



Walters Wood

Management Plan 2016-2021

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Walters Wood
Location:	Ouston
Grid reference:	NZ255549, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 88
Area:	2.10 hectares (5.19 acres)
Designations:	Community Forest, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc)

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

This small broadleaf woodland on the edge of Ouston has easy access from surrounding housing and is well used by local people. It is also linked by footpaths to the reclaimed Ouston Urpeth colliery site to the south for those wanting a longer walk.

2.2 Extended Description

Walter's Wood is a small (2.1 ha) broadleaved wood located on the edge of Ouston, Co. Durham (NZ 256 550) that was acquired by the Trust in June 1997 on a 999-year lease from Chester-le-Street District Council. South of the wood is a council housing estate, part of which has now been demolished and rebuilt with executive housing. More houses adjoin its southeast corner but to the east and north lay arable farmland, whilst to the west lays scrub woodland beyond which lies more arable land.

The western arm of the wood is dominated by mature beech that was selectively felled during 1998 and 1999 to remove the worst vandalised and diseased trees. An understory consisting of dense clumps of oak, beech, ash and rowan regeneration occur in places along with hazel and hawthorn. This half of the wood slopes gently down to a stream that flows along the outside the western boundary. The eastern arm of the wood consists mainly of mature oak and ash with a hazel, holly and hawthorn under storey and bracken in open areas. A small stream runs through this part of the wood (the southern end of which has been filled in and piped and acts as a surface water drain) down to which the wood slopes on either side.

The wood is well used by local people and suffers from littering and fly tipping problems. No public rights of way exist on site but a number of informal permissive paths provide access for walkers. Management access is available from the public highway into the southwest end of the wood by crossing a grass verge running between the houses.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Pedestrian access to the wood is available at the southern end of each arm of the wood and also from public footpath No 40 that runs along the outside of the western arm of the wood via stepping stones across the stream. Parking for three to four cars is available nearby in a lay-by off the minor road to the north of the wood from where public footpath (No 40) can be accessed; otherwise on-street parking can be found in Ouston village. For visitors wishing to reach the wood by public transport, bus stops are located on the main road running through Ouston village. By walking northwards to the end of the village and turning left into Abernethy then taking the first right will bring you to the wood within several minutes. The wood is entered via a squeeze stile in the fence. Paths in the wood are unsurfaced, narrow and climb short steep slopes but are generally firm under foot.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

To maintain a continuous cover of predominantly native broadleaved high forest woodland across the site. Access for walkers will be maintained by keeping open the permissive paths on site and at least two pedestrian entrances, one at each end of 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 Informal Public Access

Description

Walter's Wood currently has two formal pedestrian entrance points, one at the southern end of each arm of the wood. Stepping-stones across the burn near the southwest side of the wood provide another point of access into the wood along with another crossing point to the northwest. Neither of these access points are located on Trust land but were formalised by installing steps to each side of the burn during an access project delivered by Groundwork Northeast in 2010/11. Although no public rights of way exist on site, permissive paths running through both arms of the wood provide extensive access.

Significance

Providing public access to woods is a cornerstone of the Trust's management approach to its properties and is encapsulated in its corporate objective of increasing enjoyment and understanding of woodland. Walter's Wood is the only piece of mature woodland available locally that allows public access and therefore this small wood provides an important local amenity for the people of Ouston.

Opportunities & Constraints

The small size of Walter's Wood limits the level of informal recreation the wood can provide. It is an amenity for local people rather than a wood people will travel to visit. Littering and anti-social behaviour still occur on site and act as a constraint to public enjoyment as well as management of the wood. The demolition of the northern half of The Oval housing estate and the building of new houses has removed one major source of fly tipping, though a new problem with garden waste and spoil being dumped into the wood now exists. Whilst incorporating the open ground that used to exist between the old council houses and the wood into the private gardens of the new houses has stopped this boundary being used by fly tippers, this did result in the loss of an entrance into the wood.

Factors Causing Change

Bike trespass damaging paths
Loss of an entrance due to development
Sale of southeast end of wood to developers

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To ensure public access to the wood for quiet recreation on foot continues to be available in the future by maintaining a 450m permissive path on site to provide a route through the wood and at least one entrance at the southern end of each arm of the wood to provide access to this route.

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

The two entrances, one at the southern end of each arm of the wood, will be maintained in perpetuity, along with the 450m permissive route that runs through the wood between these two entrances to ensure the public enjoy free access on foot to the wood into the future. Whilst the neighbouring landowner's consent allows, the two other entrances along the western boundary will continue to provide additional access to the wood. Littering, fly tipping and other problems caused by anti-social behaviour will continue to be tackled through the annual EMC programme where this is possible and by working with the police, local authorities and the Trust's legal team as appropriate.

5.2 Natural Secondary Woodland

Description

Walter's Wood consists of 2.1 ha of predominantly native broadleaved woodland consisting of sessile oak, ash, beech, hawthorn and hazel.

Significance

The fact that Walter's Wood consists of mature broadleaved woodland makes it an important habitat and a diminishing resource in its own right. However, its importance as habitat is also confirmed by the fact that both Walter's Wood and the adjoining woodland to the west known as The Broom and tree planting and grassland to the south are designated a County Wildlife Site (No 2.1) by Durham County Council. Although Walter's Wood is not recognised on English Nature's Inventory of Ancient Woodland as ASNW, the older oak woodland on site is very likely to be a remnant of ASNW. Walter's Wood also forms part of the former Great North Forest.

Opportunities & Constraints

The demolition and rebuilding of that part of The Oval housing estate next to Walter's Wood has brought both benefits and problems. To provide access to the new houses an access road was required, resulting in a small fragment of the wood's SE corner been lost. However, as most of this part of the property has already been turned into low value amenity grassland, the overall impact on the wood was small. Having houses so near the wood has put greater pressure on it and inevitably has led to increased concerns over safety, shading etc. Because the new houses come right up to the edge of the wood, prior to construction, six trees along the southern boundary had to be felled and several others had their crowns reduced in the interests of safety. However, one of the most damaging consequences of the redevelopment could be the dense shade the high garden fences along the boundary of the wood will cast.

Factors Causing Change

- Redevelopment of housing estate
- Reduction in size due to sale of SE tip of wood to developers
- Loss of buffer zone between wood and new houses
- Heavy shading along the top of the wood due to garden fences
- Vandalism to beech trees
- Fly tipping and littering

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain predominantly native broadleaved high forest woodland across Walter's Wood in perpetuity, whilst gradually increasing biodiversity within the western arm of the wood by encouraging the spread of natural regeneration of locally native species such as oak, ash and rowan though opening the canopy by the gradual removal damaged beech trees from the canopy.

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

During 2016, a survey of the existing beech trees in the western arm of the wood will be carried out to identify any further damaged trees whose removal will open up parts of the wood still being suppressed by the beech canopy. Based on the results of this survey, a programme of selective felling work will be drawn up for the next 10 years to remove the trees identified by removing no more than three mature trees during each 5-year plan period so that the impact on this small wood is not severe but achieved through a gradual change. By 2025, those areas of the wood that currently have little natural regeneration will have been colonised by a mix of native broadleaved regeneration.

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	2.10	Oak (sessile)	1850	High forest	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site, Mostly wet ground/exposed site, People issues (+tve & -tve)	Informal Public Access, Natural Secondary Woodland	Community Forest, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc)

Compartment 1 encompasses the whole of the Walter's Wood that is situated at the northwest corner of Ouston village. The wood occupies two small stream valleys that join at its northern end, giving the wood an arrowhead-shaped appearance with housing situated at its base between the two arms of the wood. The wood itself consists of three distinct stands of trees that relate to phases of the wood's development.

The sessile oak woodland at the northern end of the wood and running along the northeast-facing slope in its east arm is the oldest part of Walter's. This area is shown as woodland on the first series Ordnance Survey (OS) map of 1861 and is very likely to be a degraded remnant of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW). Oak dominates the canopy but a few ash also occur, though a couple of large mature ash trees were felled when the housing development took place at the northern end of The Oval Estate. Old hazel coppice forms an understory along with a scattering of hawthorn, holly, elder and oak regeneration. The ground flora is more varied than in other parts of the wood but bramble is spreading along the upper slope where more light is penetrating the canopy.

The wood's western arm is not shown as woodland until the third series OS map of 1924 and therefore, must have been planted sometime after 1898 (date of second series map) and before 1924, so we can estimate the planting date to be sometime around the beginning of the 20th century. This part of the wood is dominated by beech, though a scattering of ash, oak and hawthorn also occur, usually near the edges of the wood. In places, patches of beech regeneration occur along with ash, hawthorn, rowan and some oak regeneration whilst the remaining understory consists of hazel and hawthorn. The field layer exists consists of grasses and ivy with some bramble in lighter areas.

The woodland to the northeast of the stream in the eastern arm does not appear on the 1924 map and so, presumably, this has developed since the 1920s. Hawthorn dominates this area, though hazel and a scattering of young ash are also present. Bracken has colonised the small glade in the middle of this area, otherwise plants such as ivy, grasses, etc., are common. This area probably formed part of the original wood at one time but was cleared prior to the middle of the 19th century.

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.