



# Friends of Belvoir Wood

## Management Plan 2016-2021

## MANAGEMENT PLAN - CONTENTS PAGE

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
Introduction	
Plan review and updating	
Woodland Management Approach	
Summary	
1.0 Site details	
2.0 Site description	
2.1 Summary Description	
2.2 Extended Description	
3.0 Public access information	
3.1 Getting there	
3.2 Access / Walks	
4.0 Long term policy	
5.0 Key Features	
5.1 Informal Public Access	
5.2 Secondary Woodland	
5.3 Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat	
6.0 Work Programme	
Appendix 1: Compartment descriptions	
Glossary	
<b>MAPS</b>	
Access	
Conservation Features	
Management	

## 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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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.

---

## 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>	Friends of Belvoir Wood
<b>Location:</b>	Belvoir, Belfast
<b>Grid reference:</b>	J343693, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 15
<b>Area:</b>	5.72 hectares (14.13 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Area of Special Scientific Interest, Woods on your Doorstep

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

Friends of Belvoir Wood is a woodland creation project. The woods consist of ponds, wildflower meadows, gravel paths and a stream. Burnet moths and orchids are valuable species, and the area is an important habitat for the red squirrel.

## 2.2 Extended Description

Friends of Belvoir Wood is a woodland creation site positioned between Belvoir Forest Park, the Knock Dual Carriageway and Belvoir Housing Estate on the southern edge of the city of Belfast. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive gifted the land in 2000 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.

The development of the Woods on your Doorstep site builds on the Friends of Belvoir Nature Reserve created over the previous 15 years by the Friends of Belvoir, a group of people originally brought together to lobby to prevent a road being built through Belvoir Forest Park. This consisted of a series of 3 ponds, a wildflower meadow and 2.6 hectares of tree planting.

Following consultation with the local community and the Friends of Belvoir group, an additional 2.3 ha was planted to extend the site in 2000 by contractors, the local community, children from Belvoir Primary School and members of the Guide Association taking part in an Environment Challenge. The gravel paths were resurfaced, one of the bridges was upgraded and an information board was erected to inform visitors about the site. The 3 ponds were cleaned out and dredged over a 2 year period.

A wild flower meadow is maintained through an annual cut in October/November each year. The burnet moth and orchids are among its valued species. A natural spring rises close to Belvoir Drive and forms the stream flowing through the centre of the site. The Friends of Belvoir group developed a series of 3 ponds along the route of this stream.

Public access is provided throughout this Woods on your Doorstep site, with grass paths extending the hardcore path access routes installed by the Friends of Belvoir in the original design.

Each WoyD site had a feature created to mark and celebrate the millennium. In the Friends of Belvoir Wood this is a carving of a red squirrel sitting within the open area, bringing attention to the valuable habitat in the area which is one of the last heartlands for the red squirrel in Northern Ireland.

In May 2015 the site was designated an ASSI as part of the Belvoir Estate (managed by Forest Service) Belvoir golf club and Moorlands meadows (managed by Belfast City Council). The entire ASSI lies within the Lagan Valley Regional Park and is cited for the high concentration of veteran and ancient trees in the landscape and the specialist communities the ancient, dead and standing wood supports.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

It is intended that public access should be provided to this WoyD site. Access is provided along a series of grass and hardcore paths from Belvoir Drive, the Knock Dual Carriageway and from the Housing Executive's car park at the entrance to Belvoir Forest Park.

### 3.2 Access / Walks



## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

In the long term, whilst maintaining the site for public access, it would be intended to maintain 5 hectares of self-sustaining high forest of mixed deciduous woodland. Given that the main purpose of the woodland is for public enjoyment, the canopy composition will be flexible in the future allowing tree species best suited to the site to form the climax community. It is unlikely that it will ever produce quality timber as it is a small area and vandalism levels fluctuate due to its urban nature. In the short term the wood will develop as a diverse stand, it may require thinning and restructuring to achieve this.

The wildflower meadow will be mown annually and cuttings removed to reduce nutrient build-up and maintain this valuable wildlife habitat. Trees will be removed in this area.

The ponds will be maintained and dredged as necessary to maintain this valuable wildlife habitat.

Public access will be maintained to a standard appropriate to the level of use of the site. The hardcore paths will be left to grow over with grass - the hardcore substrate will continue to provide the necessary drainage for the paths while grass mowing will be preferable to the use of chemicals to define the paths and will look more natural. Regular cutting and maintenance of all paths will maintain public access, and access features should be maintained to a high standard. An information board and entrance signs will continue to inform new visitors about the wood and its history.

## 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, Friends of Belvoir Wood is a community wood providing informal public access. Pedestrian access is provided from Belvoir Drive and the car park at the entrance to Belvoir Forest Park and allows access for pedestrians, buggies and wheelchair users. A network of hardcore and grass paths are provided and maintained throughout the site. An information board at the main entrance informs visitors about the site and its features.

#### Significance

The access facilities provide the opportunity to “increase peoples 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. To provide access to a locally and historically important woodland. To connect people to trees and woodland, to raise the profile of "local woodlands" and the voice for trees and woods.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

**Opportunities:** As an urban fringe wood, this site provides an opportunity for many local people to enjoy the woodland. Involvement of local groups and volunteers in management of the site.

**Constraints - funding**

#### Factors Causing Change

Visitor use of path, Climate change, anti-social behaviour - scramblers.

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

To maintain informal public access to the whole site by maintaining the paths, seats and open areas and to work with adjacent land owners within the Lagan Valley Regional Park to increase public visitor use, sense of ownership and enjoyment.

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

The hardcore paths should be left to grow over with grass and then mown. The hardcore substrate will continue to provide the necessary drainage for the paths while grass mowing will be preferable to the use of chemicals to define the paths and will look more natural. All paths are to be mowed as necessary to maintain access, this can be reviewed in future plans. Some access points that have become degraded or damaged to be upgraded over time and monitored. culverts should be inspected annually to insure their safety for use. Signs should be replaced as necessary and graffiti removed. To widen paths where necessary by scalloping edges of woodland and or removing one or two rows of trees either side of the paths.

## 5.2 Secondary Woodland

### Description

2.3 hectares of new native woodland were planted in 2000 as part of the Woods On Your Doorstep community woodland creation project. This builds upon the existing wood, much of which was planted by the Friends of Belvoir group around 1985. There is additional natural regeneration of oak occurring in compartments 1A&B.

### Significance

The aim of the Woods On Your Doorstep project was to create a 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 as well as helping to buffer the adjacent PAW (Plantation on Ancient Woodland) site, Belvoir Forest.

### Opportunities & Constraints

#### Opportunities:

The development of secondary woodland.

The development of a valuable habitat for local biodiversity.

Extension of new planted native broadleaf woodland through restructuring of the adjacent Belvoir firest

Constraints - anti social behaviour

### Factors Causing Change

Vandalism, Natural succession, climate change, invasive Himalayan balsam, tree disease and tree growth

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

To encourage the development of a self-sustaining woodland with public access and a good habitat for local biodiversity. To continue to look for opportunities where possible to extend and or connect the woodland through additional planting, partnership working and community involvement.

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

The newly planted areas are fully stocked, at a rate of 2250/ha, and the final WGS was approved and paid in 2006. Vandalism of young trees is now minimal. To assess the wood looking at the species and structure present. To thin and restructure where necessary to retain a resilient, diverse and sustainable secondary woodland. To do this both through the use of contractors, local groups and volunteers.

## 5.3 Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat

### Description

0.4 hectares of compartment 1A is to continue to be managed as a wild flower meadow with one cut annually in late august/early September. Early purple orchids and the burnet moth have both been recorded in the meadow.

3 ponds were created along the stream in compartment 1B by the Friends of Belvoir group around 1985. The 2 lower ponds have established successfully and blend naturally into the landscape. They provide a habitat for the normal range of water mini-beasts, frogs, damselflies and dragonflies. The ponds are fed by a natural stream that originally appeared above the top pond. It now surfaces below the top pond and does not feed this pond.

### Significance

Species rich grassland is an important habitat and rare in the area.

Open water and wetland habitats provide an important habitat in their own right and increase the biodiversity potential within the site as a whole.

### Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities: The maintenance of a valuable habitat for local wildlife. Management of habitats through working with like minded environmental organisations eg. Butterfly Conservation and Buglife.

Constraints - funding

### Factors Causing Change

Natural Succession To woodland, Nutrient enrichment to meadow, Siltation of pond, Excessive growth of vegetation in ponds, invasive pond weed and Himalayan balsam. Pollutants to water course, climate change.

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain the wild flower meadow area as a 0.4 hectare meadow which contributes to the biodiversity value of the local area.

To maintain the ponds, dredging when necessary (approx. every 5-6 years), and clearing regrowth around view points.

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

The meadow is to be cut once annually in late August/early September with the cuttings removed. Any tree seedlings should be removed.

Dredge and re-shape the three ponds to maximise on micro-habitats and biodiversity potential. To continue to inspect the ponds to monitor water depth and ensure no less than 1/2 pond surface is maintained as open water.

---

## 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	2.10	Birch (downy/silver)	2000	High forest		Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland, Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat	Area of Special Scientific Interest, Woods on your Doorstep
<p>This compartment consists of the new planting area of 1.7ha, planted in April 2000, and the wild flower meadow. It is separated from compartment 1B by a hardcore path that cuts compartment 1 approximately in half. The area is almost flat. The area is bounded by Compartment 1B, short mown grass and improved grassland maintained and owned by the Housing Executive.</p> <p>The Friends of Belvoir group began managing the wild flower meadow around 1985 while the remainder of this compartment was managed by the Housing Executive as short mown grass. This mown grass area was planted in 2000 with small cell-grown trees of native species. It received the final WGS payment in 2005.</p> <p>A number of mature and over-mature trees exist along the boundary with the grassland, these are assessed annually.</p> <p>A series of grass paths run through the compartment following routes used by the community.</p>							
1b	2.60	other oak spp	1985	High forest	People issues (+tve & -tve)	Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland, Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat	Area of Special Scientific Interest, Woods on your Doorstep

This compartment consists of the original Friends of Belvoir Nature Reserve created and managed from 1985 to 1999 by the Friends of Belvoir Group on land that was originally maintained as mown grass. The area is almost flat. It is separated from compartment 1A by a hardcore path that cuts compartment 1 approximately in half. The compartment is bounded by Compartment 1B, Belvoir Forest Park (Forest Service) and the entrance road to the Forest Park (5 metre strip mowed by Housing Executive).

The compartment includes wooded areas, ponds, a stream, open space and a network of paths. The majority of the wooded areas have been planted since 1995. The 3 ponds were created from the spring that rises close to Belvoir Drive. These were dredged in 2001 as part of the WoyD site creation works, and will be dredged approximately every 5-6 years. A large carved wooden red squirrel was the millennium feature for this site, unfortunately through vandalism and weathering it rotted away and was replaced in 2008. The car park area, owned by the Housing Executive, is now closed, due to antisocial behaviour. A network of hardcore paths and bridges over the stream are maintained in the compartment. There are also a number of informal grass paths.

2a	1.00	Hazel	2000	High forest		Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland, Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat	Area of Special Scientific Interest, Woods on your Doorstep
----	------	-------	------	-------------	--	--	---

This compartment is 60 metres to the SW of compartment 1. It faces NW, sloping downwards from the Knock Dual Carriageway. It is bounded by the Knock Dual Carriageway, Big Wood (a nature reserve within Belvoir Forest Park) and improved grassland.

A corner of the compartment was planted with oak around 1990 by the Friends of Belvoir Group. The remainder was planted as part of the WoyD project in 2000, and was granted a WGS. It consists of the original Friends of Belvoir Nature Reserve created and managed from 1985 to 1999 by the Friends of Belvoir Group on land that was originally maintained as mown grass.

A network of grass paths run through the site. These are mainly used by people walking to the pedestrian footbridge over the dual carriageway.

## 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.