



Canal Wood

Management Plan 2015-2020

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Canal Wood
Location:	Poyntz Pass
Grid reference:	J065350, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 29
Area:	6.11 hectares (15.10 acres)
Designations:	

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

There are two access points from the canal towpath over the ditch crossing a wooden bridge at the beginning of the wetland and a stone bridge at the middle east of the site. The towpath is well used by local people already with regular users frequenting the site as volunteers. We have gained a management access right of way over the towpath by deed from Newry and Mourne DC. The path is a permissive path. There are no public rights of way over the site itself.

2.2 Extended Description

The land was purchased from the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company in 2000. This low lying wet woodland site forms a linear wedge between the old canal to the east and the mainline railway to the west. The southern section is wetland consisting of rush, sedge and reed beds linking into the canal and the wet pasture to the south. The northern section is planted to the north west and has more reed beds to the NE. Thus approximately half of the site is wetland with many ditches running west to east into the canal ditches.

The access is off the canal in the middle of the site and at the beginning of the wetland via a boardwalk. There are increasingly more users of the site since the inclusion of help from local volunteers. All the ditches were cleared as part of the 2000 creation works, whilst small wood bridges were placed over the ditches running north. These were replaced by stone bridges connecting a bunded path in 2014 and the ditches cleared as part of these works. Most of the site can be seen from the canal towpath and cycle route which is way marked from Newry to Poyntzpass village and will be signed to Portadown.

The planting was of mixed wetland species, predominately willow and alder and takes in approximately 50 % of the total area. All the planting was undertaken by contractor in 2001 in the NW/middle section of the site. Oak and Ash were planted in the middle section where the ground is slightly higher. A further 300 trees were planted in 2015 as an understory mix of hazel, holly and crab apple

In 2011 a group of local volunteers in the form of the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWA) saw the potential of the woodland and wanted to help with management and the long-term vision for the site. A successful application to Biffa Award, landfill tax supported by the volunteers in 2013 meant paths access, publicity and biodiversity on the site could all be improved.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

On Foot/Bicycle

Leave Poyntzpass and follow the signs for the Towpath/Canal Road. Follow this until you get to Gambles Bridge, cross the road and keep going, pass through a yellow barrier/gate and the woodland is a 10 min walk from here in your right.

By Car

Leave Poyntzpass on the main road heading for Newry.

After 2 1/4miles turn left into the road signed "Dromantine". It is the first road on the left after Poyntzpass and I think it is called Gamble's road.

Drive down about 500yds until you meet the canal - the road goes over Gamble's Bridge.

Turn right. You are now on the beautiful Newry Canal towpath with a small parking area on the right and the Belfast/Dublin railway bridge ahead of you.

Train

You can get a train from Belfast to Poyntzpass

Bus

You can get the bus from Belfast

3.2 Access / Walks

There are two access points from the canal towpath over the ditch crossing a wooden bridge at the beginning of the wetland and a stone bridge at the middle east of the site.

We have gained a management access right of way over the towpath by deed from Newry and Mourne DC.

The path is a permissive path.

There are no public rights of way over the site itself.

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The Trust's corporate objective of increasing new native woodland has been achieved by the planting of Canal Wood. It is intended to encourage the site to become a self-sustaining high forest of mixed broadleaved species, mainly willow and alder, which will flourish in the primarily wet conditions.

The establishment of the trees has now been achieved and the site has become very attractive young woodland. The wood will be sustained by the creation of the secondary woodland in conjunction with the retention of at least 50% of the semi-natural wetland area in the Southern section greatly increases the biodiversity of this site. The surrounding landscape is primarily wet woodland, farmland pasture with hedgerows and hedgerow trees sparse. Local landowners will be encouraged where possible and opportunities arise to plant more hedgerow trees and connect field boundaries thus providing a more robust landscape and thus working towards the Trusts conservation strategy for a resilient woodscape initiative.

There was a small holding of Giant Hogweed in the centre of the site; this has since been eradicated but will continue to monitor in case it returns.

In the medium to long term, it is not envisaged that thinning of the site will be required, as the mix of tree species should encourage self-thinning. However this will be reviewed in 2015.

The self-thinning option will result in some trees dying naturally as competition increases. The resulting deadwood will be left in place creating another valuable habitat. This management option will also benefit the soil condition by minimising compaction.

Ditch levels should be checked annually to ensure that flooding does not occur into any neighbouring lands and ditches cleared every four years.

Path cutting ceased in 2009, as there was very little evidence of the public using the site. In 2011 cutting of paths resumed through the help of local volunteers through the IWAI. The canopy has closed along some of the paths however due to increased use of the site this will continue to be managed for public access.

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

Canal Wood was created as a community woodland as part of the nationwide Woods on Your Doorstep project. Free public access is provided across the site at all times. The access is via the Newry Canal Towpath to the North from Poyntzpass via Dromantine Road to Gambles Bridge. At this parking spot the tow path leads you along the canal to the site approx. 15 minute walk. Two entrances take the visitor into the site. An information board is located at the first entrance beside a boardwalk which leads you on a circular route across the wetland area, through the woodland and back across a bunded path to another area of woodland to the south of the site. Both entrances lead the visitor to the seats and viewing areas across the surrounding landscape.

Significance

The access facilities provide the opportunity to "increase people's awareness and enjoyment of woodland", one of the Woodland Trust's key objectives. Locals from the IWAI, cyclists and walkers from the towpath use this site for walking, volunteering and small events.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

Due to the nature of the site and despite improvements to access the area still suffers from seasonal flooding and increase in water levels.

Opportunities: Management of ditches along the west of the site to improve water flow across the site. Access to the wet woodland via boardwalk. Opening up visual lines of sight from one path to the next, increasing the sense of safety within the woodland.

Factors Causing Change

Climate, Tree canopies

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To retain the path access but not to mow it when it has been established as the desire route by regular public usage and tree canopies close in. To continue to look for opportunities with the local volunteers and IWAI.

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

2014-19:

To continue to maintain the 150m path to the seat and open area, this will be done by regularly cutting. We wish to keep the site looking tidy and welcoming. This would be an ideal site to hand over to the community and we want to make it as attractive as possible.

5.2 New Native Woodland

Description

2.7 hectares of the site has been planted with just over 6063 trees. A mix of mainly alder, willow and other broadleaves. Approximately 2.5 ha will be retained as open wetland for biodiversity importance.

Significance

The aim of the Woods on your Doorstep project was to create a community woodland. This is important as the area is impoverished with regard to woodland. By creating and encouraging new woodland the site will go some way to provide a link to other small existing patches of woodland within this area. The establishment also fulfils one of the Woodland Trust's key aims "increase new native woodland". In addition it will add variety of habitats to the site and greatly improve its biodiversity value.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

Persistent levels of standing water on site.

Opportunities:

An opportunity exists to encourage greater community involvement in the site with the help of IWAI and local volunteers. This will hopefully lead to a greater sense of ownership by local residents.

Factors Causing Change

Climate and water levels

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To establish secondary woodland managed as high forest. Canopy composition will consist of broadleaf species and native pines. Where possible look for potential planting areas and linking this habitat with other existing woodland, wet woodland and wetland habitat within the area.

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

Establishment of the planted area was of prime importance and this has now been achieved. The next stage will be to ensure canopy closure and look for any further potential for structural and species diversity.

5.3 Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat

Description

Approximately 2.5 ha are retained as open wetland and consist of a variety of typical wetland flora and fauna. In 2014, existing ditches on site were cleared out and wetland plug plants e.g. Devils-bit Scabious and Ragged Robin were introduced along the edges of the open ditches.

Significance

A significant number of surrounding areas have been drained for sheep and cattle farming meaning this area of wetland is of importance in terms of what cover it provides for nesting birds, migrant species and a variety of native wild plants and insects e.g. Banded Demoiselle

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

Levels of water on site.

Opportunities:

An opportunity exists to encourage greater community involvement in the site with the help of IWAI and local volunteers. This will hopefully lead to a greater sense of ownership by local residents. Possibility of controlling the water levels by creating natural dams where needed at certain times of year.

Factors Causing Change

Water levels

Site run off from adjacent land

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Manage and maintain wetland area through monitoring water levels, species diversity and retaining some open water habitat through clearing of ditches every 4 years. Where possible look for potential opportunities in linking this habitat with other existing wet woodland and wetland habitat within the area.

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

Monitor water levels and opportunities for compiling an on-site species list. Retain some open water on site through winter management of vegetation and or summer grazing.

5.4 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

Canal Wood is 6.11 hectares of native woodland and also includes a large area of wetland. It is situated on the tow path between Newry and Poyntzpass. There is a large stretch of boardwalk through the wetland and a number of benches. Wildflowers have been planted in the wood and there is a stone sculpture at the entrance depicting the industrial heritage of the area. There are two feature bridges which act as the access points and a stone wall feature entrance. There is a lockable noticeboard. There is an old well and a large significant ash tree with a bench around it. There is a circular path through the wetland. This wood was created as a WOYD.

As more than half the site is wetland, a large number of willow, alder etc have been planted by the WT with some oak, hazel and crab apple in the woodland section.

Significance

Canal Wood has a rich industrial heritage sitting alongside the Newry canal towpath on one boundary and the main rail line between Belfast and Dublin on the other. The towpath is very well used and the woodland is a lovely feature for cyclists and walkers to visit as they journey along. Since we completed significant site works the visitor numbers have been increasing.

This wood is notable for the very active group of volunteers (Friends of group) who maintain the paths and have held events and regular work parties here from 2011. The volunteers are connected to the canal as they are also members of the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland and regularly carry out work on the canal and its locks.

The local primary schools have been involved in the planting of the wood and have also attended woodland discovery events.

The wetland provides valuable habitat for nesting birds and migrant birdlife. There are a variety of native wildflowers and insects such as Banded Demoiselle.

The nearest village is Poyntzpass which has a population of 614. There is a primary school in the village.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities

Potential for volunteer group to take on more management
Good site for engaging with the public through small events

Constraints

Access is difficult as the towpath is pedestrian/cyclists only - the only parking is at a small car park approx. 1kilometre away

Funding

Seasonal flooding at times in the wetland area and boardwalk

Rural location

Factors Causing Change

Climate change (flooding), tree disease

Long term Objective (50 years+)

A thriving woodland acting as a main stopping point for visitors using the towpath. Increase visits from local schools and other organisations. Promote the wood as a visitor attraction. Promote the wood through Broadleaf and brand awareness activity.

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

Continue to hold small events here
Work with the Friends of volunteer group to support them in their work on site
Develop the Friends of group skills through offering volunteer training and help them recruit new members

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	2.70	Alder species	2001	High forest	Mostly wet ground/exposed site		

The whole wood is one compartment and is a typical wet woodland type (priority habitat) with old farm ditches running east to the old canal. Half the site is rush and reed beds and wet all year with the remaining western side now planted with mixed broadleaves.

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.