



Pond Wood & Compass Hill

Management Plan

2018-2023

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Pond Wood & Compass Hill
Location:	Old Court, Strangford
Grid reference:	J585500, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 21
Area:	1.16 hectares (2.87 acres)
Designations:	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Area of Special Scientific Interest, Environmentally Sensitive Area, Special Area of Conservation

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

A mixed woodland with ash and sycamore being the dominant species, ground flora includes wood sorrel, primrose and bluebell. A Victorian pond lies at the centre of the site and heron, otters and seals have been spotted towards the coast.

2.2 Extended Description

The land at Strangford was acquired in 2001 from Peter Maxwell as one of the Woodland Trust's, Woods on Your Doorstep projects to create new community woodland. Covering 1.22 hectares it lies to the NW of Strangford Village. The development and first five years maintenance of the site was funded by the Millennium Commission. Forest Service granted Habitat Improvement Grants and Woodland Grant Scheme funding.

A public path cuts through this wood and is part of the Lecale Way long distance route and the planting links the Compass Hill wood at the top to the old Pond wood at the base of the hill. Free public access is provided across the site at all times. The main woods are planted Victorian estate copses and hold a mixture of conifer and broadleaf species, yet with natural regeneration of ash and sycamore being dominant. The floral coverage is good with some indicator species of wood sorrel, primrose and bluebell thus showing that the wood might pre-date the Victorian period.

The landscape value is high with the views to the main body of Strangford Lough from the top of Compass Hill and to the lough, it being so close to the base of the wood. The surrounding copses and fields are managed by the De Ros Estate and hold an array of wildlife, ranging from a heronry to the shoreline which has frequent sightings of waders, otters and seals. The Pond Wood has a Victorian pond in the centre, referred to as the Japanese pond, which the WT restored in 2001 to an open water body of greater value to wildlife and the landscape.

The planting was with native trees from NI sources and is mainly broadleaf but holds some scot pines which were intended to screen the housing and provide perches for the waders and herons in the long term. An open grass area was left at the top with an information board very near the Victorian teahouse boundary.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

The public path is a RoW called the Lecale Way and starts from Strangford village (or Squeeze Cut) and it joins the coastal path at the base of the wood. This path was a RoW diversion in spring 2001 to take the path away from the Old Court buildings and to the Pond wood. It is now 270m of a gravel sloping path with resting seats and waymarkers.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

To increase the woodland cover with the establishment of a planting to a high forest and link the two woods with a wildlife corridor via the planting. Long term the wood will cover 1 ha and some open space may remain at the top. It will be important to retain the Victorain pond feature as this creates a very valuable wildlife habitat and a priority habitat for NI. The existing stands of mature trees will be managed under a minimum intervention regime with only invasive non-natives being removed to allow regeneration of the native tree species. No remaining stands of cherry Laurel and rhododendron to allow ground flora to continue to thrive into newly planted areas.

It is unlikely it will ever produce quality timber as it is a small wood and has been planted for landscape linkages and recreational purposes.

The path as a public pathway is to be kept clear by the WT. The path is made up of gravel and an annual assessment will be made as to whether any repairs or additional drainage will be required. The access is moderately popular. On-site information will be provided dependent on the level of useage. Public safety will be assessed regularly and tree inspections to mature trees carried out annually.

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, Pond Wood and Compass Hill is a community woodland. Free public access is provided across the site at all times. The main access is called the Strangford Path & takes in part of the Lecale Way; the wood has 270m of gravel path with mown edges on the slope of Compass Hill. The path is a fine gravel surface with five cutaway drains and three rest spots. There are five sculptures along the route in the Compass Hill wood of which only two now remain. One management gate is positioned in middle of the western boundary.

Significance

This is a scenic landscape area at the southern entrance to Strangford Lough - RAMSAR site with the channels visible from the top of the Compass Hill, hence it attracts many people on weekend walks. It is also within the designated lough area and is of AONB, ESA, ASSI status. It is a key tourist area leading around to the recently asserted 'Lecale Way' - a long distance footpath down to Downpatrick, the administrative capital of County Down. The access facilities provide the opportunity to "increase people's awareness and enjoyment of woodland", one of the Woodland Trust's key objectives. These reasons make it important to retain this key feature.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints

There has been a problem with anti-social behaviour in the site with young people drinking in the wood. They however do not vandalise the site but they obviously discourage casual walkers at night.

Opportunities

This is a great opportunity to involve the wider community and the public in a rich landscape area via the public access through this wood. Down District Council asserted the RoW diversion in 2000 and are responsible for maintenance to the boundary of the site, ie. the top of compass hill at the tea house and the bottom at the pond gate. The opportunity is to raise awareness of the WT at key points along the trail.

Tourist trail and visitor walking route connected to the estate - now holding wedding party events. Game of Throne tours and seasonal strangford village events.

Factors Causing Change

Tree canopy closure, Level of public useage, increased rain fall, climate change.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To retain the path way within the Lecale Way long distance path and to co-ordinate this with the Down DC & De Ros estate. This will include the maintenance of the path to an acceptable standard where it can be used all year round and maintaining the provision of site information appropriate to the level of use.

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

Make an assessment on future site management, including path edging mowings, litter lifting, feature repairs.

5.2 Secondary Woodland

Description

The new planting, 0.7 ha, was with native trees from NI sources and is mainly broadleaf but holds some scot pines which were intended to screen the housing and provide perches for the waders and herons in the long term. An open grass area was left at the top with an information board very near the Victorian teahouse boundary. A total of 1,575 trees were planted in 2001 with rabbit guards. Predominately oak species.

0.52 ha of the site consists of a small mature mixed woodland around the old Victorian pond. The wood is a mixture of conifer and broadleaf.

Significance

This is a key tourist area and as such has a relatively high visitor number. Significant of the estate woodland as a local landscape feature. The aim of the Woods on Your Doorstep project was to create community woodland. This also fulfills one of the Woodland Trust's key aims to "increase new native woodland". The continued management of Pond Wood and Compass Hill fulfill these key aims.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints

Invasive laurel, rhododendron, pheasant berry, and sycamore.
Ivy management on mature trees.

Opportunities

Opportunity to manage Pond Wood and Compass Hill as a broadleaved woodland for people to enjoy. The site is well used, being part of the Lecale Way and offers an opportunity to raise the profile of the WT in NI. Many media broadcasts have been staged there. The Brian Black "Endangered" series (2003) had the opening shot filmed in the wood on occasions. Recent local filming of Game of Thrones series in Strangford village.

Factors Causing Change

Noxious weeds, Naturally regeneraing non-native invasive species, Invasive species - laurel, rhododendron, pheasant berry, tree disease, climate change.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To establish a mixed woodland managed as high forest. Canopy composition will be both broadleaf and conifer.

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

Establishment of the planted area is of prime importance and correct management of existing mature stands. The mature stands will require some ivy management on the path edge specimens but any invasive laurel/rhododendron should be removed to allow native species regeneration.

5.3 Pond

Description

A large Victorian pond, previously the Japanese Sunken Garden as part of the De Ros Estate. Approx 50 x 30 x 4m with a small island containing small non native shrubs and a few native trees. Some pheasant berry clumps around the pond edge with bramble scrub dominating.

Significance

Historical significance and heritage connection to the estate and local context as part of Strangford village. Ponds are priority habitats for Northern Ireland and woodland ponds are increasingly rare occurrence. Significance in terms of increasing biodiversity and a feature for local visitors to the site.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints -

Funding, access to clean out silt, control of any pollutants entering pond, invasive pheasant berry, in flow and out flow control.

Opportunities -

Working with DeRos estate to repair feature, potential small funding through local community association and legacy donations.

Factors Causing Change

Pond leak, old structures and pipes, pollution, invasive species, climate change.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To restore pond to a functioning and ecologically diverse landscape and heritage feature for the site.

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

To clean out the silt, remove invasive shrubs, and repair existing leak.

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	0.52	Mixed native broadleaves	1900	High forest		Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	Environmentally Sensitive Area
<p>A small mixed woodland around the old Victorian pond & thus called Pond wood, next to the lower slope & leading into a planting area on the Compass Hill. The wood is a mixture of conifer and broadleaf species thought to date from the early 1800 estate planting.</p>							
2a	0.70	Mixed native broadleaves	1900	High forest	Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	Environmentally Sensitive Area
<p>This small planting on the slopes of Compass Hill of 0.7 ha connects Pond wood to Compass wood. Surrounding land is the Old Court (De Ros) estate lands of copses, plantings and grazed fields</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.