancient woodland characteristics are secured and maintained.

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

To manage the amount of light that is currently reaching the woodland floor by the systematic removal of all the laurel and rhododendron over the plan period. This will be achieved by the continuation of the process of chemical treatment. This will be followed by a period of monitoring and the possible further removal of re-growth. Once light levels are increased sufficiently, it is hoped that natural regeneration will occur. However enhancement planting may need to be undertaken in the next plan period if this natural process of succession is ineffective. This process of PAWS restoration should eventually allow the woodland to develop ancient woodland characteristics of shrub layer, ground flora and natural regeneration which are currently suppressed by the growth of laurel.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

This mature block of woodland is managed in accordance with the Woodland Trusts general aim that its sites be open to the public for quiet informal pedestrian activities. The trust maintains 280m of permissive footpath through the wood, linking Muskets Way and Vicarage Crescent in the north west to Purshall Close and the surfaced public footpath down to Plymouth Road in the southeast (the surfaced path is maintained by Redditch Borough Council).

Significance

In accordance with the Woodland Trusts general aims the site is open to the public for quiet informal pedestrian activities. The wood is part of a larger mosaic of open spaces that includes the cemetery to the east; the golf course to the south and a large area of semi-natural ancient woodland to the southwest. Amenity is provided to those who actually use the wood, and more generally to the local population as a prominent skyline feature.

Opportunities & Constraints

The wood is well used as a thoroughfare by pedestrians and as a play space for youngsters. Public access is restricted by areas of dense evergreen shrubs, in particular rhododendron and holy. Whilst this is advantageous for public enjoyment can be lost through limited visibility and perceptions of poor security.

The site is located next to an area of dense housing and is subject to fairly intense use during the summer months, at which times “use” can manifest itself as miss-use and over-use. Wear and tear on open spaces; fires; den building; vandalism; and fly-tipping are perennial problems that need to be taken into consideration when creating or improving access. The close proximity of a large community means that through informing interested parties, and the use of available media management issues can be used to raise debate and to inform the local population of the Trusts aims.

Factors Causing Change

Invasive Rhododendron, Vandalism and misuse

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long term intention is to maintain the present levels of access with improvements made where new opportunities are identified.

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

The Trust will continue to advertise its properties through its own publications and the local media. To exercise control over site misuse the footpaths and access points will be managed under an annual estates maintenance contract. This will include maintenance/repairs and the cutting back of vegetation to maintain good sight lines and visibility. Much of this will be achieved through the process of PAWS restoration. The safety of site users will be addressed through on-going tree safety & site risk assessment regimes generating remedial works as required.

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	0.55	other oak spp	1925	PAWS restoration	People issues (+tve & -tve)	Informal Public Access, Planted Ancient Woodland Site	Planted Ancient Woodland Site
<p>Formed by two strips of woodland sandwiched between Redditch cemetery and Purshall close. It is approximately 310m long; 10m across at its narrowest point and 35m at its widest. 200m of the compartment run east to west with the cemetery on the north facing and directly abutting Purshall Close road to the south. The remaining 110 metres runs south to north with the cemetery on the east and a line of mature yew trees defining the boundary. A short section of the road and properties numbered 15 to 17 Pershall Close directly parallel the western boundary. A path runs through the middle of the compartment from east to west, then north into sub-compartment 1B.</p> <p>There are no open spaces and generally tight spacing between the mature and young mature trees. The species mix is varied with a number of specimen trees planted along the southern roadside facing: species mix includes - oak, lime, Norway maple, birch, beech and black pine (<i>Pinus nigra</i>). With a dense understory containing yew, holy, hazel, rowan, aspen, elder, hawthorn, with rhododendron, Portuguese laurel and Lawson cypress. The northern section is less varied and has a canopy dominated by oak, lime and beech with an understory dominated by rhododendron, holy, and yew with thorn and elder.</p>							
1b	1.35	other oak spp	1925	PAWS restoration	People issues (+tve & -tve)	Informal Public Access, Planted Ancient Woodland Site	Ancient Woodland Site
<p>A small block of woodland approximately 190m long, and 85m across at its widest point. The canopy is dominated by oak, beech, lime and sycamore, with a dense understory of rhododendron, holly yew and elder, with thorn along the western boundary. The ground in the centre of the compartment drops away to the east, here an area approximately 25m across is trampled flat with no understory and no regeneration occurring.</p> <p>The sites western boundary is defined by a thorn hedge alongside Muskets way. The north and eastern boundary abuts the back gardens of properties along Vicarage Crescent for 130m, then abuts the cemetery forming its extreme eastern and southern boundaries. The south western facing backs onto domestic properties numbers 9 to 14 Purshall Close.</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.