



# **Polebrook & Crow**

## **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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk) or contact the Woodland Trust ([wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto: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.

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## 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](http://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

<b>Site name:</b>	Polebrook & Crow
<b>Location:</b>	Botcheston, Thornton
<b>Grid reference:</b>	SK481066, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 140
<b>Area:</b>	3.68 hectares (9.09 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, National Forest

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

This site comprises two ancient semi-natural woodlands - Crow Wood and Polebrook. Both are home to a diverse range of wildlife species, along with wildflowers including bluebells, yellow archangel and dog's mercury.

## 2.2 Extended Description

This holding is made up of two Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands- Crow Wood to the south and Polebrook to the north. They are separated by approximately 200 m of land which is owned by the Leicestershire Forest Golf Centre. Polebrook Wood, which is roughly rectangular, lies immediately east of Markfield Lane. Polebrook appears to have been clear-felled in the mid 20th Century and regenerated with predominantly Oak, Ash, Silver birch and Goat willow. It had remained unmanaged until acquisition by the Trust in 1997 but since then the whole wood has been selectively thinned in three annual phases which were completed in 2002.

There is now a well-spaced open canopy of predominantly Oak with some coppice of Oak and Ash, Hazel, Malus and Holly forming a under storey. Within the new light environment bramble proliferates but there are some isolated areas of Bluebell, Honeysuckle and Dog's mercury. A single permissive circular path has been established with access from the busy Markfield Lane but this appears to be little used by the Public.

Crow Wood also appears to possess the characteristics of a Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland. There is considerable variation in canopy species, age class and structure and a diverse ground flora including a number of ancient woodland indicator species including Bluebell, Dog's mercury and Yellow archangel.

Crow Wood straddles a well-used bridleway which connects Ratby Woodlands (which includes the large Trust holdings of Pear Tree and Burroughs Woods) with Markfield Lane. This bridleway has been recently upgraded by the County Council as part of the Sustrans network. In addition the Trust has established a permissive footpath which runs parallel to the bridleway but on the other side of the deeply incised stream/ditch and within the wood proper.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

Access to the short permissive route within Polebrook Wood is available directly from the public highway - Markfield Lane to the north of the small village of Botcheston. This is a short unsurfaced, circular route through woodland of approximately 300m

Access to Crow wood is available via the Public Bridleway, which is now part of the Sustrans network which links Ratby to Thornton. The bridleway meets Markfield Road just to the north of Polebrook Wood, where there is limited parking in a small layby. From here high quality access is available along the surface bridleway route for 450m to the entrance to Crow Wood.

There is a continuation of the bridleway for approximately 500m along the edge of Crow Wood with an additional 350m of unsurfaced permissive path which runs parallel to the bridleway within the woodland.

Access is also available to Crow Wood via the Woodland Trusts adjacent site of Burroughs Wood, there is a WT car park just off Burroughs Road at the eastern end of the site, and directions can be found to here can be found through the Burroughs Wood Management Plan. The car park at the golf club is private and for members only.

There is no available information as regards public conveniences but it is believed that there are none within 5 miles of the woodlands. Bus stops are at the Golf Club to the south of the woodlands and at the nearby village of Botcheston. Further information on public transport can be found through the traveline website at [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk).

## 3.2 Access / Walks

## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Minimum intervention approach to maintain broadleaved high forest on the site. Public access provision will be maintained at the current levels with permissive routes in both Polebrook and Crow Woods and a Bridleway within Crow 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

Polebrook Wood has a circular path which is not heavily used by the public but is mown at least once annually. Crow Wood has the well maintained Ratby-Thornton cycleway along its eastern boundary and also has an attractive permissive footpath running parallel to the cycleway but inside the wood.

#### Significance

The path/bridleway within Crow Wood forms part of an important link between Ratby and Thornton for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders. For much of its length it is within the Trust holdings of Pear Tree, Burroughs and Polebrook and Crow Woods.

The footpath within Polebrook is of lesser importance in terms of volume of usage but no doubt valued for its seclusion by those few who use it.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

Little opportunity for further access development within the woodland as it is already well served by bridleway and permissive path, although it does provide part of a much larger route along both the cycleway and through adjoining Woodland Trust properties of Burroughs Wood, Pear Tree Wood and Martinshaw Woods.

#### Factors Causing Change

#### Long term Objective (50 years+)

Maintain the current levels of full permissive public access across the Woodland Trust ownership

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

Maintain the current permissive path through vegetation clearance at least once each year, at the same time ensuring Woodland Trust welcome signs are present and in good condition. Sustrans should undertake maintenance of the Bridleway. The mature trees which line the bridleway are inspected annually to ensure public safety.

## 5.2 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

### Description

Two separate woodland areas - Polebrook Wood was apparently clear-felled in the mid 20th Century and regenerated with Oak, Ash, Silver birch and some Goat willow has been established. , there is an understorey of Oak and Ash coppice, Hazel, Holly, Hawthorn and Malus. The ground layer is dominated by bramble but there are areas of Bluebell and Dog's mercury.

Crow Wood has two basic elements. A triangular northern section where mature Oaks dominate the open canopy with an understorey of Hawthorn, Holly, Hazel and Elder create a dense understorey in some areas whilst in the more open areas there is the regeneration of Ash, and a narrow southern section which accommodates the newly surfaced bridleway, a deeply incised ditch/stream, ancient banks and little more than two parallel lines of ancient boundary trees. Here the species include Oak, Ash and Field maple with an understorey of Holly, Hazel, Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Malus.

### Significance

Both these small woods provide a semi-natural ancient woodland nucleus to the newly created woodland of the National Forest and provide the potential for the colonisation of the new woodland by ancient woodland communities of plants and animals.

They also contribute significantly on a landscape scale to the mosaic of farmland, woodland, both newly created and established, and leisure facilities in the form of golf courses.

### Opportunities & Constraints

There is little opportunity available with the woodland given its position within an active golf course, there are, however sufficient emerging recruits and pockets of natural regeneration for the species distribution to be maintained in perpetuity. The woodland may require a more active approach to tree safety work given the level of public useage along the bridleway and given that it is bounded on three sides by a well-used golf course.

### Factors Causing Change

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

Minimum intervention should see the retention of broadleaved high forest at both Polebrook and Crow Woods

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

Minimum intervention within this current plan period should see the retention of broadleaved high forest, with no other works envisaged other than required tree safety.

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## 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	1.96	Oak (pedunculate)	1950	High forest		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, National Forest
<p>Polebrook Wood, roughly rectangular in shape lies immediately east of Markfield Lane. Ancient Semi Natural Woodland that was apparently clear-felled in the mid 20th Century and has regenerated with predominantly Oak, Ash, Silver birch and some Goat willow. A considerable amount of thinning was completed by the Woodland Trust in 2002. Well-spaced Oak now dominates the open canopy and there is an understorey of Oak and Ash coppice, Hazel, Holly, Hawthorn and Malus. The ground layer is dominated by bramble but there are areas of Bluebell and Dog's mercury in those locations where the canopy is closed and lower light levels discourage the proliferation of bramble.</p>							
2a	1.67	Oak (pedunculate)	1880	High forest		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, National Forest
<p>Crow Wood - Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, has two basic elements. A triangular northern section where mature Oaks dominate the open canopy and a narrow southern section which accommodates the newly surfaced bridleway, a deeply incised ditch/stream, ancient banks and little more than two parallel lines of ancient boundary trees. Here the species include Oak, Ash and Field maple.</p> <p>In the northern section Hawthorn, Holly, Hazel and Elder create a dense understorey in some areas whilst in the more open areas there is the regeneration of Ash. In the narrow southern section the understorey of Holly, Hazel, Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Crab apple is almost continuous.</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.