



Wheeldon Copse

Management Plan 2016-2021

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Wheeldon Copse
Location:	Maidens Cross, Alvanley
Grid reference:	SJ513736, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 117
Area:	7.42 hectares (18.34 acres)
Designations:	Community Forest, flint scatter remains found on site

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Wheeldon Copse lies on the eastern slope of the Frodsham Hill escarpment in North Cheshire. It is just over two miles south of the town of Frodsham and about a mile to the east of the village of Alvanley. This new woodland was planted in 2003 and sown with a native wildflower mix which gives an impressive display of colour in the late spring/early summer. Public access is available from Manley Road.

2.2 Extended Description

Wheeldon Copse is a small native broadleaved woodland created in 2003 by the Woodland Trust. Prior to planting the site was rough grazing pasture for sheep and pigs. The wood lies to the south of the town of Frodsham in an attractive area of countryside on the eastern slope of the Frodsham Hill escarpment in North Cheshire. The surrounding landscape is predominantly farmland, mainly pastures surrounded by hedgerows and some relatively large blocks of ancient woodland on the western slope of the escarpment.

The purchase of the site was in large part thanks to a legacy left by Leslie Wheeldon along with support from the Mersey Forest and other funders. It was planted with a mix of broadleaf species including oak, birch, rowan, holly, buckthorn, hawthorn and elder. This new woodland serves to extend and buffer an existing privately owned block of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) known as Alvanley Cliff. The Woodland Trust owns several other woodlands nearby including a further 54 hectares at Snidley Moor, Woodhouse Hill Wood and Frodsham Hill Wood.

The site has an easterly facing moderate slope with free draining, thin acidic sands and a substrata of sandstone which rises to the surface at one or two points across the site. The perimeter field boundaries and less disturbed ground contain remnant wildflower populations of red campion, greater knapweed and foxglove. There are some sections of hawthorn hedge with dry-stone revetment wall remaining on site.

The initial establishment of the site included deep ploughing to invert the top 75cm of soil and then sowing a mix of woodland and meadow wildflower seed from Landlife followed by planting of the trees. This technique aimed to reduce the need for herbicide spraying of competing weeds around the new trees by burying the seed bank deep enough to prevent them germinating.

Approximately 1.4 ha of the site was left as open ground for path rides for public access, clearance under the overhead electricity cables and approximately 0.3 ha left unplanted to preserve an archaeological find of flint scatter which was discovered when the site was ploughed. This is a key feature of the site along with informal public access and new native woodland.

Public access to the site is from Manley Road through two public access points which lead to a permissive grass path ride around the copse for visitors to follow. The site is quite well used by local people particularly by dog walkers.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Wheeldon Copse is located on Manley Road about a mile to the east of the village of Alvanley in North Cheshire and just over 2 miles south of Frodsham. Public access to the site is through a metal kissing gate and a pedestrian squeeze gap located on Manley Road. There is approximately 800m of informal grassy ride/ footpath around the site with some moderate slopes in places. The paths are generally dry all year due to the well drained soils.

Limited parking is available in the unsurfaced layby beside the main entrance gate on Manley Road.

There are no public toilets known in the vicinity of the wood.

For information about public transport contact Traveline on www.traveline.org.uk. There are no bus stops in the vicinity of the wood.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term intention is that Wheeldon Copse will become a mixed native broadleaved woodland with a diverse species and age composition and structure. It will be managed as high forest, primarily as a recreational and landscape feature.

The woodland will be allowed to develop by natural processes where possible and should contain an increasing volume of dead wood, both standing and fallen, which serve as important habitat for invertebrates.

Key drivers for management operations will be for public access, tree safety and future resilience of the woodland to cope with pressures from climate change, pests and diseases.

Areas of open ground will be allowed to develop into transitional habitat including scrub and woodland apart from the areas identified as path rides and the area of the scheduled monument record which will be maintained as open ground.

Public access facilities will be managed to provide safe enjoyable access for visitors to the site. The two public entrance points, signage and path rides will be suitably maintained for the existing levels of use.

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

The site provides informal public access and has approximately 800 metres of permissive grass path rides with two public access points from Manley Road. One access point through a kissing gate next to a small informal parking layby on the roadside and the second access point is in the south eastern corner of the site through a pedestrian squeeze gap in a fence. An information panel about the site is located next to the kissing gate along with a wooden bench nearby. The site is used mainly by local people and has moderate levels of usage.

Significance

This land was previously grazing pasture with no public access so it now provides new public access to woodland for the local community. It is part of the Mersey Community Forest which aims to improve the management and public access to woodland in the Merseyside and North Cheshire region.

Opportunities & Constraints

There is only very limited visitor parking on Manley Road which limits the numbers of visitors. It may be possible to link the site into the wider public footpath network but will depend on neighbouring landowners being willing to accept public access on their land.

Factors Causing Change

Damage could be caused to the path surface if the number of visitors increases significantly, however this is not currently a problem due to the low level of visitors to the site.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The site should continue to be used and appreciated by local people and public access facilities maintained to ensure the site is welcoming and safe for visitors.

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

The public entrance points, access signage and furniture and site boundaries will be maintained annually and inspected once during the plan period. The paths will be cut at least once annually as part of the EMC.

5.2 New Native Woodland

Description

Wheeldon Copse is a new native woodland created in 2003 on land previously used as pasture for sheep grazing and pigs. Initially the site was deep ploughed to a depth of 75cm and the top soil inverted to reduce soil fertility and bury the arable weed seed bank. The site was then sown with native wildflower seed and approximately 3ha planted with mixed native broadleaves including Sessile Oak, Penduculate Oak, Silver Birch, Downy Birch, Rowan, Holly, Alder buckthorn, Elder and Hawthorn. An area of 2.6ha was left for natural regeneration with a further 1.4 hectares left as open ground including path rides, clearance under power lines and areas of sensitive archaeology on site. The tree planting has established well although some beat up planting was undertaken in the areas left for natural regeneration which has been slow to establish.

Significance

The wood lies adjacent to Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and helps to buffer this from external environmental impacts. Cheshire is one of the least wooded counties in England (only 4% woodland) so this new woodland is helping to increase and extend this habitat for native flora and fauna. The technique of soil inversion by deep ploughing prior to seeding with wildflowers and planting trees was a trial to compare the benefits of this approach to more traditional methods of woodland creation requiring large herbicide spraying to control competing weeds.

Opportunities & Constraints

The new woodland is quite small and there is a requirement to keep some areas of open ground clear of tree growth (under the power lines and archaeological feature), however this adds to the biodiversity value by providing a mosaic of habitats. The site buffers an area of ASNW and provides an opportunity for species found in the ASNW to spread into the new woodland.

Factors Causing Change

Growth of trees overtime will lead to canopy closure. Rabbit damage is occurring but is only having a minor impact at present with few losses.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To create a high forest of native broadleaved species, managed as a recreational and landscape feature. The wood should have a mix of species, varied structure and age classes along with a diverse shrub layer and ground flora. The site should contain a mosaic of transitional habitats including scrub and open ground. The volume of fallen and standing deadwood will increase over time.

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

A minimal intervention approach will be adopted whilst the new woodland becomes established. The growth and health of trees will be monitored once during the plan period through the woodland condition assessment for any diseases, pests or threats.

5.3 Archaeological Feature

Description

An area of flint scatter remains was discovered in the north eastern part of the site when it was deep ploughed prior to wildflower seeding. The area was not planted and kept as open ground.

Significance

An archaeological survey was undertaken following which the area of flint scatter was designated by English Heritage and Cheshire County Council as a Scheduled Monument Record (SMR).

Opportunities & Constraints

No tree establishment (planting or natural regeneration) should be allowed in the SMR area.

Factors Causing Change

Natural succession would lead to the area developing into scrub woodland. Inappropriate management operations could cause damage to the flint scatter.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

In the long term we aim to protect the Scheduled Monument Record and ensure it remains clear of scrub and trees in line with English Heritage guidance.

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

The open ground area where the SMR is located will be cut once during each plan period to control scrub and tree establishment.

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	7.42	Mixed native broadleaves	2003	High forest	Archaeological features, Services & wayleaves, Site structure, location, natural features & vegetation	Informal Public Access, New Native Woodland	Community Forest, Other

The site has an easterly aspect with free draining thin acidic soils over sandstone. It is adjacent to a block of ancient woodland called Alvanley Cliff to the south and west with the boundary defined by post and wire fencing. The northern boundary is defined by a hedgerow which abuts grazing pasture with another hedgerow protected by post and wire fencing along the eastern boundary beside Manley Road.

6.01 hectares of the site was planted in 2003/4 with a mix of native broadleaved trees: Sessile Oak (15%), Penduculate Oak (15%), Silver Birch (35%) Downy Birch (10%), Rowan (15%), Cherry, Holly (3%) Alder buckthorn (1%), Elder (3%) and Hawthorn (3%).

Approximately 1.4 hectares was left unplanted as open ground for path rides, clearance beneath the overhead pylon and 0.3 hectare which is recorded as an archaeological record following the discovery of flint scatter during the ploughing of the site prior to planting. A native wildflower seed mix was sown prior to planting.

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2016	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.03	40	1
2021	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.03	80	2
2025	1a	Thin	6.01	17	100
2026	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.03	80	2

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.