



# Top of the Hill Wood

## Management Plan 2018-2023

## 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

6.0 Work Programme

Appendix 1: Compartment descriptions

Glossary

## MAPS

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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>	Top of the Hill Wood
<b>Location:</b>	Londonderry
<b>Grid reference:</b>	C441148, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 7
<b>Area:</b>	4.09 hectares (10.11 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

Top of the Hill Wood was planted by the local community with a mixture of broadleaf trees dominated by oak. A circular grass path leads around the site linking entrances from the Country Park with the viewing plinth at the top of the site.

## 2.2 Extended Description

Top of the Hill Wood is a woodland creation site positioned on the outer edge of Top of the Hill (Gobnascale) Housing Estate on the southern edge of Derry City in Northern Ireland, adjoins Top of the Hill Country Park. McCormick Properties Ltd gifted the land in January 2002 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. NIE also sponsored this site as one of 13 “More Power to Trees” woodland creation sites across Northern Ireland.

The name Derry is derived from the Celtic Dair - an oak, or Doire - an oak grove/oak wood. In the 6th Century Derry was an island in Lough Foyle on which oak characterised the landscape. Derry has retained the symbolism of the native oak through the centuries. It is therefore fitting that this is one of 5 Woods On Your Doorstep sites which the Woodland Trust created as millennium woodlands at the turn of the 21st century in the Derry area.

The 4.07 ha site was formerly a field that had become overgrown with rank grassland and gorse. Following consultation with the local community it was planted by contractors and the local community in 2000/01 with a mixture of broadleaved trees dominated by oak. The site is bounded to the NE by private housing, to the west by industrial units and to the south by grazed fields and the open countryside. It is adjacent to Top of the Hill Country Park on its north eastern edge. The Country Park is owned and managed by Derry City Council and hosts a network of planted areas, open space and wide tarmac paths. It is intended that public access should be provided to this WoyD site also. There is a circular grass path leading through the site.

Each WoyD site had a feature created to mark and celebrate the millennium. In Top of the Hill Wood this is a viewing plinth pointing out places of local interest that can be seen from this point.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

It is intended that public access should be provided to this WoyD site. A circular grass path leads around the site. This links entrances from Top of the Hill Country Park with the viewing plinth at the top of the site. Forest Service provided a Community Woodland Supplement grant for the provision of these features.

Management access is gained along the paths through Top of the Hill County Park. A Deed of Easement has been agreed with Derry City Council for this right of way from Corrody Road.

### 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 encourage the site to become a self-sustaining high forest of mixed deciduous woodland (likely to be upland oak). It is unlikely that it will ever produce quality timber as it is small and exposed. The trees are planted in clumps of approx 100. The stands of trees will be left providing enough density to deter the public choosing additional routes through the woodland and also to allow a woodland ground flora to encroach from the surrounding hedged areas. Given that the main purpose of the woodland is for public enjoyment, the canopy composition will be flexible in the future allowing particular tree species best suited to the site to form the climax community.

Public access will remain over the whole site and levels of public useage will determine the level of facilities and future work plans. The path condition will be monitored annually. On-site information will be provided depenedent on the level of public useage again.

Public safety will be assessed regularly.

## 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, Top of the Hill Wood is a community wood providing informal public access. Three entrances provide access to the circular grass path that runs through the site, Boulders were placed at 2 of the entrances and a metal kissing gate and management gate at the other, to try and stop motorbikes and joyriders accessing the site, but still allowing walkers access.

A viewing plinth points out places of local interest that can be seen from its location at the top of the hill while an information board informs visitors about the site.

#### 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 which will be dependent on the public useage.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: Vandalism, joyriders and motorbikes are a problem at this site which restricts the provision of access features.

Opportunities: As an urban fringe woodland, this site provides an opportunity for many local people to enjoy woodland. There is an opportunity to develop its links with Top of the Hill Country Park once the woodland has developed.

#### Factors Causing Change

Visitor use of path, Weather, Canopy closure

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

To maintain informal public access to the whole site by maintaining the paths, seats and open areas, dependent on the level of public use.

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

The paths will be mown to maintain access. The need for future path maintenance should be assessed in the next management plan period. Access features and signs will all be maintained dependent on the level of public use and the level of vandalism.

## 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	4.45	Birch (downy/silver)	2001	High forest	People issues (+ve & -ve), Site structure, location, natural features & vegetation	Informal Public Access	

A sloping site consisting of former agricultural land. Previously two fields, the boundary between the two has been reduced to a slight bank/ditch and a length of overgrown gorse. This feature does, however, form the historic townland boundary. The lower field was reduced with a housing development on its eastern part, and a country park has been developed immediately to the north of the site. Originally rough meadow frasses and rushes, with large clumps of gorse/broom along the boundaries. The drainage is good and consists of brown earth/clay over mineral, with builders rubble in the lower 20-30m of the site. The whole site constitutes one compartment. The area slopes down hill from the southwest to the northeast. The gorse/broom and rushes were cut to ease access and provide a clear planting platform. A total of 6,800 trees were planted in 2000/01, predominately oaks.

Formerly a field that had become overgrown with rank grassland and gorse, contractors and the local community planted it in 2000/01 with a mixture of native broad-leaved trees dominated by oak. A Forest Service Woodland Grant scheme was awarded to undertake the planting, the stocking density was achieved and the final payment of the grant received in 2006.

The circular grass path links the entrances from Top of the Hill Country Park with the viewing plinth at the top of the site and continues back down the site to complete the loop. The path linking the entrances was designed in such a way that it should retain the view from the viewing plinth once the trees have matured.

## 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.