



Felicity's Wood

Management Plan 2014-2019

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THE WOODLAND TRUST

INTRODUCTION

The Trust's corporate aims and management approach guide the management of all the Trust's properties, and are described on Page 4. These determine basic management policies and methods, which apply to all sites unless specifically stated otherwise. Such policies include free public access; keeping local people informed of major proposed work; the retention of old trees and dead wood; and a desire for management to be as unobtrusive as possible. The Trust also has available Policy Statements covering a variety of woodland management issues.

The Trust's management plans are based on the identification of Key Features for the site and setting objectives for their management. A monitoring programme (not included in this plan) ensures that these objectives are met and any necessary management works are carried out.

Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATING

The information presented in this Management plan is held in a database which is continuously being amended and updated on our website. Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations. Please either consult The Woodland Trust website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk or contact the Woodland Trust (wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk) to confirm details of the current management programme.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and a summary of monitoring results can be obtained on request.

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The management of our woods is based on our charitable purposes, and is therefore focused on improving woodland biodiversity and increasing peoples' understanding and enjoyment of woodland. Our strategic aims are to:

- Protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future
- Work with others to create more native woodlands and places rich in trees
- Inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees

All our sites have a management plan which is freely accessible via our website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk. Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) under licence FSC-C009406 and through independent audit.

In addition to the guidelines below we have specific guidance and policies on issues of woodland management which we review and update from time to time.

We recognise that all woods are different and that the management of our sites should also reflect their local landscape and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives. Guidelines like these provide a necessary overarching framework to guide the management of our sites but such management also requires decisions based on local circumstances and our Site Manager's intimate knowledge of each site.

The following guidelines help to direct our woodland management:

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.
2. We establish new native woodland using both natural regeneration and tree planting, but largely the latter, particularly when there are opportunities for involving people.
3. We provide free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe.
4. The long term vision for our non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites is to restore them to predominantly native species composition and semi-natural structure, a vision that equally applies to our secondary woods.
5. Existing semi-natural open-ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained and new open ground habitats created where appropriate.
6. The heritage and cultural value of sites is taken into account in our management and, in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.
7. Woods can offer the potential to generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We will therefore consider the potential to generate income from our estate to help support our aims.
8. We work with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders in developing the management of our woods. We recognise the benefits of local community woodland ownership and management. Where appropriate we allow our woods to be used to support local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.
9. We use and offer the estate where appropriate, for the purpose of demonstration, evidence gathering and research associated with the conservation, recreational and sustainable management of woodlands. In particular we will develop and maintain a network of long-term monitoring sites across the estate.
- 10 Any activities we undertake will conform to sustainable forest management principles, be appropriate for the site and will be balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

SUMMARY

This public management plan briefly describes the site, specifically mentions information on public access, sets out the long term policy and lists the Key Features which drive management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site - their significance is outlined together with their long (50 year+) and short (5 year) term objectives. The short term objectives are complemented by a detailed Work Programme for the period of this management plan. Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. A short glossary of technical terms is at the end. The Key Features and general woodland condition of this site are subject to a formal monitoring programme which is maintained in a central database. A summary of monitoring results is available on request.

1.0 SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Felicity's Wood
Location:	Woodhouse Eaves
Grid reference:	SK504155, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 129
Area:	8.77 hectares (21.67 acres)
Designations:	National Forest

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Felicity's wood was purchased by the Trust in 1996 and planting took place in 1997. Prior to purchase it was grazed and the stone walls that enclosed it are still a feature of the site. It lies in the heart of the ancient hunting Forest of Charnwood and it is also within the boundary of the National Forest area. The landscape of Charnwood Forest is a mosaic of small agricultural fields and woodlands with one or two larger ancient woodlands. Felicity's wood has Beacon Hill Country Park, to the south; The Outwoods ancient woodland to the east and Charnwood Lodge NNR to the west as well as numerous copse' and spinneys in the surrounding farmland.

The site is on a north facing slope and from the main entrance there are spectacular views over Charnwood Forest and northward to the Trent valley. Beacon hill is one of the igneous rocky outcrops dotted throughout Leicestershire and the rock and soil type here is based upon this. The soil type is a sandy loam over mudstone or the igneous local stone, known as 'Forest Stone' or 'Homstone'. There is an outcrop of this within the central copse. The site is reasonably free draining due to the steepness but at the foot of the slope there is a small stream, known as Woodbrook, and the lower paths can become quite wet and poorly drained.

The wood is of two ages, planted before and after trust ownership. The new wood is mainly oak, ash, some birch and field maple with willow nearer the stream, but some Scots pine was included in the planting to echo the surrounding shelter belts and copses. The pre-trust planting is within two walled enclosures and mainly consists of Scots pine but there are some more mature willow in the area by the stream. The new woodland is challenged by a high amount of squirrel damage and now ash die back has hit, there are more dead or badly damaged trees here than not. The even aged structure of the new woodland has meant that the canopy has closed and not much of an understorey or ground flora exists here, but the older copses have a more diverse range of plant species with Hare bell, Gorse, Figwort, Wood sage, Enchanters nightshade, Foxglove, Bluebell, Honey suckle all present and ready to colonise the new woodland.

The top of the slope was left unplanted in order to protect the views and this has led to the development of a large meadow area of 2.25ha. There is also a bank of hazel coppice to the east of the meadow. At the base of the slope is Woodbrook, which has a mention in the Leicestershire Biodiversity Action Plan for its good water quality and the presence of white clawed crayfish, grey wagtails, freshwater lamprey and stone loach.

The sites key features are new native woodland; informal public access and open ground.

2.2 Extended Description

Felicity's wood was purchased by the Trust in 1996 and planting took place in 1997. Prior to purchase it was grazed agricultural land and the stone walls that enclosed it are still a feature of the site. It lies in the heart of the ancient hunting Forest of Charnwood and it is also within the boundary of the National Forest area. The surrounding landscape of Charnwood Forest is a mosaic of small agricultural fields and woodlands with one or two larger ancient woodlands. Felicity's wood has Beacon Hill Country Park, to the south; The Outwoods ancient woodland to the east and Charnwood Lodge NNR to the west as well as numerous 'copse' and 'spinneys' in the surrounding farmland.

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Although the bulk of the woodland was planted by the Trust, there were some existing areas of woodland cover. The new wood is mainly oak, ash, some birch and field maple with willow nearer the stream, but some Scots pine was included in the planting to echo the surrounding shelter belts and copses. The pre-trust planting is within two walled enclosures and mainly consists of Scots pine but there are some more mature willow in the area by the stream. The new woodland is challenged by a high amount of squirrel damage and now ash die back has hit, there are more dead or badly damaged trees here than not. The even aged structure of the new woodland has meant that the canopy has closed and not much of an understorey or ground flora exists here, but the older copses have a more diverse range of plant species with Hare bell, Gorse, Figwort, Wood sage, Enchanters nightshade, Foxglove, Bluebell, Honey suckle all present and ready to colonise the new woodland.

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The sites key features are new native woodland; informal public access and open ground.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

This small site is approximately 5 kms SW of Loughborough on the northern flank of Beacon Hill, a significant landscape feature in Charnwood Forest and it adjoins Martin's Wood on the southern boundary. It can be accessed from Dean's Lane and the lower boundary with the permissive path along Wood Brook. Although gaps in the fence have been established by usage there is no formal agreement with the adjacent landowner. There is a small pull-off on Dean's Lane limited to one or two cars. Far better to park cars in the Beacon Hill Country Park car and walk the 500 metres to the wood.

The paths through the site are mown grass, with a generally even surface, but steep in places. There are a number of strategically placed seats which enable the visitor to take in the wonderful views northwards over Wood Brook, Loughborough and the Trent Valley beyond. There is an excellent walk from Beacon Hill, through Martins Wood and across Deans Lane to Felicity's Wood, join the permissive path along Wood Brook and thence to Jubilee Wood and the Outwoods. Then follow the road towards Woodhouse Eaves and enter the bottom end of Beacon Hill Country Park. There is no public transport but the walk to Martins can be shortened by taking the bus from Loughborough to Nanpanton or Woodhouse Eaves. There is a public toilet at Beacon Hill Country Park.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term objective of the site is to have created and maintained a thriving mixed woodland, comprised of several native species and exhibiting a diverse age structure, from naturally regenerating seedlings through to old growth characteristics. Standing deadwood will be retained where its safe to do so. Diversity of wildlife will be well established, tying the site in with the other important habitats surrounding it. The site will continue to remain open to the public to enjoy quiet, informal recreation. The path network will be maintained and the open area in the south will continue to be cut allowing the views out over the surrounding landscape. Woodland management will only be undertaken when woodland condition assessments show that there is a need to encourage biodiversity or improve the structure of the woodland with interventions.

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 New Native Woodland

Description

An oak ash woodland with a fairly wide range of other minor species in the mix and included in the two existing mature copses. It is continuous with other older planted woods on the steeper slopes of Woodbrook Valley but outside of the Woodland Trust ownership. Within the wood there are several other minor habitats also including dry stone walls, fast flowing stream, open grassland, dead wood. The wood is located on the lower slopes of Beacon hill.

Significance

As part of the national forest area Felicity's Wood helps to fulfil many of the original goals set out for the national forest, these were:-

To create a diverse landscape and enhance biodiversity.

To make a significant contribution to the UK's efforts to reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide.

To create a major resource for tourism, recreation and education.

To provide a productive alternative use for farmland.

To make a contribution to the UK's timber needs.

To stimulate the economy and to create new jobs.

Despite the fact that Charnwood Forest is a well wooded area before the National Forest initiative got underway, woodland cover across the area as a whole accounted for just six per cent of land use, well below the national average.

This particular wood is integrated within the special landscape character of Charnwood Forest that is one of scattered woods with meadows and heaths.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints

The views from the southern glade northwards over the rest of the wood and the valley of the Wood Brook must be maintained

The site is very steep so any subsequent management is difficult.

Opportunities

Expansion of common woodland species outwards from the two established copses into the planted woodland. The southern stream Wood Brook is very important to many wildlife species some of which are nationally notable

Factors Causing Change

Pests and diseases, most notable are grey squirrel and ash die back. The grey squirrel damage on this site is very pronounced and coupled with the effects of ADB, the woodland is facing a severe challenge.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Oak-ash dominated woodland with a thriving wildlife community, deadwood habitat and public access.

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

The planted woodland areas will require a first thinning operation in order to allow more light on to the woodland floor, which in turn will increase biodiversity and encourage a more diverse age structure. The rides will be widened to facilitate them drying-out and to allow the development of a multi-stage mowing regime to improve floral diversity. Ash trees close to the paths with severe ADB that will cause H&S issues in the future will be removed, and this work will tie in with the planned thinning operation to keep disturbance to a minimum. Management of the squirrel population will be undertaken prior to thinning to reduce the burden on the remaining trees post-thinning. Viewpoints from benches and footpaths will also require active management. The hazel coppice on the flanks of the upper slopes will be managed in order to improve biodiversity; produce a product and to maintain the view from Dean's Lane.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

Felicity's Wood was planted up as part of the National Forest in association with the National Forest Company and with funding from FC and Charnwood Borough Council. Local people were consulted from the very earliest stages over the design. They were anxious to maintain the spectacular views across the Wood Brook Valley and to ensure that the site was properly integrated into the local landscape. As a consequence the new planting was concentrated on the lower, steeper slopes below the dominant sight-line from the upper parts of the site. The wood is well connected to the public footpath network directly off Dean's Lane and via the permissive paths through adjoining Martins Wood up to Beacon Hill country Park so although there are no villages very close, the site is a linking amenity for locals and visitors from further afield. There are 1150m of paths throughout the site and a large amount of open grassland on the upper slopes which dog walkers love.

Significance

Fulfills a local requirement for recreational land and is an integral part of the larger landscape/recreation picture as part of the National Forest and Charnwood countryside character area and it is linked via Martins wood to Beacon Hill Country Park.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints

Very steep so most of the wood is unsuitable for some disabled visitors and the views from the glade at the southern end of the site must be maintained as a key part of the woodland design.

Opportunities

There is no definitive/ permissive access into the adjoining woodland to the east, which could provide additional access through another woodland habitat.

Factors Causing Change

Ash die back and squirrel damage could lead to a dangerous woodland habitat if not managed correctly.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Maintain full permissive public access across the Woodland Trust ownership with a link over the Wood Brook to the north and links with the woodland to the east, if an understanding with the neighbouring landowner can be reached.

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

Maintain the current 1150 m of paths by mowing two or three times each year under a two-zone management system. That is the central zone at least twice annually and the sides alternate years. Carry out regular tree safety inspections and organise any required remedial works promptly. Maintain viewpoints from seats and specific sections of path. Maintenance of the seats, welcome signs and information board will be required at least once annually.

5.3 Continuity of Open Ground

Description

This key feature is confined to the area covered by sub-compartment 1c which is the area of permanent grassland on the upper slopes of the site. The upper boundary is formed by Dean's Lane and the lower by the dry-stone wall at the break of slope with the planting below. To the east and west the boundaries are formed by the hazel coppices planted on acquisition.

Significance

During the initial public consultation powerful arguments were made to ensure both the spectacular views and the close integration of the site within the surrounding landscape which comprises of upland meadows, woodland, conifer enclosures and heathland. Consequently these aspects closely informed the initial design of the woodland.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints.

Requires the assistance of a local farmer in order to cut and remove the grass, not always possible to arrange.

Opportunities.

Provides the much valued open views across Woodbrook Valley, the Trent Vale and the Derbyshire Pennines in the far distance.

Allows the proper integration of the site within the surrounding landscape.

Could possibly be improved to improve floral diversity of the meadow area.

Factors Causing Change

Ruderal weeds. Natural succession to woodland if left un-cut.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Maintain the grassland habitat of 2.25 ha and the views to the north. Look to improve the diversity of the grassland habitat.

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

Establish an agreement with a local farmer, to cut and remove the grass. This will decrease the nitrogen reserves in the soil and help to suppress ruderal weeds, encouraging a more diverse ground flora. Enhance the species diversity by planting wildflower plugs and/or seeds.

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	5.85	Ash	1997	High forest	Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Informal Public Access, New Native Woodland	National Forest
<p>Forming the majority of the woodland, this compartment was planted in 1997 under the National Forest tender scheme. The mix was oak and ash with small amounts of field maple, birch, Scots pine and willow as well as a proportion of woody shrubs on the ride edges. The Scots pine was included to reflect the surrounding established copses in the landscape, which are well stocked with conifer. The compartment is very steep, falling some 50m in the space of 360m; it is bounded by the lane to the south and the edge of an established wood to the west. The eastern boundary is a thorn hedgerow whilst the northern extremity is marked by the Wood Brook.</p>							
1b	0.52	Mixed conifers	1960	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Informal Public Access, New Native Woodland	National Forest
<p>Two established small copses with Scots pine estimated to have been re-planted in about 1960 as they are represented on a map of 1889. Both are enclosed by dry-stone walls. Within the larger of the copses adjacent to Wood Brook there are areas of ash, alder, oak, rowan and willow, sparse areas of understorey of mainly elder with some holly and gorse. The ground flora is dominated by bramble but with small amounts of bluebell, honeysuckle, enchanters nightshade, fox glove, woundwort and figwort. This area was thinned in approximately 1993 and there is a significant amount of dead wood lying on the ground. The smaller copse is less well vegetated but is dominated by conifers with an elder/thorn shrub layer in places and has a very thin soil through which the local rock outcrops.</p>							
1c	2.40	Open ground	1997	Non-wood habitat		Informal Public Access, New Native Woodland	National Forest
<p>This sub-compartment is an area of former improved grassland which has been retained as open grassland to allow views across the Charnwood Forest landscape to the Trent Valley to the north. The meadow ensures the integration of the site within the local landscape. The views enabled by the meadow were a key component of the site design at the consultation meetings. During this plan period an agreement with a local farmer will be established to facilitate the cutting and removal of the hay.</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.