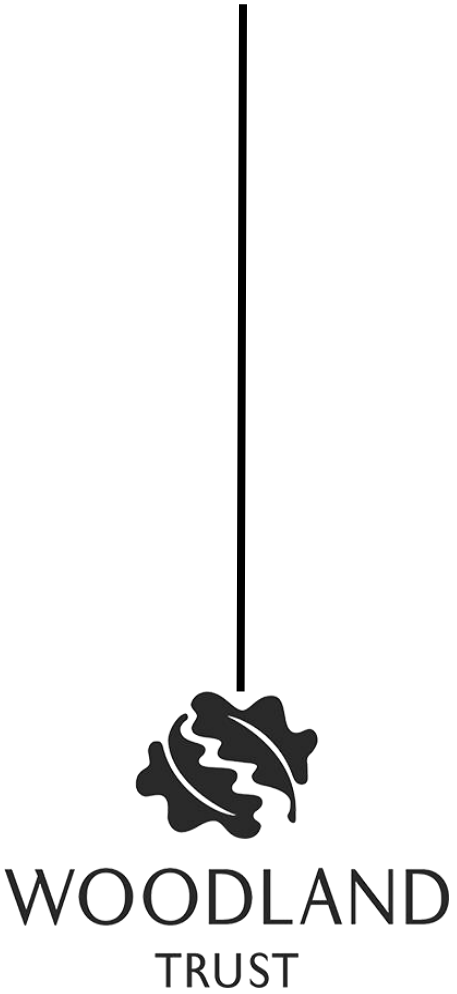
# Crowhill Valley

# (Plan period – 2020 to 2025)



# Management Plan Content Page



# Introduction to the Woodland Trust Estate

The Woodland Trust owns and cares for well over 1,250 sites covering almost 30,000 hectares (ha) across the UK. This includes more than 4,000ha of ancient semi-natural woodland and almost 4,000ha of non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites and we have created over 5,000ha of new native woodland. We also manage other valuable habitats such as flower-rich grasslands, heaths, ponds/lakes and moorland.

Our Vision is:

"A UK rich in native woods and trees for people and wildlife."

To realise all the environmental, social and economic benefits woods and trees bring to society, we:

- **Create Woodland** – championing the need to hugely increase the UK's native woodland and trees.
- **Protect Woodland** – fighting to defend native woodland, especially irreplaceable ancient woodland and veteran trees; there should be no loss of ancient woodland
- **Restore Woodland** – ensuring the sensitive restoration of all damaged ancient woodland and the re-creation of native wooded landscapes.

# Management of the Woodland Trust Estate

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.

The following principles provide an overarching framework to guide the management of all our sites but we recognise that all woods are different and that their management also needs to reflect their local landscape, history and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives.

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene in our woods when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity, safety and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.

2. We establish new native woodland for all the positive reasons set out in our Conservation Principles, preferably using natural regeneration but often by planting trees, 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. Where possible, we pro-actively engage with people to help them appreciate the value of woods and trees.

4. The long term vision for all our 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 natural and cultural heritage value of sites is taken into account in our management and in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.

7. Land and woods can generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We therefore consider the appropriateness of opportunities 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 encourage our woods to be used for 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. We maintain a network of sites for long-term monitoring and trials leading to reductions in plastics and pesticides.

10. Any activities we undertake are in line with our wider Conservation Principles, conform to sustainable forest management practices, are appropriate for the site and balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

# The Public Management Plan

This public management plan describes the site and sets out the long term aims for our management and lists the Key Features which drive our management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site – their significance is outlined together with our long, 50 years and beyond, and our short, the next 5 years, term objectives for the management and enhancement of these features. The short term objectives are complemented by an outline Work Programme for the period of this management plan aimed at delivering our management aims.

Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and we continually monitor our sites to assess the success of our management, therefore this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme.

Please either consult The Woodland Trust website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

or contact the Woodland Trust

operations@woodlandtrust.org.uk

to confirm details of the current management programme.

A short glossary of technical terms can be found at the end of the plan.

# Location and Access

Location maps and directions for how to find and access our woods, including this site, can be found by using the following link to the Woodland Trust web-site which contains information on accessible woodlands across the UK

https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/find-woods/

In Scotland access to our sites is in accordance with the Land Reform Act (of Scotland) 2003 and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

In England, Wales and NI, with the exception of designated Public Rights of Ways, all routes across our sites are permissive in nature and where we have specific access provision for horse riders and/or cyclists this will be noted in the management plan.

# The Management Plan



## 1. SITE DETAILS

**Crowhill Valley**

| | |
|---|---|
| Location: | Grampound Grid reference: SW933512 OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 204 |
| Area: | 10.70 hectares (26.44 acres) |
| External Designations: | Area of Landscape Value, Conservation Area, Great Landscape Value, Site of Special Scientific Interest |
| Internal Designations: | N/A |

## 2. SITE DESCRIPTION

Crowhill Valley lies in a narrow, steeply sided wooded valley near the upper reaches of the River Fal. It stands within the Cornish Killas National Character Area No152 which is characterised by an upper undulating plateau which is often incised by broadleaved wooded valleys dominated by internationally important western oak woodland habitat that lead to the south coast. Crowhill Valley is one of the most significant areas of Sump Alder woodland remaining in the South West and as with the surrounding woodland and valley slopes been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. It is bounded by the River Fal on the eastern side and a mill race to the west. Numerous ditches and pools are to be found in the valley bottom which remains waterlogged throughout the year and this and general ground conditions indicate a tin streaming history. The wood is dominated by stunted common alder and grey willow throughout with Sessile oak and birch on drier humps. Lichens and marsh loving plants including nationally rare species thrive in the woodland. A small open glade resulting from past agricultural activities and containing a reservoir of fen meadow species lies at the southern end of the wood is naturally inclined to colonise to alder woodland also. The stunted growth of the trees and abundant ground flora and lichens give this secluded wood an air of tranquillity and timelessness.

Access is from the hamlet of Trenowth, along a privately owned green lane then over the river Fal into the site across a concrete bridge. Because of the wet ground conditions access is only possible along a path that follows the higher drier bank of the river. The path itself is narrow, sometimes grassy but often has a bare earth surface, and undulates along the bank and throughout small wetter areas. In times of flood and high river levels the bank and consequently sometimes parts of the path can become eroded making the route more difficult to walk than the level ground present would indicate. Parking at, and public transport links to, the wood are very limited and as the wood is set in open country with only a scattered local community it is only used by a small but regular number of locals.

## 3. LONG TERM POLICY

Crowhill Valley will continue to be managed as Sump Alder woodland as agreed within a management statement with Natural England and this will help the Trust achieve its aims of protecting native woods and trees and their wildlife for the future. The wood will be managed via a low intervention continuous cover type regime to maintain and enhance the diversity and structure of the woodland; maintain the extensive sump alder woodland; maintain and where possible enhance other associated habitats such as the fen meadow, river, streams, bogs, ponds, hedges and glades; maintain and enhance the populations of rare and important plant and lichen species and enhance the semi-natural woodland by control of non-native species and in particular rhododendron and laurel present in quantity on adjacent woodland and Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed and other species that wash downstream in floods.

While the fen meadow area has been managed in agreement with Natural England to prevent succession to alder woodland the island of fen is very small and isolated and may in the future be deemed too small or requiring too much management or chemical input to make it sustainable and may be allowed to succeed to and increase the area of sump alder woodland. This will only be done following agreement to change the management statement with NE. The riverside path within the wood forms the only management access in the site it will be maintained for this purpose, however as public access is limited to a small number of regular local visitors and facilitated at an appropriate level by the 'management path', public access will not form a key feature in its own right. Because of the beauty and tranquillity of the wood the access allowed will inspire those who visit to enjoy and value the woods.

# 4. KEY FEATURES

## 4.1 f1 Wet Woodland

| **Description** |
|---|
| Alder sump woodland dominated by alder and grey willow and supporting a rich ground flora, designated a SSSI in 1987. With Oak and Birch on drier areas it supports bilberry, great woodrush, wood millet, wood sorrel, wood sage, wood anemone, cow wheat and bluebell. The sump area lacks an understory with only alder and willow regeneration and coppice from fallen and collapsed old trees. Here the ground flora is very rich with hemlock water-dropwort, opposite leaved golden saxifrage, meadow sweet, marsh speedwell, water figwort, common valerian, yellow pimpernel, yellow flag and marsh violet, with the nationally important Cornish moneywort and dense stands of water loving ferns and particularly the Royal Fern. The small pools support species such as Sphagnum species, marsh cinquefoil and broadleaved pondweed. In addition the woodland supports important lichens including seven ancient woodland indicators and the nationally rare Parmelia endochlora and offers habitats and feeding areas for many bird and mammals as well as several bat species which appear to roost in local mine adits. An area of wet fen meadow at the southern end of the wood has a lush sward with soft rush; hemlock water-dropwort and meadow sweet would succeed to alder woodland but is prevented from doing that by management to retain the fen characteristics. Rhododendron was prolific in surrounding woodland areas but was mostly cleared as part of a plant health operation to remove a primary host for Phytophthora ramorum. Some remains in isolated clumps especially to the east, but the threat of spread to Crowhill Valley is reduced. However the threat still remains for rhododendron, to seed in and for Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and other species to spread downstream during flood conditions |
| **Significance** |
| Crowhill Valley forms one of the largest and hence most important areas of wet woodland habitat in the SW of England. It helps fulfil the national, regional and local HAP targets for this woodland type and as such helps the Trust achieve its aims of protecting native woods and trees and their wildlife for the future and because of the beauty and tranquillity of the wood the access allowed will inspire those who visit to enjoy and value the woods |
| **Opportunities & Constraints** |
| |
| **Factors Causing Change** |
| Invasive non-native species,<br>Natural Succession To Alder within the fen meadow area,<br>Raising or Lowering of water table levels due to adjacent land drainage, siltation or blockage of river. |
| **Long term Objective (50 years+)** |
| A healthy and functioning semi-natural sump alder wet woodland habitat with many associated habitats (riparian zones, fen areas, deadwood, standing water and ephemeral ponds, hedges, ancient and veteran trees) that will allow healthy populations of its rare plant and lichen species to develop while continuing to offer limited public access along management routes. |

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

A healthy native species wet woodland with wide range of age, appropriate species, and structure diversity that meets favourable condition requirements for the SSSI, helps enhance the broadleaf woodland habitat in the area and the wet woodland habitat in the region and offers limited access to the local community.

Manage the sump woodland with minimal intervention.
Monitor the site for and control establishing non-native invasive species. Cut and stump treat established rhododendron and/or laurel, but pull seedlings to reduce use of chemicals. Treat Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and variegated archangel etc. encroaching onto site as required.
Maintain lower canopy height in the alder around the edges of the fen meadow area to retain adequate light levels for the ground flora, possibly on 7-10 year cycle as appropriate.
Monitor the effects of the alder coppice and the encroaching alder during the period of this plan to ascertain whether the fen meadow is sustainable for the future or whether it should be left to colonise to alder woodland
Management of fen area by annual cutting of sward after flowering season to maintain species richness and collection of arisings to reduce soil enrichment.
Annually maintain the riverside path at appropriate levels to allow management access and low level local public access requirements by removing fallen trees, redefining eroded path sections etc.
Manage sides and surface of management access track (usually biennially) from highway to bridge sufficiently to allow our access, as not normally done by owner.
Monitor trees that fall into the river. Consider removal where they may cause blockages or bank erosion, but retain fallen trees where they may provide a system for slowing down flood water movement and act to maintain the values of the wood as a 'flood plain' and to maintain appropriate water table levels across the area.
Allow and or undertake surveys of the wood as applicable.

## 4.2 f2 Informal Public Access

**Description**

A relatively small wood, situated in an isolated rural area approximately 1.5 miles east of Grampound Road and 2miles north of Grampound which lies on the A390 between St Austell and Truro and used almost solely by the a few members of the local community. Access can be gained via narrow lanes running from the village of Grampound past the hamlet of Trenowth, along a privately owned green lane, under the viaduct carrying the railway line from St Austell to Truro and then over a bridge across the River Fal that rises nearby. The only parking is in wider places located along adjacent lanes however even here widths are restricted and careless parking might cause obstructions. The entrance to the wood remains secured by a two gate system (one locked and the other smaller gate available for pedestrian access) to prevent unauthorised vehicular access onto the bridge and into the wet woodland. Access within the wood is restricted to a narrow uneven path, sometimes grassy but often of muddy bare earth surface that undulates along the riverside bank and through small boggy areas. Away from the path the wood is very wet, with deep boggy and swampy conditions that cannot be walked through. At the northern end of the wood the path exits into privately owned woodland over a small low hedge. This path appears to have been created over many years by local walkers, but there appears to be no authorised permissive agreement to do so and therefore the Trust does not promote any access beyond its boundary. The path sometimes becomes eroded by floods and high river levels making the route more difficult to walk until usage has redefined the path. As a result of the limited access combined with the informal access

points and difficulty in parking and reaching the wood it is not really suitable for less-abled people or those travelling from afar.

**Significance**

The wood's small size and isolated location provides very limited public access benefit beyond local residents and neighbours. However it never the less helps the Trust achieve its aim of inspiring people to enjoy and value woods

**Opportunities & Constraints**

Limited access due to the wood's isolated location and very wet conditions beyond the single path.
The wood's liability to flooding during wet weather.
Access being limited to a single 'out and back' path as no access permitted beyond the northern end of the wood

**Factors Causing Change**

Invasive non-native species,
Raising or Lowering of water table levels due to adjacent land drainage, siltation or blockage of river causing path to erode or become very muddy
Reliance on management access track across third party land being maintained and passable.

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

An attractive and serviceable 'out and back' route along the river bank through the woodland that provides views and vistas of the river, wet woodland and woodland beyond and encourages the appreciation of the woodland both on the site and in the adjacent valley. The access route will be managed to maintain the current level of demand by the local community which will help create better ground flora populations on adjacent raised and drier ground and encourage a more conservationally and aesthetically valuable woodland.

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

Annually manage access gates, signs and furniture and replace on estimated 10year cycle as appearance and ease of use deteriorates
Annually maintain the riverside path at appropriate levels to allow management access and low level local public access requirements by removing fallen trees, redefining eroded path sections etc.
Manage sides and surface of management access track (usually biennially) from highway to bridge sufficiently to allow our access, as not normally done by owner.

## APPENDIX 1 : COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

| Cpt No. | Area (ha) | Main Species | Year | Management Regime | Major Management Constraints | Designations |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1a | 10.8 | Alder species | 1940 | Min-intervention | Gullies/Deep Valleys/Uneven/Rocky ground, Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, Site structure, location, natural features & vegetation | Area of Landscape Value, Conservation Area, Great Landscape Value, Site of Special Scientific Interest |
| Crowhill Valley is one of the largest areas of Alder Sump woodland in Southwest England and as such is designated SSSI. It supports a woodland complex of ancient broadleaved species dominated by Sessile Oak and birch on drier areas and Alder and willow species on the wet alluvial soils across most of the valley bottom. On drier land and banks hazel, rowan and holly form the understory with the ground flora being dominated by bilberry, great woodrush, wood millet, wood sorrel, wood sage, wood anemone, and bluebell. The sump area lacks an understory with only alder and willow regeneration and coppice from fallen and collapsed old trees. However the ground flora is very rich with hemlock water-dropwort, opposite leaved golden saxifrage, meadow sweet, marsh speedwell, water figwort, common valerian, yellow pimpernel, yellow flag and marsh violet, with the nationally important Cornish moneywort and dense stands of water loving ferns and particularly the Royal Fern. The small pools support species such as Sphagnum species, marsh cinquefoil and broadleaved pondweed. In addition the woodland supports important lichens including seven ancient woodland indicators and the nationally rare Parmelia endochlora and offers habitats and feeding areas for many bird and mammals as well as several bat spp. An area of wet fen meadow at the southern end of the wood, with soft rush, hemlock water-dropwort, meadow sweet is succeeding to alder woodland. Limited access is via a narrow track from the nearby road and over a concrete bridge, which crosses the river Fal. | | | | | | |

## 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.

**Windblow/Windthrow**
Trees or groups of trees blown over (usually uprooted) by strong winds and gales.