



Blaby Oaks

**Management Plan
2017-2022**

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 Informal Public Access	
5.2 New Native Woodland	
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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Blaby Oaks
Location:	Blaby
Grid reference:	SP575967, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 140
Area:	5.67 hectares (14.01 acres)
Designations:	

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Created by the community in 1998 Blaby Oaks is a site of oak trees, a small pond and a wetland area. A bridleway and numerous circular walks exist around the site but they can be very muddy in wet weather.

2.2 Extended Description

Blaby Oaks is a 5.7 hectare new native woodland plantation leased for 199 years from Leicestershire County Council in 1998. It comprises two fields, the northern one formerly being arable and divided by a fence from the remainder of the field to the east. The southern field was permanent pasture and is divided almost equally north - south, by a stream. To the west of the site there is public open space and a playing field called Oakfield Park which is managed by Blaby Parish Council. Oakfield Park has a car park which is convenient for visitors to Blaby Oaks. Blaby Oaks is located on the edge of Leicester and forms part of a landscape dominated by a mix of farmland and pockets of dense urban areas.

Blaby Oaks was planted in the winter of 1998 as part of the Woodland Trusts "Woods On Your Doorstep" initiative. It was designed and planted with full consultation and involvement of the local community. The northern field was planted with 2000 oaks grown from locally collected seed; sourced from The Outwoods in Charnwood Forest. The oaks comprise the Millennium Feature and contribute to the woodland name "Blaby Oaks".

A series of paths give numerous circular walks around the site, these form links to the main entrance and an additional permissive route in from Oakfield Park.

Blaby Oaks has the line of an underground sewer and two overhead power lines running through it.

A diverted public bridleway runs into and through the wood along the northern and eastern boundaries, effectively bypassing a long section of Hospital Road; this agreement forms part of the lease for the property. A management bridge crosses the stream and two additional foot bridges have been installed to improve accessibility around the site. The low lying nature of the land does mean that the wood is prone to being boggy at times and paths can get very muddy during wet periods.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Access to Blaby Oaks is via the main entrance off the public highway Hospital Lane, east of the town of Blaby. Car parking is available on the Parish Council's Oakfield Park playing fields immediately to the west. A further permissive entrance into the wood exists from Oakfield Park. A series of unsurfaced paths are managed around the site giving circular path options. These paths, although flat can become muddy in the winter.

A definitive public bridleway has been re-routed by Leicestershire County Council to cross the site from the main entrance then follow the northern then eastern boundaries, exiting in the south-east corner of the site. This path is enclosed so as to prevent horse and cycle users straying over into the rest of the woodland.

There are bus services from the city of Leicester and the surrounding sub-urban towns. Details are available from the www.traveline.org.uk website.

There is a public toilet in the adjacent Oakfield Park.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The primary objective pertaining to the Woodland Trusts "Conservation" corporate aim is to allow Blaby Oaks to develop into healthy, resilient mature woodland consisting of multiple native tree and shrub species of varying age classes and to preserve the woodland in perpetuity (at least for the length of the 199 year lease granted by Blaby District Council in 1997). The primary plan is to allow this to take place with minimal management intervention. Any interventions that do take place will come about as a result of recommendations made during the periodic Woodland Condition Assessments carried out prior to each management plan review in conjunction with assessments made during New Native Woodland Key Feature Observations. Any interventions will come out of a necessity to promote the woodlands resilience in the light of threats from pests and disease such as Ash Dieback and also environmental changes resulting from climate change.

That said, there may be the potential for limited economic thinning at Blaby Oaks, so long as the stipulations outlined in the Woodland Trusts "Production of Timber Policy" document are met. Timber production should always be a secondary objective on Woodland Trust property and should only take place where the act of economic harvesting is not of detriment to the Woodland Trusts primary corporate objectives of Conservation, People and Woodland Creation. Economic thinning should only take place if financially viable, evidence that this is the case would be required before any works of this type take place on site.

There may be an opportunity based around on-going Woodland Condition Assessments, a relevant Environmental Impact Assessment and an assessment of an estimate of cost for economic thinning's being justified at Blaby Oaks. It is an avenue worth investigating "BUT" the above criterion must be met before thinning's for economic purposes can be entered into the work programme for the property and take place on site.

In order to meet the Woodland Trusts "Public" corporate aim Blaby Oaks will remain fully accessible for people to enjoy for informal recreation at all times with regular path cuts and entrance and welcome signage maintenance taking place annually as part of the Estates Management Contract associated with the property.

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

Access to Blaby Oaks is via the main entrance off Hospital Lane, east of the town of Blaby. Car parking is available from the Oakfield Park car park immediately to the west. A further entrance into the wood exists from Oakfield Park. A series of unsurfaced paths are managed throughout the site. A public bridleway crosses the site from the main entrance following the northern then eastern boundaries, exiting in the south-east corner of the site. This path is enclosed so as to prevent horse and cycle users straying over into the rest of the woodland.

Significance

Blaby Oaks is a site where the public can go and enjoy informal recreation. It already provides a valuable resource for the people of Blaby, a place to go and walk without the need for a car, away from traffic and noise along well marked and maintained paths, safe for all the family. It makes a natural informal extension to the more formal open space of Oakfield Park adjacent and connects nicely into the surrounding rights of way network.

Opportunities & Constraints

The Woodland Trust is potentially constrained by the terms of its leasehold agreement. It is this agreement that requires the Trust to accommodate the re-routed bridleway. This will offer an additional entrance into the woodland and provide additional possibilities for access to the countryside in this area.

The land tends to lie rather wet and the more heavily used paths and entrances tend to become muddy during wet periods.

Factors Causing Change

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain the current path network, Woodland Trust "Welcome" signage and entrances for the length of the lease.

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

To mow the paths three times a year in May, July and September.

To maintain the Woodland Trust "Welcome" signage at the entrance, to be inspected and cleaned by the contractor in July annually.

To maintain the existing pedestrian access points as part of the visits made by the contractor as described above.

All of the above to be included in the Estates Management Contract for the property.

5.2 New Native Woodland

Description

A native broadleaved woodland consisting of 2000 local provenance oak trees in the northern field sourced from The Outwoods in Charnwood Forest, commemorating the Millennium. Oak, ash, silver birch field maple and woody shrubs make up the planting in the remaining area. A wetland area adjacent to the stream provides an additional habitat type and is well colonised with aquatic vegetation.

Significance

There are very few woodlands within this area of dense population on the edge of Leicester and next to none with public access such as Blaby Oaks. Its location is ideal beside Oakfield Park which extends the public open space and the potential opportunities for wildlife. The property ties nicely into the surrounding rights of way network.

Opportunities & Constraints

Vandalism and misuse was an issue and continues to be periodically at Blaby Oaks which had some initial effect upon the establishment of the trees - despite this the tree stock has generally established well.

Factors Causing Change

Threats from Ash dieback and other pests and diseases.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To allow the woodland to develop into native high-forest with trees and shrubs of varying age classes and species types. "Woodland Condition Assessments" will inform management going into the future, interventions only taking place if highlighted as necessary by the Woodland Condition Assessments; the aim being to ensure the long term resilience of the woodland in perpetuity.

To explore the opportunities associated with economic thinning at Blaby Oaks and the practical and economic feasibility of related operations once the woodland has passed the 20 year mark as per the Woodland Trusts "Woodland Condition Assessment - Guidance for Site Managers" document and following the criterion stipulated in the Woodland Trusts "Timber Production Policy" document as outlined in the "Long Term Intentions" section of this management plan. To take action or not pertaining to management and associated operations based on this assessment.

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

Monitor the woodland annually to assess its health and well-being via the New-Native Woodland Key Feature observation.

Once in the plan period, just prior to the next management plan review, assess the woodland using a "Woodland Condition Assessment" the results of which will inform the next management plan review in 5 years' time.

Assess the economic and practical feasibility of commercial thinning's at Blaby Oaks in 2020 incorporating an Environmental Risk Assessment and an estimate of costs versus profit / benefits and make a decision as to whether economic thinning's are viable and whether they have a part to play in the management of the woodland going forward into the future.

We may need to look at thinning ash by 2020 where it is over-topping and shading out other native species.

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	5.70	Oak (sessile)	1998	Min-intervention	Legal issues	Informal Public Access, New Native Woodland	
<p>The woodland consists of 4 hectare's of new planting and 1.7 hectare's of open ground. Planting took place in December 1998 with 2000 local provenance oaks in the northern field and oak, ash, birch and woody shrubs in the remaining field. 2250 trees were planted per hectare and were protected with 60cm Tubex Sleeves and Shelters on the shrubs.</p> <p>A network of paths has been incorporated around the site, which are generally about 3m in width. These are regularly mown to define them and keep them accessible throughout the year. An information board can be found at the entrance and a seat has been positioned in the southern field.</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.