WOODLAND TRUST

Hunkin Wood

Management Plan 2014-2019

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Hunkin Wood
Location:	Uffculme, Culmstock
Grid reference:	ST084136, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 181
Area:	5.87 hectares (14.51 acres)
Designations:	

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Hunkin wood is a flat woodland that offers good views out of the site to surrounding countryside. It is located on a floodplain of the River Culm. Access is via a ford, and as such the site may be inaccessible to vehicles for parts of the year.

2.2 Extended Description

Hunkin Wood is a flat woodland creation site on the floodplain of the River Culm, located approximately a mile upstream from the Mid Devon village of Uffculme. The wood is surrounded on 3 sides by rivers, with flooding of the site often at times of high rainfall . The site can be boggy in places, but despite this the grassy paths and tracks around the wood provide attractive access facilities which hold up well to the levels of usage it receives, which is mainly local and not intensive. The site comprises the riparian habitats of the main river plus smaller parallel brooks, grassland areas and young native woodland,

A 'Woods on Your Doorstep' site, the wood is situated halfway between Uffculme and Culmstock, and is crossed by two public footpaths, linking the wood into a wider network. There is limited parking at the entrance for the less active walker. Although the site is flat, there are good views out to surrounding countryside, particularly towards Culmstock Beacon. This is complemented by a stone gateway facing the beacon - the millennium feature chosen by local people. The whole of the site was formerly a meadow and 61% of site was planted in 1998-99 with native mixed broadleaves using a high proportion of alder and willow to create a wet woodland habitat. Although the wood is generally well established a number of trees regularly succumbed to local disease or insect outbreaks and this has resulted in a more open mixture than was originally intended, however the establishment of some natural regeneration combined with this open appearance is already leading to an attractive diversifying structure.

The remainder of the site was left unplanted due to its high grassland interest and the meadow area is fenced off to allow management by grazing and/or mowing to maintain the grassland quality.

The valley of the River Culm retains a peaceful atmosphere, with the tree-lined river meandering through a wide floodplain. The River Culm area has a varied underlying geology, comprising red Permian sandstones in the western part of the area, Permian mudstones and Triassic sandstones in the central part, and Triassic mudstones in the eastern part, with localised limestone outcrops elsewhere.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Hunkin Wood is set in a rural location at Five Fords, north of the river Culm, between the villages of Uffculme (3/4 mile) and Culmstock (1 1/4 miles) from where it can be reached by narrow country roads which are without footpaths. It is also linked to both these villages, and the villages of Prescott and Craddock, by public footpaths leading across the fields. Using this route it is possible to walk a circular route taking in Hunkin Wood on the way.

From the road at Five Fords, the first approach into the wood is a rough surfaced track which leads through a ford across the Prescott Brook. As this is the main management access and is not surfaced the area around the ford can be rutted & boggy. Next to the ford is a pedestrian bridge but the restrictions required to keep the bridge above the level of the brook in flood mean that at each end there are 2 high steps. Following the footpath due south takes you shortly to a similar bridge across the Culm river and out of the wood. However, turning left visitors can follow a circular route through the wood, or continue out of a pedestrian kissing gate in the south east corner along the footpath towards Culmstock. Within the wood the land is generally flat, the paths are unsurfaced with tussocky grass and with some local unevenness caused by flooding.

The River Culm and Prescott Brook form 3 of the boundaries to the wood and consequently the wood floods after periods of heavy rain. Scrapes and hollows retain standing water for some time after the main waters recede and so some areas of the path can be boggy for much of the year. Flood waters may regularly bring debris down river which can be deposited on site, although generally this is clear of the paths.

Nearest bus stop: Junction of Ashley Close, Ashley Road, Uffculme - approximately 1 mile away. Information taken from Traveline website & bus timetables from Devon County Council May 2007
Nearest train station: Tiverton Parkway approximately 4.5 miles
Nearest toilet: 4 toilets in Tiverton including one at the Market car park, approximately 4.5 miles away, all have facilities for disabled people (RADAR key required). Information taken from Mid Devon district council website www.middevon.gov.uk as at May 2007

For further information on transport see the Traveline website www.traveline.com or phone 0871 200 22 33

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

A new native woodland is being created here that will develop characteristics of wet woodland. A diverse age structure will develop as the alder, poplar and willow mature, collapse and regenerate helping to deliver the Trust's aims of creating new native woodland and vision "of a UK rich in native woods and trees enjoyed and valued by everyone.".

The site's other habitats will maintain their biodiversity value and compliment the neighbouring network of wet meadows. The meadow area will recover to be at least as diverse in species as that recorded in 1998 (when it was less dominated by coarse grasses). The development of the riverine system will be allowed to continue naturally, the course of the river altering over time.

The site helps fulfil the Trust's objectives of increasing public access to and enjoyment of woodland. Access facilities, will be maintained and enhanced, where appropriate, to suit local demand. Low level public access across the site will be encouraged with the footpaths, entrances and facilities being well maintained and welcoming.
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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

3.7 ha (61%) of site was planted in 1998-99 with native mixed broadleaves with a high proportion of alder and willow, some of which struggle to establish against disease and insect attack (unidentified moth). All other tree species are growing well, and natural regeneration is becoming established throughout the site, creating a more open mix and greater structural diversity than originally envisaged.

Significance

Fulfils the Trust's objective of creating new native woodland, and was part of the Woods on Your Doorstep scheme to increase local areas of woodland with open access. This helps deliver WT belief that everyone should recognise that trees and woods are an essential part of a healthy environment and aim to inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees. WT aims:
Aim 1: to enable the creation of more native woods and places rich in trees
Aim 2: to protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future
Aim 3: to inspire and engage everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees

Wet Woodland has been identified as a priority habitat in both the local and national biodiversity action plans and the natural area profile. The beneficial effects of the site will increase in this capacity as the woodland matures [source WWF].
Devon County Council's long term strategy for the area includes: 'Protect floodplains, resisting any inappropriate development'.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraint: Phytophthora alni and insect populations are damaging the alder and willow that typify this habitat.
Coppicing encourages the regeneration of new growth, especially if the tree has a diseased root system that can no longer support the entire crown. It also prevents diseased trees from becoming unstable and causing damage to the anchoring riverbank. Ideally, trees should be cut for coppicing 20–30 cm above ground level, leaving a tall stump to develop new shoots under favourable space and light conditions

Factors Causing Change

Deer Damage, Other - Excessive flooding/erosion, Rabbit Damage, Other - Phytophthora alni infection of young alder and moth attack on willow. More generally: Climate change leading to increased winter flooding, summer drought and changes in seasonal growth patterns, potentially affecting semi-natural habitats.
•Loss of woodland and trees as a result of new pests and diseases (e.g. Phytophthora), and increased magnitude and frequency of storm events as a result of climate change.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

This wet woodland will have reached maturity, with healthy trees naturally replacing any diseased or insect attacked trees from original planting. It will be of predominantly alder and willow with occasional mature open grown specimens , good populations of natural regeneration and shrubs as well as associated ground flora giving the wood a variable age, size and species structure.

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

To ensure the continuing development towards mixed broadleaf woodland. This will be done through:

1. Where willow and alder have died following attack from disease or pests these gaps are to be checked for the abundance of natural regeneration and the damage from deer/rabbits. Consider methods of protection/enrichment if regeneration is insufficient.
2. Coppicing of disease affected alder 20-30cm above ground (FC recommended way of dealing with phytopthora alni)
3. Control of invasive weeds annually as necessary (in particular Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed & hogweed.
4. Check annually for the prevalence of phytophthora and conduct control as necessary to reduce spread.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

Hunkin Wood is set in a rural location at Five Fords, north of the River Culm, between the villages of Uffculme (3/4 mile) and Culmstock (1 1/4 miles) from where it can be reached by narrow country roads. It is also linked to both these villages (and to the villages of Prescott and Craddock) by public footpaths leading across the fields. Using these links it is possible to walk a circular route taking in Hunkin Wood on the way. For less active walkers there is limited parking at the main entrance for two cars if carefully parked. Local walkers are the most common type of users (in particular dog walkers). As a WOYD the knowledge of the site, and expectations are locally high.

The landscape is varied and interesting providing views to Culmstock Beacon, the riverside tracks and the millennium stone 'doorway' all add value to the site itself..

Significance

The site provides local green space and woodland in an area that has little other open access land. By crossing the bridges the site joins onto several other footpaths which mean it forms an important link to the surrounding countryside. The site is well used and several desire lines have been created, most notably a path along the river edge.
Helps deliver WT belief – there should be a wood with open access close to everyone's home and to aim to inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees.
Devon County Council's long term strategy for the area includes: 'Links between settlements and the countryside are encouraged, and the recreational, historic and wildlife values of the river valleys are enhanced'.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: 1) Access involves either steep steps over the bridge, or crossing a ford, limiting access for the less able. 2) Very limited parking at the gate without blocking neighbour's access into neighbouring fields. 3) Wetness of site in winter and potential to flood throughout the year can limit access to the site.
Opportunity – to consider improving parking area and other access constraints where this might provide access for a wider range of users but within the constraints of its rural and local use levels.

Factors Causing Change

Other – Flooding

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Public access will be maintained at a level appropriate to demand so that the site will be a valued access space for the local residents who come to enjoy the wildlife, the mature woodland or relax by the riverbank.

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

The site should remain safe, open and welcoming throughout the plan. This will be achieved by:
1. Paths are to be mown to encourage access, entrances checked to ensure they are welcoming.
2. The historic stepping stones are to be kept clear to expose them and highlight them as a notable feature of the site.
3. Clearance of ditch along access track between road and ford to remove silt/debris annually to ensure main entrance remains in sound condition.
4. Safety checks on the wooden bridges every 2 years to ensure they are safe for public use. Also check after periods of flooding.
5. Check the riverside banks for stability particularly areas where the path may be being undercut, diverting the path where necessary.
6. Conduct tree safety inspections in accordance with the Trust policy and react appropriately.

5.3 Mixed Habitat Mosaic

Description

The site is important for wildlife and has interest for the visiting public as it is a mix of habitats.
Important grassland in the northern section of the site has been surveyed as NVC type MG5 .
The site is also important as it provides natural flood alleviation for the River Culm, becoming a storage facility for the waters during periods of flooding and lessening problems downstream. 39% of the site has been left open due to existing grassland interest. Generally the grassland has a strong affinity with NVC type MG6 (Lolium perenne - Cynosurus cristatus), but the northern section is thought to be derived from the more diverse NVC type MG5 (Centaureo-Cynosuretum). The surrounding land is all pasture, although probably improved it still shows some interesting characteristics, broadening the spread of this habitat.

The site is almost entirely bordered by watercourses which are known to provide habitat for two UKBAP species, these indicate the overall healthy nature of the river. i.e. white clawed crayfish and otter (also present: bullhead, salmon, kingfisher and dipper).

A significant, mature oak tree grows on the edge of the river bank on the bend where the river makes its main meander through the site.

Significance

The site links with the mosaic of sympathetically managed habitats surrounding it, expanding the value of the area for biodiversity. The grassland and river are identified as important in the local biodiversity action plan & natural area profile.
NVC type MG5 Centaureo-Cynosuretum would have been the main unimproved neutral grassland vegetation community present in the locality (according to natural area profile) although it has declined in recent decades.

The river is an integral attraction of the site, and contributes to the other habitat types. It also supports 2 species listed as priorities under the UKBAP (e.g. white clawed crayfish & otter).
The grassland, watercourses and the newly created wet woodland habitats regularly interact. This is through regular flooding, bank erosion and the ecotones between each. This leads to the creation of countless areas of potentially important niche habitat.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunity: to retain and enhance the grassland habitat value. To allow the watercourses to develop naturally, allowing the river to develop meanders, islands and accumulations of flotsam at random. Investigate the potential of grazing as a better method of grassland management than mowing.

Constraints: Management of the grassland may not be sustainable in the longer term as the cost of mowing and removing clippings without a hay cut or finding a regular grazier and costs of improving management access, fencing/holding pen costs, possible local opposition and increased safety risk/responsibilities associated with grazing may be prohibitive.
The spread of the invasive species may be detrimental to all native species if left unchecked.
Difficulties posed to management and access by flooding/waterlogged ground.

Factors Causing Change

Natural Succession to woodland, Excessive flooding/erosion, Loss of large riverside oak as a result of river bank erosion. Invasive species e.g. Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed. Threat of invasive water-borne weeds such as Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam, resulting in loss of native riparian vegetation.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The open grassland has been enhanced and has an abundance of native wildflowers such as Scabious, Trefoil and Betony; the site is rich with insect life feeding on the nectar of these plants. Maintain stability of veteran oak if possible unless river has taken its own course and is not undermining the root system.

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

The condition of the meadows should be enhanced during the life of this plan. This will be done through:

1. Grazing and/or mowing of grassland areas to maintain open grassland feature and associated species. Pursue opportunity to install a new, wider bridge to replace current footbridge to allow better access for site management.
2. Survey grassland to establish range of species within the meadow during life of this plan to determine if management of this key feature has been successful.
3. Undertake the most efficient method of controlling the spread of himalayan Balsam where it encroaches into grassland. To cut all plants and remove the immediate seed source. 5. Undertake some protection to the roots of veteran tree to stabilise it if roots become undermined by river

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	3.70	other willows	1999	High forest	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access to the site	Informal Public Access, Mixed Habitat Mosaic	
Mixed native broadleaved species were planted on this former water meadow at 1100/ha spacing in 98-99. Only 61% of the whole site was planted due to habitat value of the remaining grassland. The main species are alder, willow, aspen, oak, plus some shrubs. Although generally establishing well the alder and willow are gradually dying due to disease (phytophthora) and insect (unidentified moth) damage. The soils, although prone to flooding, are generally free-draining and allow access for most of the year. Several paths additional to the public footpaths have been created along 'desire lines' through the compartment, mainly alongside the river and stream. The river is eroding the bank in places, and may end up undercutting these tracks. One large oak tree in this area at edge of river ... treated as a conservation feature. May be in danger from river bank erosion.							
1b	2.40	Open ground		Non-wood habitat	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access to the site	Informal Public Access, Mixed Habitat Mosaic	

This area comprises the rides and open ground mostly along the northern edge of the site. These areas were left unplanted following recommendations by the Devon Wildlife Trust. This report identified the grassland as being of existing nature conservation value. NVC type was noted as MG5 Centaureo-Cynosuretum in 1998.

Himalayan balsam is present on the site, and at locations further upstream, attempts to control this invasive species on site have failed to eliminate it, but has been successful in keeping the population to small areas.

The ground can be very boggy in places, but is generally free draining and so remains firm underfoot even after flooding. Although the scrapes can hold the water for a long time, forming ephemeral ponds. These are mostly around the stone doorway that was created as the millennium feature.

Previous management has seen a hay cut being taken, but the woody flotsam and large quantities of dog faeces meant that this was no longer attractive and has ceased as recently as 2005.

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.