



Tofts Wood

Management Plan 2012-2017

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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: | Tofts Wood |
| Location: | Weeley Heath, Nr Colchester, Essex |
| Grid reference: | TM141205, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 169 |
| Area: | 5.99 hectares (14.80 acres) |
| Designations: | Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance |

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Tofts Wood is a small broadleaf woodland near the village of Weeley, a few miles east of Colchester. It is typical of the area, fitting neatly in a landscape characterised by flat, low lying farmland dotted with tree-lined hedges and small, often ancient, woodlands.

2.2 Extended Description

Tofts Wood is a small 6 ha broadleaf woodland near the village of Weeley, a few miles east of Colchester. It was gifted to the Trust in 2006 and is part Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) and part Planted Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS), primarily plantation oak. It also contains some birch, sweet chestnut and some terrific patches of alder wet woodland.

Tofts Wood is typical of the area, it fits neatly in a landscape characterised by flat, low lying farmland dotted with tree-lined hedges and small, often ancient, woodlands.

Informal paths weave their way through the site and both public and management access is via a public footpath along the western side of the wood off the public highway, the Site Manager has a key to the management gate.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Although public access exists there are no formal paths or facilities on site to promote it. Public footpath (FP No 22) runs along the western boundary up the management access leading from Bentley Road.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long-term intentions are to maintain and enhance this ancient woodland habitat. Tofts Wood should remain as native broadleaf uneven-aged woodland with a varied stand structure and a diverse range of habitats. The natural decay and collapse of old trees in the wood will punch holes in the canopy, thereby increasing light levels and providing the opportunity for new natural regeneration and coppice regrowth, a totally sustainable and continuous management system.

The mature chestnut coppice will be allowed to collapse and naturally re-coppice / regenerate; and the aging oak and ash scattered throughout the wood will be left to senescence and beyond resulting in a large number of veteran trees.

The younger planted oak trees in compartment 1a will merge discretely into the surrounding ancient woodland as they mature, and will indeed compliment the existing woodland structure.

The wood should remain open to the public and maintained in line with Trust policy and site demands.

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 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Description

Attractive mixed ancient woodland. Despite a high concentration of non-native sweet chestnut, it would probably be classed as NVC W10: *Quercus robur* - *Pteridium aquilinum* - *Rubus fruticosus* woodland with a significant patch of W5: *Alnus glutinosa* - *Carex paniculata* woodland.

Significance

Ancient woodlands have been in existence for many hundreds of years and unfortunately are a declining resource. As well as being a traditional feature in the landscape they support an abundance of plants, mammals, birds, insects and fungi. It is one of the Trust's main objectives to ensure no further loss of ASNW. They take centuries to evolve and are irreplaceable.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:

Opportunity to maintain and enhance this ancient woodland and its associated habitats by encouraging native broadleaf regeneration and seeking opportunities to buffer the ancient woodland from the intensive arable farmland beyond.

Encourage adjacent landowners to carry out more sympathetic farming practices to help conserve the ancient woodland components.

Factors Causing Change

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Mixed broadleaf uneven aged woodland of varying stand structure, including areas of open and dense high forest and a mixed, multi-aged understorey. Attractive maturing woodland continuing to develop its ancient woodland characteristics and components.

Natural regeneration levels should remain sufficient to ensure sustainable continuous cover management. Leaf litter, rotting wood and natural clearings will influence such regeneration. Thriving communities of specialist woodland flora will occur throughout the wood, much of it concentrated along the stream edge and within the wet woodland habitat.

The old chestnut coppice will be allowed to collapse and naturally regenerate / re-coppice. Many of the large oak will reach senescence and beyond providing numerous veteran trees and valuable dead wood habitats.

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

Operational Objective:

Conserve and enhance the ancient woodland characteristics of Tofts Wood, primarily the mature oak trees, ancient wood banks and interesting ground flora. Retain a well structured high forest of predominantly native species through a process of minimal intervention.

Work Programme:

Annual woodland condition observations and tree safety inspections to retain legal obligations and site safety.

Ensure a contact tel number is present at the site entrance

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 | 3.42 | Oak (pedunculate) | 1975 | High forest | | | Ancient Semi Natural Woodland |
| <p>Compartment 1a mainly comprises oak planted around 1975. It is fairly well stocked and the trees are of good form (2012). Understorey consists of hazel, elder, hawthorn and a touch of holly. A dense carpet of bramble and nettle dominates the ground flora but odd patches of ferns can be found. An old earth bank surrounds the entire compartment, with ancient woodland on all sides except the arable fields to the west. A relative of the site's donor lives in the house just over the fence in the south east corner. They have retained a caravan on the site owned by the WT</p> | | | | | | | |
| 1b | 2.55 | Sweet chestnut | 1900 | High forest | | | Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance |
| <p>Compartment 1b is a fine piece of mixed broadleaf ancient woodland, once part of a larger woodland that was sliced in two by the A133 some years ago. Main species include oak and mature sweet chestnut coppice along with the odd ash, birch and aspen. A strip of alder carr runs along the wet, stream-lined northern boundary. A tremendous ancient poplar towers over the rest of the trees in the centre of the compartment. Understorey species include hazel, elder and holly with bracken, ferns (abundant where wet) and mixed natural regeneration making up the ground flora. Unimproved grassland lies to the south and arable to the north.</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.