



# Bithams Woods

## Management Plan 2020-2025

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk) or contact the Woodland Trust ([wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto: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.

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## 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](http://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.

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## 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

<b>Site name:</b>	Bithams Woods
<b>Location:</b>	Chew Magna
<b>Grid reference:</b>	ST560642, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 172
<b>Area:</b>	6.56 hectares (16.21 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Avon County Site of Wildlife importance, Community Forest, Green Belt

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

## 2.1 Summary Description

Bithams Wood is a 6.56 Ha ancient semi-natural broadleaf woodland in Chew Magna in the Chew Valley outside Bristol. The site is part of The Bristol, Avon Valleys and Ridges National Character Area 118 (NCA). It is situated on a gentle south facing slope, surrounded by grassland fields (the one to the north is a County Wildlife Site) with a strip of ASNW woodland not in Trust ownership stretching along the eastern streamside boundary. Although in a rural location, the woodland is isolated, and is the only recorded area of ASNW within a 6 mile radius.

The site conforms to NVC type W8 ash-maple woodland, but is dominated by planted (circa 1940) even aged oak, some beech with secondary ash and ash coppice. Younger trees are predominantly ash with some hazel, holly and hawthorn understorey. The ground flora is rich with many ancient woodland specialists including woodruff, yellow archangel, moschatel, spotted orchid, twayblade, dog's mercury.

Parts of the wood show a history of coppice management. Some turkey oak was removed from the canopy in the 1990's and little regeneration of this species has been found since. Ash regeneration occurs throughout the wood in gaps where there is sufficient light due to failed canopy trees. Deadwood is abundant across the site, both standing and fallen.

The woodland is surrounded by grazed pasture of varying intensity. Stock historically gained access to the woodland through dilapidated fencing, but stock-proof boundary fences were installed in 2016. During the previous plan period both cattle and sheep have been identified as having been present from the neighbouring farmland. The wood is mixed broadleaf of high forest structure with stored coppice. The ground flora is rich with many AW indicators under a closed canopy

The wood is accessed from a narrow public road known as Littleton Lane by crossing two fields not in WT ownership. A public footpath crosses the fields cutting through the western corner of the wood for approx. 30m. Due to its inaccessibility the wood is not well used by the public and no paths, other than the public footpath, exist within the wood. There is no provision for internal management access, but a field gate on the southern boundary exists with remnant woodland tracks still visible.

## 2.2 Extended Description

Bithams Wood is a 6.56 Ha ancient semi-natural broadleaf woodland in Chew Magna in the Chew Valley outside Bristol. The site is part of The Bristol, Avon Valleys and Ridges National Character Area 118 (NCA). It is situated on a gentle south facing slope, surrounded by grassland fields (the one to the north is a County Wildlife Site) with a strip of ASNW woodland not in Trust ownership stretching along the eastern streamside boundary. Although in a rural location, the woodland is isolated, and is the only recorded area of ASNW within a 6 mile radius.

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## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

This site is isolated and difficult to reach. The nearest road is a minor country lane which does not offer the possibility of parking.

Public access is from the highway to the south walking along the footpath which crosses two fields before reaching the site, this footpath passes through two kissing gates and is unsurfaced. Access into the wood crosses over a stile to exit at the north. For these reasons the site is not well used by the public.

There are no formal tracks within the wood, and usage is not high enough to establish informal ones.

The nearest public toilets are at Chew Stoke, which is 2.5km away by road or footpath.

The nearest bus stop is at Portbridge Crossroads on Pagans Hill. This bus stop is served by buses from Bristol to Blagdon. From here walk eastbound along a quiet country lane without pavements until reaching the kissing gate to allow access along the footpath northwards over the grass fields. Total distance is 1km up a steady gradient. (info from Travel line website on June 2013)

### 3.2 Access / Walks



## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Bithams Wood will continue to develop as a mature broadleaved high forest of locally native species, appropriate to the local landscape, constituting a varied age, size and species structure with populations of woody shrubs and woodland ground flora. The site will allow for natural breaks in the canopy to develop, and allow the levels of fallen and standing deadwood to increase with natural factors such as tree disease, storm events or browsing by deer, shaping and changing the character of the wood over time. Bithams Wood sits in a landscape with little ASNW, but good hedgerow connectivity, permeable to biodiversity.

Bithams Wood will remain open to informal public access via the public footpath which will be maintained. However, due to the very small numbers of users public access this does not merit key feature status. The Trusts duty of care to neighbours and visitors will be addressed through ongoing tree safety, tree health, and site risk assessment regimes, which may require remedial works as required.

## 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.

## 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	6.56	Oak (pedunculate)	1940	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Community Forest, Green Belt

Ancient semi-natural broadleaf woodland, NVC type W8 ash-maple. Planted (circa 1940) with even aged oak, some beech, and approx. 40yo secondary ash. Younger trees are predominantly ash with hazel, holly and hawthorn. Ground flora includes at least 11 AW indicator species include sweet woodruff, yellow archangel, primrose, moschatel, spotted orchid, twayblade, and dog's mercury.

The woodland has a gentle south-easterly aspect, with an old earth bank visible within the wood. The soil is well drained, and a stream runs along the eastern boundary from NE to South within a large, but gentle ravine.

## 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.