



WOODLAND  
TRUST

# Vecklands

## Management Plan 2019-2024

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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>	Vecklands
<b>Location:</b>	Yetminster
<b>Grid reference:</b>	ST597105, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 194
<b>Area:</b>	5.97 hectares (14.75 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

## 2.1 Summary Description

Vecklands is an attractive, 5.9ha young woodland located a few miles southeast of Yeovil, in the Dorset village of Yetminster. The site was created as part of a Woodland Trust millennium project known as Woods on your Doorstep. Local people were involved with the fundraising, design and planting of the site which took place between 1998 and 1999.

The layout of the woodland provides a good mix of native broadleaved trees and shrubs principally oak, ash, cherry, birch, willow and aspen with hazel and blackthorn forming the main shrub species. Ground flora is mainly generalist species such as hogweed and cleavers, but other species are starting to establish such as cow parley and red campion.

Approximately 20% of the site remains open ground, formed through the wide rides. The site was formerly arable farmland and the old field layout can still be seen from the mature hedgerows in and around the wood which are a valuable habitat for a variety of wildlife. The hedge running north/south through the wood, and the more northerly of the two east /west hedgerows are situated on a small wood/earth bank.

Vecklands lies just within the western tip of the National Character Area 133: Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour, where it borders NCA 140. Yeovil Scarplands and demonstrates one of the key characteristics of the NCA: "Small irregular and rectilinear pasture fields with hedgerow oak trees and many scattered small broadleaved woodlands". The site contributes to the 6% of the NCA that is broadleaved woodland.

The wood also lies within the "Limestone hills" Landscape Character Area classification (LCA) and demonstrates the dense hedgerows and woodland characteristic of this LCA. Through the planting and establishment of the site, the wood contributes to one of the key management guidance of the LCA, which includes the enhancement of woodland through small scale planting.

The wood is located on the south eastern edge of the village, with housing to the north, a railway line to the west and farmland to the south. A country lane forms the eastern boundary, beyond which are a few residential properties. Overall the wider surrounding landscape is sparsely wooded.

The site is fairly flat, with the main part of the site having a gentle gradient downhill in a northerly direction and with the south western corner sloping to the south and west.

A network of grass surfaced permissive paths give good public access throughout the site with two public footpaths coming in from the south eastern and south western corners with both exiting the site at the northern entrance. These public footpaths connect the wood to the wider landscape. There are access points for pedestrians on the north side as well as the south west and south eastern corners. The wood lies on shallow lime-rich soils which are seasonally water logged, so the woodland paths can be muddy at times.

## 2.2 Extended Description

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## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

Directions to main entrance:

1. In the village of Yetminster, head east along the High Street for 0.5 miles, passing over the railway line and the road becomes known as Brister End.
2. Pass Eastlands (cul-de-sac) on your right and take the next lane on your right, which is opposite a lane called Willow Farm (cul-de-sac). The entrance to the wood is at the end of this lane (approx. 50metres)

### 3.2 Access / Walks

**Access.**

There are three official pedestrian entrances to Vecklands Wood. Public footpaths lead into the south western corner, the South Eastern corner from Downs Lane and also enable access from the north of the site from a road known as Brister End. Parking is available on the streets of the village.

**Paths.**

There are a number of permissive paths that can form various circular routes around the woodland. Two public footpaths cross the site from the south western and south eastern corners and meet up at the northern entrance to the site. The site is generally flat but can be waterlogged and muddy at times.

**Public transport**

Nearest Bus Stop : Yetminster Station. Accessible from Yeovil and Dorchester via Damory Coaches, Service No. 74 (Information from Traveline November 2014, [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk)). From the station it is half a mile walk through the village east to the main northern entrance.

Nearest Station : Yetminster, on the Bristol - Dorchester line run by First Great Western (Information from Traveline November 2014 [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk)). From the station it is half a mile walk through the village east to the main northern entrance.



## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long-term intention is that Vecklands will develop into mature, native, broadleaved woodland with a healthy canopy of trees with an understorey of woodland shrubs, integrating with other habitats such as the hedges. Open space, provided through the path network and open areas underneath powerlines with associated open ride side habitat will be maintained as part of the woodland design.

The woodland will be managed via a continuous cover regime encouraging natural processes such as retaining windblown trees /standing deadwood which will result in holes in the canopy allowing light onto the woodland floor, providing new opportunities for natural regeneration. Fallen and standing deadwood should remain as long as safety considerations allow. Through any management works, some level of deadwood onsite will be retained to further increase this habitat aspect of the site. The mature hedges (conservation feature CF4) will become integrated into the planted area and be an important habitat for wildlife. The wood banks (HF1) will be retained and protected during any management works.

Site boundaries and official paths will be monitored for tree safety and appropriate woodland structure and will be managed in accordance with Woodland Trust policies with works actioned as necessary e.g. for safety/legal reasons. The site will be monitored for any non-native / invasive plant species; pests and diseases and any management carried out as necessary in accordance with Woodland Trust policies. Woodland margins will be monitored and managed as necessary e.g. to maintain a graduated canopy towards woodland edges.

Located on the south eastern edge of Yetminster village, Vecklands Wood will be managed as an important open access area where the public are welcome. The wood should be welcoming for visitors, with paths maintained to allow access, having regard to their location and natural limitations.

As the wood continues to develop it will give improved and varied opportunities for woodland walks, wildlife interest and appreciation of the natural environment; fulfilling the Trust's aim to increase people's awareness and enjoyment of woodland and also to achieve the Trust's vision of "a UK rich in native woods and trees enjoyed and valued by everyone."

## 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

A locally well-used wood easily accessible from the village of Yetminster. Pedestrian entrances (via kissing gates) on the north side and in the south western and south eastern corners. Two public footpaths run through the site, from the south western and south eastern corners, joining and exiting the site at the northern entrance. The path layout allows circular routes and connects to the wider public footpath network. Approximately 20% of the site is open space through the path network and also underneath overhead powerlines. The open space and paths create a network of routes that provide good access to all parts of the Wood and the site is used very regularly by local people including for forest school activities. A picnic bench was installed in the south eastern corner to form the millennium feature.

The wood lies on shallow lime-rich soils (<http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/index.cfm>) which are seasonally waterlogged. Characteristically the area is underlain mainly by Jurassic rocks which are alternations of clays, limestones and sandstones

#### Significance

Vecklands is surrounded by farmland and housing with the overall wider surrounding landscape being sparsely wooded. The path network allows walkers the opportunity to visit and enjoy a quiet native woodland. The public use of this wood helps fulfil the Trust's aim of inspiring everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees as it:

- provides a place for people to walk;
- provides opportunities for outdoor woodland management opportunities and the appreciation of the countryside/nature
- Adds to the local rights of way network.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

##### Constraints

- The site can be seasonally wet
- Lack of parking

#### Factors Causing Change

- Increase or decrease in level of use - increase in numbers potentially leading to increased erosion/damage to biodiversity
- Anti-social behaviour such as  
Fly tipping / dumping of waste from adjacent properties  
Creation of bike jumps or tracks  
Vandalism to the site
- Tree pests and diseases affecting the site which affects the access of the site such as potential for ash dieback to create health and safety issues.
- Canopy closure over paths making paths muddier and less accessible
- Ground conditions and level of water table / water logging.

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

A wood where entrances and the ride network, with respect to natural limitations, link to the wider rights of way and are maintained and appropriate for the level and type of use, to allow enjoyable informal public access to most parts of the wood predominantly by locals from surrounding village. The wood should continue to provide, where possible, people engagement opportunities.

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

- Entrances and ride/path network maintained and appropriate for level and type of use, managed within the Estate Management Contract, e.g. Path cuts (including ride side flailing / coppicing when required) and entrance maintenance 3 times per year - to ensure the site remains welcoming and accessible with respect to natural limitations e.g. geology.
- Necessary tree safety works will be actioned.
- Continue to work with existing volunteers/ and interest groups to:
  - maintain local community links
  - continue woodland management/wildlife monitoring benefits
  - utilising the notice board for relevant information such as Nature Defective activity sheets
- Monitoring of any antisocial activity (fortunately this is rare) via WT staff visits/EMC visits/ local contacts such as volunteer warden/neighbours/Forest School, who will report any issues.
- Replacement of the Millennium Feature picnic bench which has deteriorated.
- Maintenance of hedge alongside northern entrance to facilitate access and create open and welcoming entrance

## 5.2 Secondary Woodland

### Description

Vecklands contains a mixture of native broadleaves and shrubs, with the planted area covering approximately 80% of the whole site. The main species are oak, ash, birch, alder, cherry and willow with woody shrubs such as hazel clumped mainly on ride edges / corners. There is a grove of aspen in the north western corner of the site.

Locals were involved in the initial design and planting of the site which included three commemorative oaks planted on Remembrance Sunday 1999 - Millennium Oak, Remembrance Oak and Peace Oak. (CF 1). Planting was also undertaken by the Forest School in 2012 to mark the Jubilee (CF 2). These plantings are found in the western section of the site.

Currently the planted areas are even-aged and un-thinned, although some works to thin the aspen has been undertaken. Much of the understorey species planting was located along the edges / corners of the main planted blocks with the aim of providing a transitional structure from the high woodland to the open rides. Natural regeneration of tree species within the planted areas can be seen at varying densities although fairly low overall.

Ground flora within the planted areas is mainly more general species such as grasses / cleavers / hogweed in the more lighter canopy areas although there are some other species starting to colonise such as small areas of red campion in the south western corner. In some areas, particularly the eastern half of the site, there is still high competition from grass species. Species found here tend to be generalist species such as grasses, nettle and herb robert.

In many areas, old former farm field boundary hedgerows (CF4) including older trees and wood banks (HF1) are becoming integrated with the new plantings. These mature long-standing ecological features provide important wildlife habitat niches and a source of associated woodland flora and fauna which are gradually being able to colonise the wood as it matures. The planted areas, hedges and the path network combine to provide a good variety of habitats as well as good connectivity within the site. They also provide habitat corridors, connecting the site to the wider landscape.

Previously, management has been minimal, involving establishment of the planted trees and mowing of paths. As the site has developed, more recently, limited intervention has become more appropriate, including ride side coppicing/scrub clearance to maintain ride width and transitional edge habitat, along with thinning of trees to promote development of a diverse structure - such as thinning of aspen over recent years in the north western corner to reduce canopy height to encourage development of a graduated woodland edge. Therefore any future works e.g. to diversify structure will be achieved through an irregular Continuous Cover Forestry approach.

Ash dieback is present on site and will have a long term impact on the structure and composition of the woodland areas.

### Significance

The wood forms an important area of lowland mixed deciduous woodland, a UK BAP priority habitat in a landscape which is sparsely wooded, thus the site is an important refuge for woodland biodiversity. The hedgerows within the site are also a UK BAP priority habitat. The Trust's aim of creating a UK rich in native woods and trees and protecting trees, woodlands and their wildlife is adequately fulfilled in the new woodland becoming established at Vecklands.

### Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:

- Speed / extent / severity of ash dieback and related mortality of ash presents an opportunity to develop a more varied stand structure across the site either naturally or through limited intervention.

Constraints:

- Public access means safety is a key issue during management works
- Historic features and conservation features to consider when undertaking any management works to ensure these are not damaged by any site works

### Factors Causing Change

- Deer browsing, if severe will damage success of natural regeneration
- Invasive non-native species taking hold
- Pest and diseases - Ash dieback is evident and will likely have a significant impact on the future composition and structure of the woodland blocks as well as the wider biodiversity of the site. However, alternative species are already present on site.
- High levels of competition from coarse vegetation nettles/grass/brambles inhibiting natural tree regeneration

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

Healthy, mature and attractive mixed native broadleaved woodland with a diverse structure supporting a wide range of species and associated habitats and providing wider connectivity within the adjacent landscape. The site will have regenerating understory and ground flora with retention of approximately 20% open space with graduated wood edges. This will be created and maintained largely through natural processes with limited intervention where necessary.

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

Operational Objective:

A mixed native broadleaf woodland, managed as high forest, through limited intervention with a diverse understorey of trees, shrubs and developing a varied ground flora.

Work Programme:

- Tree safety zone A inspections in accordance with Woodland Trust guidance.
- Monitoring development of extent and severity of ash-dieback with assessment /implementation of any necessary works such as felling / supplementary planting to address any safety issues / promote structural diversity / maintain long term canopy.
- Thinning of aspen in NW corner to develop a graduated woodland edge
- Works to restructure / encourage regeneration as required (assessed through Woodland Condition Assessment, extent/severity/progress of ash dieback and site visits such as tree safety checks.

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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	5.90	Ash	1999	High forest	Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site	Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	

Compartment 1a covers the whole site.

It contains mixed native broadleaves planted in 1998 / 1999 at 2.1 m x 2.1 m spacing (2250 trees / ha) in sinuous lines. The bulk of the site contains an intimate mix of oak, ash, birch, alder, cherry and willow with woody shrubs on ride edges / corners with a solid grove of aspen in the NW corner. This young woodland has established well and regeneration of trees is beginning in some areas. Where ash is the dominant canopy species, generalist species such as grass, nettles and cleavers are dominant.

Several mature hedgerows (conservation feature CF4) are contained within the site as well as forming the southern boundary often spreading by suckering into the nearby rides / planted areas, particularly where blackthorn is present. These older hedgerows are generally well developed and contain scattered mature trees providing excellent existing wildlife habitats. Two of these hedges run on top of wood banks, running north/south and the more northerly of the two east/west hedges.

## Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2020	1a	Thin	0.02	455	9.10000038146973
2025	1a	null	5.90	51	300



## 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.