



Easters Wood

Management Plan 2018-2023

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Easters Wood
Location:	Leominster
Grid reference:	SO505589, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 149
Area:	6.91 hectares (17.07 acres)
Designations:	

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

A new woodland planted in 1999 with native broadleaf trees just five minutes walk from Leominster town centre, easily accessed via a public right of way which crosses both the River Lugg and the railway line. Wide, grassy rides and a good network of paths.

2.2 Extended Description

Easters wood lies on the eastern edge of Leominster, Herefordshire separated from the town itself by the Leominster bypass and the River Lugg. The site is a young native broadleaved woodland planted in 1999 as part of the Woodland Trust's "Woods on your Doorstep" initiative, on previously arable and pasture land.

Level ground forming the west end of the site and adjacent to the river (cpt 1a) is planted with Common Alder, Ash, Crack Willow and Black Poplar. Sloping drier ground forming the eastern portion (cpt 2a) is planted with Ash, Pedunculate Oak, Wild Cherry and Field Maple. Shrubs include Hazel, Hawthorn, Guelder Rose and Wayfaring Tree and these line the wide, grassy ride edges. Open ground can be found alongside the riparian zone and the permissive paths which feature several woodland glades. Boundary hedges are well stocked with mature broadleaves and the River Lugg SSSI forms the southern boundary of the site.

As a relatively new woodland, planted for conservation and the local Community, Easters Wood is not typical of the surrounding woodland habitat within the National Character Area (NCA) 100 Herefordshire Lowlands. Woodland tends to be a significant landscape feature throughout much of Herefordshire often located on hill tops and valley sides and managed for commercial timber. Nevertheless Easters wood provides a important niche role for the local community of Leominster and will likely increase its importance in terms of wider biodiversity as the site matures.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Easters wood is a 5 minute walk from the town centre of Leominster via a public right of way (PROW) that crosses the River Lugg and the railway line. Management access is served via a stoned 30m route off the A49 and a 12 foot management gate. It is a flat to gently sloping site with grass covered paths and tracks offering circular walks. Links to the wider public right of way (PROW) network and a riverside walk can be easily found. Horse riding, cycling and motor vehicle access are not condoned within the site and kissing gates along the surrounding path network restrict access for such uses. The main access to the site is through a kissing gate and visitors should also note that to access to the site from the town requires navigating a series of steep steps to cross the railway line and the River Lugg.

There is currently no formal parking at the site and most visitors arrive from the town centre on foot.

Buses to various locations within the town centre run on a regular basis and the mainline train station is approximately five minutes' walk away from the wood.

Leominster town has the following public conveniences suitable for disabled access:

Broad Street
Central Area
The Grange
Westbury Street

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Easters Wood will develop as a mature broadleaved woodland of locally typical native species with a irregular high-forest structure comprised of native broadleaved species and maintained by regular successive thinning and coppicing interventions to maximise biodiversity and natural regeneration opportunities.

Continuing from its early success during the millennium “Woods on your Doorstep” project to create a new, local and accessible wood, Easters Wood will consistently provide opportunities to engage, involve and empower local residents and the wider community. This will be achieved via Woodland Trust initiated or supported opportunities for public participation in site conservation and development activities. Featured in The Welcoming Sites Programme, Easters Wood will further demonstrate a series of lasting upgrades which will improve the visitor experience via excellently maintained paths, tracks, access infrastructure and signage.

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 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

Easters Wood is linked to the Town of Leominster via a short length of PROW footpath and serves as the only substantial high forest within easy walking distance of the centre for the town's 12,000 residents. A permissive pathway network within the site offers circular options around each of the planted broadleaf stands and provides a link to longer walks beside the River Lugg. Paths within the site can become muddy and slippery in locations where pinch points exist combined with over shadowing trees and shrubs. The planting design does however link wide grassy rides with maintained glades to provide pleasing visual and structural diversity with shrubs alongside the ride and river edges.

Informal parking and access to the site exists via the A49, however current arrangements present a risk of traffic collisions with vehicles on this fast stretch of road and are not currently promoted. This Welcoming Site provides particularly convenient and valued access for local walkers, runners and dog walkers, while providing visitor opportunities for users of public transport in the town, with the train station just a five-minute walk away. Original signage at the site will benefit from refreshing to increase appeal to new visitors and to demonstrate the site's continued value to existing users.

Public engagement at the site to date has included varied volunteer conservation tasks and the community-supported design and installation of furniture, sculptures and art pieces. Whilst a damsel fly mural on the adjacent river bridge remains as a legacy of this; vandalism and natural deterioration have necessitated removal of other items.

Significance

The Woodland Trust believes that everyone should recognise that trees and woods are an essential part of a healthy environment and that there should be a wood with open access close to everyone's home. Easters Wood was initially planted at the millennium as part of the Woods on your Doorstep initiative, which endeavoured to enable 250 local communities across the UK to design and plant new, local and accessible woods. Two decades later, Easters Wood now provides a locally rare environment for the 12,000 residents of Leominster and visitors from further afield, constituting the only substantial high forest within easy walking distance of the town.

The Woodland Trust has designated Easter's Wood as one of 250 Welcoming Sites within the UK and as such will prioritise the woodland in terms of increasing local engagement opportunities both to support the ongoing management of the wood and further raise the profile of the Woodland Trust in this area.

Opportunities & Constraints

The current lack of formal parking facilities restricts wider visitor appeal and ease of access. Access for less able visitors cannot currently be provided as the public footpath linking the site to the town has flights of stairs over the railway bridge and the Local Authority has installed barriers in response to dangerous unauthorised motorcycle access. There is presently no viable alternative route to cross the railway line.

Subject to planning, it may be possible to create a small car park running off the A49 as long as the design appropriately accommodates the risk associated with traffic adjoining the busy highway.

Sections of narrow, overshadowed path can become extremely slippery in poor weather. Accessibility could be improved by the promotion of a circular surfaced route, increasing the width as well as reducing adjacent overhanging vegetation.

Developing tree cover has provided seclusion for antisocial behaviour, increased vandalism, littering and motorcycle use.

The Welcoming Site programme presents a new opportunity to engage the local community and volunteers

The site suffers from anti-social behaviour being a secluded peri urban site. The frequent vandalism and depositing of waste creates hazards which currently restricts potential use of the site by community groups, notably young school groups. Increased awareness and use of the site may contribute to combatting this on-going issue.

The Welcoming Sites Programme creates an opportunity to increase local awareness of the site. If a car park with appropriate welcoming signage was created off the A49 in tandem with installing new signage at the footpath route from the town including a small brown facility sign at the railway bridge alleyway, combined serving to better promote the site to new and existing visitors.

Factors Causing Change

Presence of ash dieback on site and its anticipated spread may cause widespread, rapid tree mortality which may cause a health & safety hazard and otherwise detract from the visitor experience.

Improvement of access infrastructure, signage, path conditions and highway access as part of The Welcoming Site Programme should increase visitor numbers and improve individuals' experience of the site.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The Welcoming Site Programme will lead to a series of lasting upgrades that will improve the visitor experience, increase the range of visitors, and accommodate the increasing local population visiting this locally-rare woodland environment. An attractive and serviceable network of access tracks and paths will further encourage the appreciation of this native broadleaf woodland, the maintained woodland glades, riverside path and its links with wider pathways beyond this site.

Opportunities to engage with local communities and interest groups in furthering mutual aims will be taken. Long term volunteer engagement will assist in maintaining path surfaces and access infrastructure, suppressing invasive weed development and forming links with local youth with the aim of fostering appreciation and care of the site.

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

Feasibility study into a formalised car park off the A40 to create increased and improved accessibility for visitors as well as raising the site's local profile.

Upgrade the surface and maintenance of a circular route around the site, raising the internal profile and enhancing the visitor experience while also increasing accessibility to a wider range of visitors.

Enhance current maintenance programme to include cutting back rides 3 metres from the main path/track edges to ensure access tracks/paths are open as well as crown lift any low hanging branches, thereby improving the track/path surface helping unmade tracks to dry out but also enhancing safety by increasing visibility.

Develop engagement plan and programme of events as part of the site's selection as a top 250 Welcoming Site likely to result in increased visitor activity and better local engagement with the site, likely also helping to combat further anti-social behaviour

5.2 Secondary Woodland

Description

Native broadleaves emulating two NVC types, W6 and W8 were planted in 1999 in the two distinctly different compartments.

Level ground forming the west end of the site and adjacent to the river (cpt 1a) is planted with Common Alder, Ash, Crack Willow and Black Poplar (NVC W6). The area now demonstrates a dense closed canopy with low light levels and low structural diversity.

Sloping drier ground forming the eastern portion (cpt 2a) is planted with Ash, Pedunculate Oak, Wild Cherry and Field Maple and shrubs including Hazel, Hawthorn, Guelder Rose and Wayfaring Tree (NVC W8). Planted blocks line the wide, grassy ride edges.

Open ground can be found alongside the riparian zone and the permissive paths which feature several woodland glades.

Both compartments buffer hedgerow habitats through a predominately agricultural landscape. Due to previous long-standing agricultural use, both treed and open habitats at Easters Wood are only slowly developing conditions suitable for semi-natural characteristics to establish.

2a Woodland within Cpt 2a has been subjected to tree vandalism which has caused distinct open areas. In terms of past management, other than some light conservation thinning the wood has largely been unmanaged since planting. The stands are now rather dense and require opening to enable better canopy development and promotion of a more diverse structure in the long-term.

Significance

As a Woods on your Doorstep site, the project has been funded on the understanding that woodland will be established and maintained for future generations. The creation of the new wood and local involvement both in planting and management helps to achieve the Trust's aim of increasing new native woodland and people's understanding and enjoyment of woods.

The Woodland Trust believes that there should be twice as much native tree cover like that at Easters Wood in the UK. Sustainable management of these sites helps to achieve our aim of protecting long-term survival of native woods and trees for people and wildlife

Opportunities & Constraints

The presence of ash dieback poses an opportunity for natural thinning of the plantation as mortality occurs. As the long-term impact of ash dieback is unknown, WT policy is to retain ash trees for as long as possible (where they present no major health and safety risk), to identify any resistance/tolerance to the disease.

Antisocial behaviour including vandalism of trees threatens the desired woodland development and regeneration levels.

Machinery access into the wood is poor, the site is relatively flat with wide unsurfaced tracks. The potential stacking area adjacent to the main entrance however requires further enlargement to accommodate full lorry access.

Factors Causing Change

Presence of ash dieback on site and its anticipated spread may cause widespread tree mortality, significant crown loss and wholesale light increase. Increased light may provide opportunity for natural regeneration but also potential for the enriched soils to allow other ground flora to dominate. Rapid tree mortality may also cause a health & safety hazard and detract from overall visitor experience. Ash dieback will over time have a considerable effect on the tree species composition of the woodland. Given the presence of other species, it is envisioned that a woodland canopy will survive however, thinning interventions should aim to favour non-ash species which are currently being suppressed by ash.

Ash presently dominates the dense crown in many areas and is evidently suppressing development of other tree species and natural regeneration, which may otherwise be more resilient and resistant to present disease threats at the site. Ash dieback may result in natural thinning and improvement of this situation.

The maturing woodland in this peri-urban location provides increased seclusion and appeal for antisocial behaviour. Resulting widespread tree vandalism and unauthorised felling threatens long-term desired woodland development.

Large populations of rabbits are causing extensive ring-barking at browsing level and squirrels are further bark stripping throughout the site. Resulting tree mortality is beyond desirable levels and threatens long-term woodland development.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To create and maintain a diverse, irregular high-forest structure comprised of native broadleaved species and maintained by successive thinning and coppicing interventions to maximise biodiversity and natural regeneration opportunities. Easters Wood will demonstrate a sustainably managed mixed native broadleaf woodland, with a variety of age structure and additional habitats such as rides and glades.

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

Carry out feasibility study during 2020 of current management access entrance for harvesting purposes and upgrade as required. In tandem with the connecting people key feature, anti-social behaviour should be tackled to reduce any threat to the woodland's development. Notably this involves halting any unauthorised felling of trees and fires.

Selectively thin cpt 1a and 2a in 2021 by roughly 20% basal area (BA) to open up and promote canopy development, favour non-ash tree species currently being suppressed as a way of mitigating future ash dieback, and over time develop a more irregular structure facilitating natural regeneration opportunities, creating a more diverse and varied habitat for associated species.

Widen main access rides by targetting track edge trees for removal during harvesting operations, with the aim of promoting more varied ride-side habitat for associated species

Further monitoring of damage by squirrels and rabbits should be undertaken and management developed accordingly, highly concerning the former, it is noted that any attempt to reduce the grey squirrel population is unlikely to be successful without a landscape scale approach, difficult in this peri-urban site.

Ensure the development of ash dieback continues to be monitored and any remedial action regarding safety taken as soon as possible.

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	3.78	Alder species	1999	High forest		Connecting People with woods & trees, Secondary Woodland	
<p>Level ground adjacent to and forming part of the River Lugg flood plain and prone to periodic flooding. Other compartment boundaries are mature hedgerows supporting a range of mature broadleaves and the A49 trunk road. Planted in 1999 with Alder, Willow, Ash and Black Poplar from pure non-hybridised stock. Access paths, glades and an unplanted riparian zone provide a range of habitats in the compartment.</p>							
2a	2.79	Ash	1999	High forest		Connecting People with woods & trees, Secondary Woodland	
<p>West facing slope of newly planted broadleaves comprising Ash, Pedunculate Oak, Field Maple, Wild Cherry, Hazel, Hawthorn, Guelder Rose and Wayfaring Tree. Accessed by wide paths linking to glades. The compartment surrounded by mature hedges with a number of large mature broadleaved trees, notably the western boundary with mature veteran lime.</p>							

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2021	1a	Thin	3.78	7	25
2021	2a	Thin	2.79	9	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.