



Woodcote

Management Plan 2017-2022

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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: | Woodcote |
| Location: | Smisby |
| Grid reference: | SK355186, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 128 |
| Area: | 9.44 hectares (23.33 acres) |
| Designations: | Green Belt, National Forest |

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Woodcote Wood is one of The Woodland Trust's 'Woods on Your Doorstep' woodlands, planted to commemorate the Millennium. This young woodland lies one mile north of the village of Ashby de la Zouch, and provides views over the village and its castle. The car park has been closed for some time due to misuse.

2.2 Extended Description

Woodcote Wood takes its name from nearby Woodcote Farm from which the land was acquired by the Woodland Trust in 1997. The wood is about 9.5 hectares in size and was grass seeded on purchase following the lands previous use as arable fields. The two fields immediately south of Old Park Lane were already grassed. The site lies 1 mile north of Ashby de la Zouch, east of the B5006 to Smisby. Old Park Lane upon which the main site entrance is located, divides the site into two halves, the lane roughly forms the county boundary, the north part of the site being in Derbyshire and the southern part in Leicestershire.

The site was purchased with the help of the National Forest Companies "National Forest Tender Scheme" and is one of two hundred woods planted as part of the Woodland Trusts "Woods On Your Doorstep" initiative to mark and commemorate the Millennium. It was designed to take into account the view over Ashby de la Zouch, its castle and beyond. It has a number of circular paths leading from a car park constructed on site in a fairly central location. An information board can be found here and welcome signs at all other public entrances, of which there are 7. A large lump of granite from nearby Bardon Quarry forms the commemorative Millennium Feature. Local people were involved in the site design and a community tree planting event in November 1997. Unfortunately due to significant misuse the car park was closed to vehicles some years ago, though there is some limited parking in the site entrance.

The new woodland is located in an area dominated largely by agriculture, however Woodcote does sit within a large block of new woodland plantations that encompass a sizeable belt of land to the south of the village of Smisby. These are young woodlands planted largely on private property; encouraged and supported by the National Forest Company with whom the Woodland Trust works in close partnership.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Woodcote Wood lies 1 mile north of Ashby de la Zouch and close to the village of Smisby. It lies east of the B5006, immediately north of the new Ashby by-pass. An information board can be found near the now closed off car park and welcome signs at each of the seven entrances. 1.9km of mown paths can be found, forming circuitous routes around each part of the wood. The paths are generally smooth but sections in the southern sector do tend to get muddy in winter.

There is no public bus service to Smisby.

To mark the Millennium, a large piece of granite from nearby Bardon Quarry was placed on south of the car park with a plaque marking the occasion. Views over this to Ashby Castle and beyond can be had from the highest point of the site in the north-west corner of the site. There is a bench here and a further one near the stone.

Woodcote lies centrally to many additional woodlands being planted as part of the National Forest. These are being created year on year and can increasingly be accessed via public footpaths from Woodcote. Additional information about sites open to the public at any current time is available from the National Forest office on 01283 551211 or <http://www.nationalforest.org>

The nearest public toilets are in Ashby de la Zouch (Derby Road) and it has disabled facilities accessible using a radar key.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The current plan pertaining to the Woodland Trusts "Conservation" corporate aim is to allow Top Wood 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. The primary plan is to allow this to take place with minimal management intervention.

However ash thinning will be required to free up native tree species on site particularly oak which is being over-topped and which has already suffered some significant loss as a result, the first thin around oak marked as under threat will take place in the winter of 2017.

Any further 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 economic thinning at Woodcote as per the Woodland Trusts "Production of Timber Policy" document. 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. The combination of an environmental assessment and indicative costings should indicate suitability and will be investigated over coming management plan periods to ascertain Woodcotes potential for Economic Timber Production.

In order to meet the Woodland Trusts "Public" corporate aim Top Wood 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

Woodcote is located half a mile from Smisby and about 1 mile from the edge of Ashby de la Zouch. A car park was constructed off Old Park Lane at the time of planting sufficient for 6 cars, however due to regular excessive fly tipping and anti-social behaviour the decision was made to close the car park some years ago, though there is some limited unofficial parking space at the site entrance; most visitors however are local and walk into the property. From the car park and the six other entrances into the wood, there are a series of circular paths amounting to some 1.9 km in length. An information board can be found near the car park and welcome signs are at each of the entrances. A large granite boulder commemorates the Millennium, suggested by local people who were involved in the design, planting and naming of the wood. This can be found in the open grassed area in the southern section of the woodland.

Significance

The paths at Woodcote are important in fulfilling the Woodland Trusts corporate objective associated with "People"; 1.9km of path open to the public free of charge, 24/7. The woodland is located in the National Forest area and links with other woodlands in the area and the wider rights of way network via its paths and rides. Open access to walkers remains throughout with the possibility of long woodland walks within the Forest having become a reality. Public access and its promotion is an important objective of the National Forest initiative, the access provided at Woodcote being an important contribution to that wider goal and symbolic of on-going successful partnership working between the Woodland Trust and The National Forest Company.

Opportunities & Constraints

Fly tipping and car abandonment made the car park inaccessible at times and required costly time consuming clearance on a regular basis. Local people were also becoming upset about this on-going, difficult to resolve issue; this ultimately led to the decision being made to close the car park, fly tipping however remains a periodic issue in the car park entrance.

The woodland remains an important amenity resource for local people; sitting within the National Forest and not far from it's "Heart" Woodcote links nicely into the wider public rights of way network.

There is the potential for future partnership working with the National Forest Company in terms of access promotion and linking the property into the wider National Forest area.

Factors Causing Change

Fly Tipping

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain the current path network, Woodland Trust "Welcome" signage and entrances in perpetuity.

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

To mow the paths three times a year in May, July and September, this includes the open grassed area around the millennium feature.

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.

In areas of the woodland some ride side coppicing will be carried out to minimise the area of tunnel effect on paths and to maintain access for management purposes, removal of overhanging branches on pathways will also take place - look to carry out in 2017 along with works associated with freeing up oak etc. dominated by ash.

5.2 New Native Woodland

Description

Woodcote is native broadleaf plantation planted in 1997 and consisting of oak, ash and birch as the main tree species. 2250 trees were planted per hectare and individually protected against rabbits and hares using tree shelters. Stock fencing was also erected along the northern most boundaries as a precaution against livestock incursions from adjacent fields. Willow and alder are concentrated in wetter areas such as that north-west of the car park.

Significance

Woodcote is one of many new woodlands planted in and making up National Forest area. Locally Woodcote is one of a number of new woodland plantations which occupy a significant area to the south of Smisby village. The woodland contributes greatly to biodiversity in an area that consists predominantly of agricultural fields and which has seen and was scarred by significant mineral extraction in the past. Woodcote achieves the Woodland Trusts corporate objective associated with "Woodland Creation" and that associated with "Conservation".

Opportunities & Constraints

Woodcote Wood forms an extension and buffer to small amounts of existing scrubby streamside woodland on Gilwiskaw Brook; Woodcote protects and extends on this wildlife corridor with the potential for colonisation of both flora and fauna from this source. This is constrained to the south by the Ashby by-pass.

Woodcote sits within a wider block of woodland creation in the local area in what is otherwise predominantly agricultural fields to the south of Smisby; there may be further opportunities in the future for joint partnership working with both the National Forest Company and other local landowners pertaining to a range of management and promotional activities.

Factors Causing Change

Threats from Ash dieback and other pests and diseases.

Where ash and oak have been planted as a mix, ash has in large parts of the property overtopped the oak resulting in the death / dieback of many of the oaks planted at the start of the project in 1997.

Rabbits were found to be grazing birch regeneration in the northern part of the site - though the grazing was seemingly focused and limited to one particular spot.

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. The woodland will reach this state primarily via natural processes through a minimum intervention management approach. "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.

Ash thinning will be required to free up other native tree species on site, particularly the oak which are being over-topped. This will be assessed and implemented following a full environmental and economic assessment.

To explore the opportunities associated with economic thinning at Woodcote in the longer term 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.

Look to carry out small scale thinning work of ash around oak in the winter of 2017 where oak is being over topped by ash.

Assess the environmental, economic and practical feasibility of commercial thinning at Woodcote in 2018 incorporating an Environmental Risk Assessment and an estimate of costs versus profit / benefits and make a decision as to whether thinning is viable.

If viable look to carry out thinning work in summer 2018, if possible in partnership with neighbouring landowners and the National Forest Company.

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 | 9.50 | Ash | 1998 | Min-intervention | | Informal Public Access, New Native Woodland | National Forest |

A 9.5 ha native woodland creation site planted in December 1997. Over 20% of this area remains unplanted and consists of a series of circular paths and a rough grassland area. A granite stone commemorating the Millennium is located within the grassland area alongside a bench. Trees are planted at 2250 stems per hectare with oak, ash and birch together with woody shrubs such as hazel and hawthorn. The paths were designed to provide circular routes within each part of the woodland, interlinking with each other the entrances and the car park. The car park is prone to misuse, anti-social behaviour, fly tipping and the abandonment and burning out of stolen cars; because of these issues and the distress it was causing local people the car park was closed some years ago, though fly tipping in the car park entrance remains a periodic problem. The roadside hedge has also been reduced in height to allow clear views into the car park again to try and deter fly tipping and nuisance behaviour.

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

| Forecast Year | Cpt | Operation Type | Work Area (ha) | Estimated vol/ha | Estimated total vol. |
|---------------|-----|----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 2017 | 1a | Thin | 9.40 | 3 | 25 |
| 2018 | 1a | Thin | 9.40 | 2 | 15 |
| 2019 | 1a | Thin | 9.40 | 3 | 25 |
| 2027 | 1a | Thin | 9.40 | 3 | 25 |

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.