



# Three Corners Common

## Management Plan 2005-2010

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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>	Three Corners Common
<b>Location:</b>	Churchinford
<b>Grid reference:</b>	ST210119, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 193
<b>Area:</b>	1.24 hectares (3.06 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Environmentally Sensitive Area

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

Three Corners Common is one of The Woodland Trust's 'Woods on Your Doorstep' woodlands, created to commemorate the Millennium. A triangular site, it lies in a quiet rural area in the heart of the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It comprises a rich mosaic of habitats, including woodland, unimproved grassland and heathland.

## 2.2 Extended Description

Three Corners Common is, as the name suggests, a triangular field, situated on a plateau in the Blackdown Hills half a mile south of the village of Churchinford. It is located in a quiet rural area in the heart of the Blackdown Hills AONB, ESA and Natural Area. The environmental value of the area lies in its small-scale patchwork of grass fields, hedgebanks/rows and woodland and the diversity of habitats, such as mires, unimproved grassland, water courses and remnant heathland. The area has a rich historic heritage including evidence of many centuries of settlement and farming, with extensive remains of small-scale industry, such as lime kilns, marl pits and mills.

Predominantly semi improved neutral grassland, there are scattered trees and scrub, particularly at the southern end of the site, with a few additional clumps of trees & shrubs (oak, willow, crab apple, birch and hazel) planted in 2000 as part of the Woods on Your Doorstep project. Bound by old hedgebanks supporting semi mature beech and oak trees the site forms part of a small area of former common land which is now a patchwork of small fields and gardens. A wet area/seasonal pond at the northern end provide additional interest. The soils are a fine silty over fine clayey, and fine loamy over clayey soils, with slowly permeable sub soils with slight seasonal water logging. Surrounding land use is predominantly pasture, some of which is also semi improved.

Under the Woods on Your Doorstep scheme the local community helped design the new woodland and undertook the first planting of new trees, and continue to take an interest in the development of the wood. Although not immediately adjacent to the village, there is an entrance direct from the road and a network of paths was integrated into the wood design, which provides public access for quiet enjoyment of the site.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

Three Corners Common is situated 1/2 mile south of the village of Churchinford, on a busy minor road, with no pavement. Public access is available direct from the public road via a kissing gate suitable for pedestrians, and from there permissive paths lead in a loop round the southern end of the site, and linearly up to the seasonal pond in the north. The site is flat, and paths have a natural grass surface - these are reasonably level, although there will be natural undulations, and the length of grass will depend on the time of year, and the stage of the cutting/grazing. A seat at the southern end of the site provides the opportunity to rest and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere.

Nearest public toilet: Taunton - various locations - approximately 9 miles

[http://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk/tdbcsites/heartofsomerset/disabledvisitors/disabled\\_toilets.asp](http://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk/tdbcsites/heartofsomerset/disabledvisitors/disabled_toilets.asp) as at Apr 2007

Nearest bus stop: The York Inn, Royston Road Churchinford - approximately 1/2 mile

<http://www.travelinesw.com/> as at April 2007

### 3.2 Access / Walks

## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term vision for Three Corners Common is for a predominantly open neutral grassland area, broadly corresponding to the NVC classification MG5 *Cynosurus cristatus* - *Centaurea nigra*, bounded by hedges, and with a small element of native broadleaf trees/scrub as part of the mix. The grassland areas will be kept open by mowing and/or grazing as necessary to provide valuable habitats important for birds, invertebrates and grassland flora. Tree and scrub areas will not extend beyond their current extent, and over time the number of individual trees may reduce, to produce a 'wood pasture' effect. The hedges will be retained around the boundaries. With the grassland, pond, hedges and tree element, the site will form a component of the biologically rich landscape of the surrounding AONB/ESA, helping to fulfil The Trust's corporate objective of increasing biodiversity.

The signs, and well-kept paths and rides will all encourage public interest and participation in the woodland. The combination of the open grassland, hedges, pond and small stands of trees will give improved and varied opportunities for appreciation of the natural environment; fulfilling the Trust's corporate objective of increasing people's awareness and enjoyment of woodland.

## 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 Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat

#### Description

Three Corners Common is essentially semi improved neutral grassland with characteristics of MG5 *Cynosurus cristatus* - *Centaurea nigra*. In the southern corner is a small area of marshy grassland with Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*) locally frequent and common and greater birds foot trefoil. The south and east hedges include occasional bluebell and bristle bent grass (a Somerset notable), while the western hedge contains scaly male fern and honeysuckle. 40 planted trees & shrubs, and a small patch of hawthorn & gorse scrub provide further variety of habitat, as does the seasonal pond created at the northern end of the field, which contains scarce water pepper (*Polygonum hydropiper*)

#### Significance

Neutral grassland is a declining habitat nationally -Lowland meadows are the subject of a UK BAP and Neutral grassland is a Habitat Action plan in the SW Regional BAP & Taunton Deane Local BAP - although the former deals with unimproved examples of the habitat, there are actions related to increasing the area which this grassland could contribute to over time. The majority of surrounding land use is pasture, so grassland within Woodland Trust ownership may prove valuable as link/buffer for surrounding grassland, particularly the County Wildlife Site MG5 grassland over the road. In the Blackdown Hills this is the main type of unimproved grassland, however, it has declined in the last few years. Maintenance of the nature conservation interest and landscape character of low-input permanent grassland is one of the main aims of the Blackdown Hills ESA. Management of the site helps to achieve the Woodland Trust corporate objective of enhancing biodiversity

#### Opportunities & Constraints

There is an opportunity to retain and enhance the diversity of the neutral grassland, which links with the adjacent hedges, scrub and trees and adjoining pasture land to provide a mosaic of habitats. The fields to the east are also semi improved grassland, whilst the field opposite, across the road (Arrow Head Field) is a County Wildlife Site as unimproved neutral grassland, giving the possibility over the longer term of 3 Corners Common providing a link/buffer in a wider area of semi improved and unimproved habitats. .

Constraint: Managing the site appropriately through cutting for hay and aftermath grazing is very important to maintain & enhance the site's biodiversity, and lack of a grazier would make appropriate management more difficult

#### Factors Causing Change

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

Diverse neutral grassland, retaining at least the diversity present at the 2002 survey, and with the aim of increasing the numbers of species associated with the habitat type, with a minimum of encroachment by rank vegetation such as thistle, bracken and nettle. Within this mix, a small element of trees/shrubs/scrub, not extending beyond the current boundaries (approximately 4% of area), and over the long term reduction in the total numbers of trees to produce 'wood pasture'. Recruitment over the long term of younger trees, by natural regeneration or planting, to produce age diversity. Retention of the characteristic beech hedge along the road boundary, and the seasonal pond and wet area which are providing additional diversity.

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

#### Operational Objective

Retain and increase diversity of species associated with neutral grassland, aiming to retain locally notable/scarce species Bristle Bent Grass and Waterpepper. Tree and scrub element contained within current limits (approximately 4% of the area) Retain pond as seasonal pond

Grassland quality managed by hay cut annually in mid to late July followed by light aftermath grazing by sheep up until the end of October, avoiding poaching of the sward

#### Work programme

Grass cut and removed annually in mid to late July followed by light grazing if available.

Continue consideration of management options of roadside hedge/trees re possible regeneration 2005/6 in conjunction with local community

Removal of tree and shrub shelters as they become tight - rate will depend on the growth of the trees, but would expect them to be removed by 2008

## 5.2 Informal Public Access

### Description

Three Corners Common is set in a rural location 1/2 mile south of the small village of Churchinford (parish population approximately 760). Access is available directly off the road via a kissing gate, and the field is open for quiet informal recreation with paths circulating the site. A seat has been installed as a special feature to mark the Millennium, and this provides the opportunity to rest and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere of the area.

Although it's location along a fast minor road with no pavement will deter some visitors, and population in the immediately local area is quite low, as a WOYD local expectations of the site will be high.

### Significance

Created as part of the Woods on your Doorstep project, the local community have been involved in the fundraising, design and planting of the site. Public access is vital to ensure ongoing support for the Trust's work.

### Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunity to retain the involvement and interest of the local community by making the site interesting, attractive and easy to visit for a wide range of people.

### Factors Causing Change

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

A woodland that contains well-maintained & attractive paths & entrances providing a pleasant and interesting place to visit. The wood will remain open to the public for quiet informal recreation predominantly by locals from surrounding houses/villages

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

Operational objective

Accessible, attractive, well maintained and safe woodland that the public frequently enjoy. Entrances and path network are appropriate to the level of use and type of demand from the local population.

Work programme:

Cut paths to 3m width, monitor signs & entrances once a year in May, with further work as necessary. Further control of grass growth will be achieved via cutting/grazing for grassland management.

Keep the area around the bench clear of long vegetation and weeds by cutting back

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## 6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By
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## APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	1.25	Hazel	2000	null		Informal Public Access, Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Environmentally Sensitive Area
<p>Unimproved/semi improved neutral grassland with 3 small clumps of trees planted in February 2000 by the local community, and a few scattered older trees. 40 trees were planted - a mix of oak, willow, crab apple, birch and hazel. The area is bound by outgrown hedge banks of predominantly beech with some oak. A seasonal pond was created at the northern end of the site in autumn 2000.</p>							

## Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2015	1a	Selective Fell	0.04	0	0

## 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.