



Little Down Wood

Management Plan 2013-2018

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 Local Woodland Habitat

5.2 Open Ground Habitat

5.3 Informal Public Access

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Little Down Wood
Location:	Dundry
Grid reference:	ST550671, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 172
Area:	6.47 hectares (15.99 acres)
Designations:	Community Forest, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc)

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Little Down Wood was gifted to The Woodland Trust in 1998 as part of The Woodland Trust's 'Woods on Your Doorstep' campaign. It is roughly square in shape and lies over the shoulder of the eastern end of Dundry Hill, offering great views of Bristol and beyond.

2.2 Extended Description

Little Down Wood was gifted to The Woodland Trust in 1998 as part of the Woods on your Doorstep project. It is roughly square in shape and lies over the shoulder of the eastern end of Dundry Hill, with great views of Bristol and beyond.

The site has a steep north facing slope which joins a flatter section at the north of the site with a hill top plateau to the south. Bordering Dundry Lane the lower northern part of the site was rough ground with springs before being planted in 1998. Part of the steepest scarp above this has semi-mature trees including conifers on land which would have been too steep to cultivate. This thin strip of mature woodland grades into semi-improved limestone grassland which was left unplanted at the time of acquisition for biodiversity reasons. The top of the site is generally improved grassland and was also left unplanted for landscape reasons.

The neighbouring land is limestone grassland most of which is managed as organic grazing. The site is bordered by dry stone walls at the south and hedges lower down the northern slopes. The open plateau is under a farm business tenancy and grazed during the summer months.

The top of Dundry Hill has significant geological importance and several digs have been undertaken, with fossils discovered from the Jurassic Period. There are the remains of a quarry at the edge of the grassland.

Access is via a bridleway which runs along the eastern boundary. Further public access is gained directly from the road along a footpath at the north east of the site or on a footpath crossing neighbouring farmland to the south east.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

General Location

The wood is on a steep hill outside the village of Dundry. It is on the very south-west extremities of Bristol.

Overview

Public access is available at all 4 corners of the site. A squeeze gap leads from Dundry Lane (a busy public highway) in the north east corner, an open bridle way to the north east and a 5-bar gate leads to the neighbouring farmland in the south west and a climb over stile in the south east. The Monarch's Way runs along the western boundary and the site is also on the junction of the South West Samaritan's Path and the Community Forest Trail (all three are long distance routes). A kissing gate is installed part way along the bridleway where it enters the grazed part of the site.

Within the site the paths can be steep in places as they climb the hill, all the paths are unsurfaced and can be uneven. They are slippery in places where the mud is exposed and a wet flush crosses the woodland path at one point.

Parking

Parking can be found at the village car park approximately quarter of a mile walk along footpaths across Dundry Down

Public Transport

The nearest bus stop is 200m away from the stile, at the Highridge Road stop on Dundry Lane. It is served by the 672 service from Bristol (information gathered from Traveline website on 27/3/2013)

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term aim is for the site to be mixed, predominately native, broadleaf woodland containing several majestic conifers. The limestone grassland will be a vibrant semi-natural habitat alive with insects and wildflowers having been sensitively grazed for many years.

The established young woodland blocks are areas where the ground flora from the existing species rich hedgerows can slowly colonise outwards. The mature trees in the older blocks of woodland and old hedgerows will be retained until they collapse where safety allows this as an option.

Access and enjoyment for informal pedestrian use will be provided primarily across a series of paths within the site, which link up with other external paths to create a circular walk from the village.

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 Local Woodland Habitat

Description

Two small blocks of existing mixed woodland and two stretches of ancient hedgerow have been linked and expanded by the new mixed native broadleaf tree planting. The woodland ground flora that survived in these existing areas can now spread into the plantations which have achieved canopy closure. Several of the mature trees are of veteran status and important in their own right.

The creation of new native woodland is one of the Trust's core objectives, and at this site it also links in with other semi-natural habitats on the Dundry slopes and in the Forest of Avon boundary.

Significance

The Woodland Trust believes that native woodland cover should be doubled and the creation of Little Down Wood helped to achieve this. Here it is also part of the Forest of Avon community forest. The woodland itself is important locally as it is part of a partially wooded scarp, part of a mosaic of semi natural habitats along the Dundry Hills.

Opportunities & Constraints

Factors Causing Change

Deer browsing on natural regeneration

Long term Objective (50 years+)

An area of predominantly native broadleaved high forest with varied age and size structure and rich populations of shrubs and woodland ground flora encroaching from the surrounding remnants of the ancient hedgerows. Several of the mature trees have characteristics of ancient trees and support whole ecosystems by themselves

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

The short term objective will be to ensure that the young plantation reaches a healthy maturity after its successful establishment phase. This will be achieved by:

- Checking biennially for any pests or external threats that are likely to prevent this and reacting accordingly to reduce or eliminate harm.
- Browsing pressure on natural regeneration will also be checked once in the plan cycle if found to threaten the future of the woodland action will be taken to control this threat.

All remaining tree shelters will be removed during this plan period

5.2 Open Ground Habitat

Description

A scarp slope of species-rich semi-improved limestone grassland rising to a plateau of improved grassland which provides a habitat for a diverse range of invertebrates. This plateau provides wonderful views over the surrounding landscape. The area is currently managed organically by a neighbouring tenant farmer and is cut for hay in mid-summer then the aftermath is grazed by cattle until the autumn.

Significance

Semi-improved calcareous grassland is a nationally and locally important habitat. The scarp slope is particularly rich only having a limited history of cultivation.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraint

The local authority objected to any tree planting on the plateau due to the appearance in the landscape so it is important to keep it open and free from tree growth.

Factors Causing Change

Natural succession to woodland

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain the quality of the semi-improved limestone grassland, so that the sward is rich in characteristic species and alive with the associated insects and butterflies on warm sunny summer days. The view over Bristol remains, so you can make out both Severn Bridges in the far distance.

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

The short term objective is to ensure that the grassland habitat remains in its current condition, as this will allow the migration of species from the adjacent semi-natural grassland. The current sensitive grazing regime will therefore be maintained.

A full survey of the grassland interest at the end of the plan period and compared against that in 2008 will note any changes in species diversity.

Check once in the plan period for tree growth and take action to remove if found.

5.3 Informal Public Access

Description

A bridleway runs up the western boundary and an internal network of paths provides a circular route linking a footpath from Dundry over the Downs to Dundry Lane. Access is available from all four corners of the site. There are far reaching views across Bristol and beyond from the top of the site.

The site is sloping and may not be suitable for all abilities especially along the bridleway which sinks to form a sunken lane which can stay muddy after rain. The rest of the site paths are natural, grassy surfaces which can be uneven in places.

The site is on the junction of three long distance routes which means the potential number of visitors annually is high.

Significance

The Woodland Trust believes that everyone should live within a reasonable proximity to open access woodland and this is furthered by the Trust ownership of Little Down Wood, especially in this area where there is little other open woodland

The site was acquired as part of the Woods on your Doorstep project and public access was a cornerstone to the project.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraint

The access is from Dundry Lane which is a very busy narrow lane which limits the amount of access from this direction

Factors Causing Change

Deterioration of the path network

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The site will be used and valued by the local residents and those who pass through on the long distance routes, possibly pausing to enjoy the views from the plateau.

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

The objective is to ensure that the current level of access provision is adequate so people can easily access and enjoy the site. This will be achieved by:

- Undertaking annual path management works to facilitate safe and easy access via all four corner entrances.
- Periodic tree safety surveys and any required remedial works as necessary

Check the accessibility of the bridleway annually and take suitable action to ensure it is a welcoming traversable route to the site.

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	2.86	Mixed native broadleaves	1998	High forest	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Informal Public Access	Community Forest, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc)
<p>Mixed broadleaf planting of oak, ash, field maple, willow and hazel all planted in 1998/9 at 3m spacing on former grassland. These surround two small blocks of existing mature trees. There is a substantial existing hedgerow of hazel, oak and ash within the compartment which hosts a diverse woodland flora including bluebell, yellow archangel, primrose and sanicle. A second existing hedgerow runs along the western boundary beside the bridleway, which was also expanded by planting. This area slopes downwards to the north, although steep in places is generally easy to access. The spring causes localised boggy patches, and the area around it now supports a thick development of mare's tail.</p> <p>Some mature trees are found through the woodland area and of particular note is a large oak pollard and a hollow ash pollard.</p>							
2a	3.50	Open ground		Non-wood habitat	Site structure, location, natural features & vegetation, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Informal Public Access	Community Forest, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc)
<p>A plateau area of improved grassland above a scarp slope of unimproved calcareous grassland. Pockets of interesting grassland species survive on the thinner soils which include field scabious, salad burnet, birds foot trefoil, thyme. This area was left unplanted when the site was acquired for the value of this grassland. Having been fenced off from the tree planting the meadow area has been grazed annually by the neighbouring farmer and is now certified as organic. Wonderful views across Bristol are available from this part of the site. The area includes a small quarry with sloping sides, it is not a significant hazard.</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.