



Diggers 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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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 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:	Diggers Wood
Location:	Shipton Under Wychwood
Grid reference:	SP270172, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 163
Area:	2.48 hectares (6.13 acres)
Designations:	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

This small wood of oak, ash and field maple has a seat at the highest point in the wood giving commanding views. The site is accessible from the nearby villages of Shipton and Milton by a linked by a footpath called Diggers or Dog Kennel Lane.

2.2 Extended Description

Diggers Wood is a 2.53 ha (6.25 acre) site which was acquired in 1999 through the Woodland Trust's 'Woods on Your Doorstep' project. The site is situated within the ancient Wychwood hunting forest area in the Oxfordshire Cotswolds AONB between the villages of Shipton under Wychwood 0.8km (0.5 miles) and Milton under Wychwood 1.2km (0.75 miles).

The soils are defined as shallow lime-rich soils over chalk or limestone, providing suitable habitat for beech hangers and other lime-rich woodlands.

Prior to planting the site was a low-grade arable field. Further back in history in Norman times, the Royal Forest of Wychwood covered much of West Oxfordshire. Tree planting on the site took place with considerable financial and physical support from the local community took place in 2000, with a mix of native trees and shrubs including oak, ash, field maple, wild cherry and wild service trees.

There are several paths through the site, some of which have connected glades with wildflowers, planted by the local community.

The site has a northerly aspect looking towards the two villages. Although the site is relatively small it does offer a quiet short walk in a scenic landscape, and it is well connected to the surroundings by public rights of way.

The Woodland Trust has given the site a category C for access (Low usage site where we do maintain paths).

On the other side of Dog Kennel Lane from the wood is 'Wychwood wild garden', which is a community owned site with woodland and ponds. There may be the opportunity in the future for the community to become more involved in the management of Diggers Wood.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Diggers Wood overlooks the hamlets of Shipton under Wychwood (0.8km / 0.5 miles away) and Milton under Wychwood (1.2km / 0.75 miles away).

There is no car park at the site but it is accessible from both villages linked by a public footpath called Diggers or Dog Kennel Lane. Another public footpath enters from the south. Shipton Station on the Oxford to Worcester railway line, lies about 2.4km / 1.5 miles away and buses run to/from Oxford from Shipton Under Wychwood.

There are public conveniences in Burford and Charlbury (www.westoxon.gov.uk).

(Further information about public transport is available from Traveline - www.traveline.org.uk or by calling 0871 200 22 33).

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term intentions for Diggers Wood will seek to realise a key aim of the Woodland Trust:

- to protect native woods, trees and their wildlife

The woodland will, through silvicultural intervention, be managed where necessary to deal with disease and improve conditions for selected retained specimens. The local community are involved in the management of the wood via the Cotswold Wardens, and small scale silvicultural management such as ride-side coppicing and cutting of glades is undertaken by the group.

The likely colonisation by ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) will affect the species composition of the wood over time, and so oak is likely to be the dominant tree species in the woodland as it grows and develops.

The woodland will always remain safe and open for people to enjoy in an informal way. This will be achieved through a managed path and entrance network and regular safety inspections of site infrastructure and of higher risk tree zones. Parts of the path network will also contain small sunny glades.

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 Secondary Woodland

Description

A 2.53ha / 6.25 acre compartment covering the entire site comprising native broadleaved trees planted in 2000 at a rate of 1100 / ha (3m x 3m spacing)

Existing woodland lies to the west some 20m from the site and connects on the south-eastern corner. To the north the stone track and public right of way, Dog Kennel Lane, borders the frontage and main entrance, and the remaining surrounding landscape is a mixture of arable and pastureland.

The major species mix is approximately 30% oak, 14% ash, 14% field maple, 10% hazel, 10% goat willow, with a minor components of hawthorn, dogwood, goat willow, wild cherry, small leaved lime, crab apple and wayfaring tree. There are also shrub species such as guilder rose, dog rose and spindle.

There are paths and open glades (comprising 20% of the site) with wildflowers planted by the local community, including ragged robin, vetch, scabious, toadflax, primroses, bluebells, snowdrops and aconites.

The woodland is developing well, with canopy closure in many places.

Significance

New woodlands help absorb CO₂ from the atmosphere, protect soils from erosion, create future wood fuel supplies, improve health and wellbeing, encourage wildlife and build resilience against pests and diseases while improving biodiversity.

The creation of this woodland has helped increase the amount of new native woodland cover in an area where woodland cover is very low, as well as establishing an open access woodland near to where people live.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

- The lane leading to the woodland is narrow and un-surfaced
- Deer are present on site and browsing is evident

Opportunities:

- To use the site to demonstrate the Trust's approach to woodland establishment best practice

Factors Causing Change

- Death of ash due to colonisation of ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*)
- Mammal damage (deer, rabbits, squirrels)

Long term Objective (50 years+)

In the long term Diggers Wood will be a thriving mixed native broadleaved woodland, with woodland components such as mature trees, introduced ground flora, and a diverse deadwood component in a secure and improving condition.

The likely colonisation by ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) will affect the species composition of the wood over time, and the resulting stands (oak, field maple, hazel being the most common species) of high forest will be being managed on a continuous cover silvicultural system to produce uneven-aged, self-regenerating stands of high conservation and amenity value.

Sycamore and cherry is naturally seeding in the woodland and this process will be allowed to continue; over time these will become a larger component of the tree mixture throughout the wood.

Deer damage to the broadleaf trees will be monitored and action taken if the damage threatens the health of the wood.

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

Diggers Wood will be managed to maintain and improve conditions for continued healthy tree colonisation, and to diversify habitat where possible.

Work undertaken by the Cotswold Wardens include a minor programme of thinning of willow will take place along the northern edge of the woodland and coppicing of hazel in the north west corner (approx. 0.25 acre).

All the stools will be covered with brash after cutting. (2017). Annually in late summer the glades will be cut and raked including the 'bay' areas alongside the paths.

5.2 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

Diggers Wood is located 0.5km (0.3 miles) from Shipton-Under-Wychwood (population 1,280 - 2001 census), and Milton-under-Wychwood (population 1,560 - 2001 census).

The site is linked by a public footpath to Shipton and Milton called Diggers or Dog Kennel Lane. This small wood of oak, ash and field maple has a seat at the highest point in the wood giving commanding views of the surrounding landscape.

Within the site, two legal footpaths run north/south across the site. One passes from the north west corner in a south easterly direction and egresses mid-point on the southern boundary. The second path passes from the north eastern corner in a south westerly direction and egresses mid-point on the southern boundary. A circular route permissive path and another linking the two footpaths combine to comprise in total some 775m of managed paths.

200m along the lane towards Shipton lies Wychwood Wild Garden, which is owned and managed by the local community. It comprises 5Ha (12.5) acres of avenues, woods and ponds much of which was laid out in the 1860's.

The Cotswold Wardens are actively involved at the site and there is an opportunity to maintain and enhance this relationship as the woodland matures.

Wychwood Church Of England Primary School is located 1.8km (1.1 miles) away and Diggers could therefore provide an opportunity for engagement with local children.

Significance

- Diggers Wood offers a place of peace and tranquillity to local residents, guests and visitors to the area.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

- The woodland paths can become muddy in parts quickly in wet weather
- Vehicular parking is not available

Opportunities:

- There is the opportunity for wider publicity of the wood via working closer with the community owned Wychwood Wild Gardens and associated local volunteer groups such as The Shipton Volunteers, the Wychwood Project and the Cotswold Wardens
- To promote for the benefit of the public and wildlife the conservation, protection, establishment and management of open access woodland
- There is an opportunity to adopt part of the site for use as a forest school, with Wychwood Church Of England Primary School nearby

Factors Causing Change

- Changes in vegetation along rides
- Visual changes as woodland matures
- Increase in housing / infrastructure nearby

Long term Objective (50 years+)

- Informal public access will be provided at the wood in perpetuity.
- To provide easy access for visitors with a cut path surface along clearly defined routes.
- The paths will be kept safe for quiet, recreational pedestrian access to the woodland.
- The site should be accessible and safe but not over-managed with excessive infrastructure and signage.
- There should be an appropriate level of resources available for the site to guide and inform all visitors.

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

Diggers Wood will be kept open and accessible for visitors, our contractor will ensure paths are cut annually and remain open to visitors to the wood all year round.

- Routine safety inspections of the trees in higher risk zones, such alongside footpaths and tracks, will be carried out formally every two years
- Entrances - maintenance and inspection: Cleaning of all signage and fixing of any immediate problems with entrance furniture - annually
- Path cutting and maintenance and removal of overhanging branches - annually
- Remove colour routed breadboard and reinstall white routed breadboard on fence, and install small welcome sign at southern entrance - 2018

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	2.53	Oak (pedunculate)	2000	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site		Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
<p>A 2.53Ha / 6.25 acre compartment covering the entire site comprising native broadleaved trees planted in 2000 at a rate of 1100 / Ha (3m x 3m spacing)</p> <p>The major species mix is approximately 30% oak, 14% ash, 14% field maple, 10% hazel, 10% goat willow, with a minor components of hawthorn, dogwood, goat willow, wild cherry, small leaved lime, crab apple and wayfaring tree. There are also shrub species such as guilder rose, dog rose and spindle.</p> <p>There are paths and open glades (comprising 20% of the site) with wildflowers planted by the local community, including ragged robin, vetch, scabious, toadflax, primroses, bluebells, snowdrops and aconites.</p> <p>Major species are planted in drifts of 10-15 of each species, minor species are concentrated around the perimeter of the wood and adjacent to open ground in a more intimate mix. Hazel is present in drifts of 20-25 plants along ride edges.</p> <p>The woodland is developing well, with canopy closure in many places.</p>							

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.