



# Mill Dam Wood

# Management Plan 2017-2022

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## THE WOODLAND TRUST

### INTRODUCTION

The Trust's corporate aims and management approach guide the management of all the Trust's properties, and are described on Page 4. These determine basic management policies and methods, which apply to all sites unless specifically stated otherwise. Such policies include free public access; keeping local people informed of major proposed work; the retention of old trees and dead wood; and a desire for management to be as unobtrusive as possible. The Trust also has available Policy Statements covering a variety of woodland management issues.

The Trust's management plans are based on the identification of Key Features for the site and setting objectives for their management. A monitoring programme (not included in this plan) ensures that these objectives are met and any necessary management works are carried out.

Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

### PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATING

The information presented in this Management plan is held in a database which is continuously being amended and updated on our website. Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations. Please either consult The Woodland Trust website [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](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.

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## 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>	Mill Dam Wood
<b>Location:</b>	Upper Springfield, Belfast
<b>Grid reference:</b>	J300742, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 15
<b>Area:</b>	1.88 hectares (4.65 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Woods on your Doorstep

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

Mill Dam Wood is one of The Woodland Trust's 'Woods on Your Doorstep' woodlands, created to commemorate the Millennium. It lies on the outer edge of Moyard Housing Estate on the western edge of the Upper Springfield area of Belfast, in Northern Ireland. It is currently not accessible to the public.

## 2.2 Extended Description

Mill Dam Wood is a woodland creation site positioned on the outer edge of Moyard Housing Estate on the western edge of the Upper Springfield area of Belfast, in Northern Ireland. Grazed fields of the lower reaches of the Belfast Hills (Black Mountain) flank it on one side with Moyard Housing Estate on the other. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive gifted the land in 1999 as one of the 51 Woods On Your Doorstep (WoyD) sites in Northern Ireland. The development and first 5 years maintenance of the 51 sites was 50% funded by the Millennium Commission.

Following consultation with the local community, the 1.82 ha site was planted by contractors and the local community in 1998. Local children from Vere Foster Primary School and Springfield Primary School took part in a schools tree-planting day.

The woodland creation site itself is part of the wider site of an old linen making complex which included the Old Rock Dam, mill wheel and mill. The Old Rock Dam and millrace fed the mill wheel that powered the beetling process for finishing by bleaching and dyeing of linen as far back as 1832 in this area. The banks of the Old Rock Dam are still visible but the two ponds of the dam have been filled in. The Housing Executive covered the dams in a layer of soil in 2000 and seeded it with grass. Much of the building that housed the Mill Wheel is still present on the site. It is locally called “the castle”. The Woodland Trust has assumed ownership and responsibility for the site in-between the Old Rock Dam and “the castle” for a lease period of 999 years, with the rest of the land remaining in the care of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

It was initially planted with a mixture of native broadleaved trees dominated by oak, with a willow/alder/birch mixture in the wetter areas. Unfortunately, due to extensive vandalism, bonfires and cattle grazing, very few of the initial planting survived. So, in 2006, a new fence with a Haw-Haw (type of trench) was installed to stop access from the cattle, and local schools were invited to take part in a planting programme, which restocked the site with 4500 trees. Ash, alder, willow and hazel, were the favoured species as they are more resilient to vandalism and browsing. Unfortunately, the site has suffered extensive damage, with the fence and many of the trees vandalised since then.

It was intended that public access should be provided to this WoyD site. The Housing Executive, as part of the site transfer, created a circular hardcore path network, and early purple orchids flourish (common in NI) along many of these path edges. While access should be gained through a series of kissing gates created as part of the WoyD project, the main gate from Moyard Parade was padlocked closed and the gate from the Springfield road fenced in 2000 due to community conflict between the Springfield and Ballygomartin communities. It is unlikely that the access can be reopened in the near future.

Each WoyD site had a feature created to mark and celebrate the millennium. In Mill Dam Wood this is a galvanised steel seat shaped as a mill wheel on its edge, commemorating the history of linen manufacture in the area.

Following a series of bonfire issues each year on the site, more recently in 2015 some community progress has been made to reduce the burning on the site with local community reps, councillors. PSNI and Black Mountain Shared Space getting involved in regular update meetings around tackling bonfires and other anti-social behaviour in this area.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

It was intended that public access should be provided to this WoyD site. A circular hardcore path network was created by the Housing Executive along with 2 culverts to carry the path over a small stream. While access should be available through a series of kissing gates, the main gate from Moyard Parade was padlocked closed and the gate from the Springfield road fenced in 2000 due to community conflict between the Springfield and Ballygomartin communities. Forest Service therefore rejected the application for Community Woodland Supplement for the site. Children still find their way through the fence, and conflict is ongoing.

The hardcore paths have been left to grow over with grass. The hardcore substrate will continue to provide the necessary drainage for the paths. As mentioned the entrances have been closed and the regular maintenance to all paths and access features has been cancelled due to the anti-social activities on the site, such as damage to contractors vehicles and threats.

Management access was established through a gate from the Ballygomartin Road. This was fenced (3 metre metal palisade fence) by the Housing Executive in 1999 due to inter community conflict. Temporary management access is now being provided up a track used by Rivers Agency from Moyard Parade.

### 3.2 Access / Walks

## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

In the long term, we are looking at what options are available to us, in respect of this site. The maintenance for public access has ceased at present, it may continue if inter-community relations have improved and vandalism levels subside. The selection of tree species was chosen to establish a 1.82 hectare forest of mixed deciduous woodland which can withstand, to a certain extent, vandalism and cattle browsing.

The woodland will never produce quality timber as it is small and vandalism levels will continue to be high due to its urban nature. After re-stocking in 2006, vandalism and cattle browsing remain a threat, therefore it is unlikely thinning or restructuring will be needed in the long term. The woodland has some alder and willow with mainly scrub hawthorn and blackthorn forming dense thickets through part of the site. However, if there is a reduction in vandalism and cattle browsing, oak trees may be inter-planted to provide a greater variety of tree species, and would help to form a high forest woodland.

Maintenance to public access facilities has ceased and is unlikely to continue unless there is evidence that inter-community conflict, vandalism and damage from cattle has ceased or reduced dramatically. Should this occur, it would be expected to recommence maintenance, to a standard appropriate to the level of use of the site.

Belfast City Council are considering developing their land and the Housing Executive's land surrounding the wood as well as removing the children's playground to a new location next to the Mat Talbot Nursery School. A regeneration project of the land adjacent to the old mill is also under the first stages of design for an area of social enterprise, businesses and local amenities which may also hold opportunities for community use and involvement. If this is forthcoming our path network should link with it, and a joint maintenance regime considered.

The hedge along the Ballygomartin road will be cut when necessary to maintain road safety, although a palisade fence now barriers this end of the site.

## 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.

## 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	1.82	Birch (downy/silver)	2000	Min-intervention	People issues (+tve & -tve)		

The whole site constitutes one compartment. The area slopes gently from West to East from the base of the bank of the former mill dam down to the housing. 2 small streams flow down the site from the former mill dam.

The area is bounded by the former mill dam to the West (now filled in and planted with grass). This has a Woodland Trust managed fence and haw-haw (trench) running along it, to exclude cattle and horses, unfortunately this has been, and is continually vandalised. The Ballygomartin Road bounds the northern edge with a hedge and pallasade fencing along it. The site is separated from the Housing Executive housing area to the South and East, including a playground maintained by Belfast City Council, by a 3-metre metal palisade fence maintained by the Housing Executive.

Previously left unmanaged by the Housing Executive, it was planted by local schoolchildren in 2000 with native species. Following initial problems from vandalism and cattle browsing to the trees, and bonfires (resulting in majority losses), it was replanted with the assistance of local school children in January 2006 and has since been repeatedly vandalised and or bonfires lit on the site.

A hardcore path network runs through the site in a figure of 8. The ruins of the mill wheel building sit in the centre of the site near the millennium feature, a galvanised steel seat shaped as a mill wheel set on its site.

## 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.