



The Woodland Walkway

**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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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 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: | The Woodland Walkway |
| Location: | East Belfast |
| Grid reference: | J381729, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 15 |
| Area: | 0.83 hectares (2.05 acres) |
| Designations: | |

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Woodland Walkway is a woodland creation site planted by the local community with a mixture of native trees, poplar and Swedish whitebeam. Paths allow you wander through and enjoy views over Belfast and the Lough. Access is via Knockmount Gardens.

2.2 Extended Description

Woodland Walkway is a woodland creation site in Clarawood Housing Estate, close to Knock in East Belfast in Northern Ireland. It is flanked to the west by Clarawood housing estate, to the south and northeast by private housing and to the east by the ancient Knock Burial Ground. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive gifted the land in 1999 as one of the 50 Woods On Your Doorstep (WoyD) sites in Northern Ireland. The development and first 5 years maintenance of the 50 sites was 50% funded by the Millennium Commission.

Formerly maintained as mown grass by the Housing Executive, following consultation with the local community, the 0.83 ha site was planted by the local community in 1999. It is planted with a mixture of native trees amongst the poplar and Swedish whitebeam that previously existed on the site.

An informal grass path network has been established to allow local people to wander through the site, sit in an open area, or enjoy the view over Belfast, the hills and Lough.

There is no official Woodland Trust car park here but cars can park off Knockmount Gardens.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Pedestrian and management access are provided from Knockmount Gardens. In addition, a grass path will be maintained along with an open area and seats.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

This site will be maintained as a 0.83 hectares mixed deciduous woodland.

Given that the main purpose of the woodland is for public enjoyment, the canopy composition will be flexible. The Swedish Whitebeam will be phased out over time due to the recurring damage through wind blow and root balling and these will be replaced with native local provenance species to encourage a diversity and structure able to cope with increasing environmental threats such as climate change and tree disease.

Public access facilities will be maintained as grass to a standard appropriate to the level of use, this will be reviewed regularly, with the intention that the paths will be self sustaining with canopy closure, and the amount of public use.

The site is currently attended on a seasonal basis by a local volunteer and it is hoped that this will continue to grow through local residents use of the site, schools and or the local community group in the area. Public safety will be assessed annually over the whole 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.

5.1 Informal Public Access

Description

As part of the Woods On Your Doorstep project, The Woodland Walkway is a community wood providing informal public access. A pedestrian entrance from Knockmount Gardens leads to a circular grass path network around the site. A seat provides a view over Belfast.

Significance

The access facilities provide the opportunity to “increase people’s awareness and enjoyment of woodland”, one of the Woodland Trusts key objectives. The area provides a woodland experience for local people in an area of low car ownership. Also, as this was created as a Woods On Your Doorstep site, it will be important to retain informal public access facilities within the site.

The woodland can also provide a sense of place, quiet reflection, health and well being for local residents and visitors.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities: The planting of the remainder of the site has added to the existing Swedish Whitebeam, creating a small, yet attractive woodland for public enjoyment.

There may be possibilities to work with the council, golf course and or local schools and residents to connect the existing sites in the area e.g. the new and improved Orangefield Park and Comber Greenway.

Continuing the existing volunteer involvement on site towards a local community woodland initiative.

Constraints: The site is prone to a little vandalism, graffiti and tree damage, as well as some fly tipping. Busy connecting A55 carriageway, funding constraints.

Factors Causing Change

Visitor use of path, Damage by vandals, root balling and wind blow of Swedish whitebeam, dumping on site, anti social behaviour.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain informal public access to the whole site by maintaining the paths, seats and open areas. To look for opportunities for connecting walkways or urban green ways where possible and partnerships with local groups and or volunteers. For the site where possible to be managed locally as a community woodland resource as part of a community woodland network.

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

These paths are to be mowed as necessary to maintain access. The extent of maintenance will be reviewed in future plans. Access features should be maintained to a high standard.

5.2 Secondary Woodland

Description

320 native trees were planted in 2000 as part of the Woods On Your Doorstep community woodland creation project, a mixture of ash, silver birch, oak and hazel. These trees were planted among the standard trees e.g. Sycamore and Swedish Whitebeam already established by the Housing Executive.

Significance

The aim of the Woods On Your Doorstep project was to create community woodland. This also fulfills one of the Woodland Trust's key aims to "increase new native woodland". In addition, woodland creation will add a variety of habitats to the site and improve its biodiversity value.

The site also plays a role in terms of urban biodiversity and urban resilient landscapes by connecting the existing street trees, garden trees and local parks for useable and sustainable wildlife corridors.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:

The development of native secondary woodland.

The development of a valuable habitat for local biodiversity.

Connectivity where possible to adjacent green areas e.g. Orangefield Park, Shandon Golf Course and the Comber Greenway.

Constraints:

Vandalism, dumping, funding.

Factors Causing Change

Vandalism, dumping, Natural succession, climate change and tree growth.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To encourage the development of a self-sustaining native woodland with public access and a good habitat for local wildlife. Where opportunities arise through woodland creation and or partnerships we will seek where possible to connect this woodland with other adjacent habitats for a more resilient future landscape.

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

Establishment of the planted areas is of primary importance to enable a tree canopy to develop. The 300 trees and shrubs are now well established and require minimal intervention. The need to thin and/or restructure the woodland to encourage age and structural diversity will be assessed in a future plan. The Swedish Whitebeam will be phased out over time due to the recurring damage through wind blow and root balling and these will be replaced with preference to native local provenance species to encourage a diversity and structure able to cope with increasing environmental threats such as climate change and tree disease.

6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

| Year | Type of Work | Description | Due By |
|------|--------------|-------------|--------|
|------|--------------|-------------|--------|

APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

| Cpt No. | Area (ha) | Main Species | Year | Management Regime | Major Management Constraints | Key Features Present | Designations |
|---------|-----------|--------------|------|-------------------|------------------------------|--|--------------|
| 1a | 0.83 | Scots pine | 1999 | High forest | People issues (+tve & -tve) | Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland | |

The whole site constitutes one compartment. The area slopes gently from East to West from the very old Knock Burial Ground. Clarawood Housing Estate flanks the area to the west with private housing to the south and northeast. The owners of each property have responsibility for their own boundaries. The Northeast boundary is a tall stone wall surrounding the Knock Burial Ground. This is owned and managed by Belfast City Council.

Prior to 1995 it was maintained as mown grass by the Housing Executive, after which they planted a selection of Swedish Whitebeam and native standards on the site. Following consultation with the local community, the 0.83 ha site was planted by the local community in 1999 with a mixture of native trees amongst the poplar and Swedish whitebeam that previously existed on the site. Due to the number of existing trees on the site and the small area, a WGS was not applied for. The trees are now established and minimal intervention will be required until the trees touch canopy.

A circular grass path network runs through the site to an open clearing and a viewpoint over the city

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.