

Beechland Mill Wood

(Plan period – 2022 to 2027)



WOODLAND
TRUST

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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

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GLOSSARY

1. SITE DETAILS

Beechland Mill Wood

Location:	Newick	Grid	reference:	TQ412204	OS	1:50,000	Sheet	No.	198
Area:	4.81 hectares (11.89 acres)								
External Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland								
Internal Designations:	N/A								

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

Beechland Mill Wood is situated 500m south of the village of Newick, in East Sussex. The wood was acquired by the Woodland Trust in three sections: a meadow donated in 1981 and planted in 1982 (now Cpt 1c); Mill Wood purchased in 1988 (now Cpt 1a); the north-eastern section donated in 1997 (now Cpt 1b). The acquisitions were made possible by members of the Wallinger family of Newick. The whole wood is known as Beechland Mill Wood at the request of the donors.

The wood occupies part of the southern side of a small east-west valley with a small seasonal stream and is mainly surrounded by semi-improved grassland. The wood is linked to other small woods and shaws by wide hedgerows typical of the Low Weald National Character Area (NCA) of East Sussex, an area of low lying, mainly pastoral agriculture and woodland on heavy clay soils. Woodland accounts for 16% of this landscape with almost half being ancient (defined as existing since at least 1600AD). The site is largely on Tunbridge Wells Sand and Wadhurst Clay which gives rise to some wet soils prone to waterlogging.

Mill Wood is mostly ancient semi-natural woodland with mature oak over a hazel understorey. There are good displays of bluebells in the spring. The area at the western end has a series of pits/ponds, dams and spillways associated with its previous industrial use. Along the stream alder, willow and ash are more dominant.

The north-eastern section of the wood along the valley bottom and containing the stream is partly secondary woodland although it appears to be long established. Tree species include oak, ash and birch with alder, hazel and willow along the stream. The flora includes woodland specialist plants such as dog's mercury, bluebell, wood anemone and enchanter's nightshade. There is a further pond bay in this part of the wood.

In the south-east, the land was formerly a rough, sloping meadow. In 1982 it was planted with widely-spaced broadleaved trees (native and non-native) which have now closed canopy. Species include oak, ash, wild cherry and small-leaved lime.

Ash dieback due to the fungus *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* has been present on the site since at least 2017 with annual assessments being undertaken and subsequent felling of trees with advanced symptoms that are within falling distance of the paths.

The wood can be accessed by three public footpaths from the village and one from the south and is well-used by local people. It currently hosts Forest School sessions for pupils from Newick primary school. Local footpath volunteer group Newick Rootz undertake occasional tasks in the wood including an annual hedgelaying session

3. LONG TERM POLICY

Beechland Mill Wood is characteristic of many unmanaged ancient and recent woods in Sussex. The existing variety of structure and species can be maintained and improved in the long term largely by a policy of minimum intervention, allowing the processes of natural succession to take place, i.e. with no silvicultural operations such as coppicing or thinning. Over time the canopy of oak in Mill Wood (Cpt 1a) will change as mature oaks die or are blown over, creating gaps for natural regeneration of species such as birch, willow, hornbeam and hazel. Ash may be reduced to a very minor component of the wood due to disease. Along the stream, gaps may also be created by the collapse of shorter-lived species such as willow and alder. These processes will eventually lead to a more diverse age structure across the site. The small area of planted trees (Cpt 1c) will be managed for safety reasons while it is used by the Forest School.

Some periodic management will be carried out along main rides and paths where it will benefit public access as well as adding a minor element to the structural diversity of the wood. Dead or dying trees will only be felled if they pose a safety risk, otherwise they will be left to provide a valuable deadwood habitat.

The wood will continue to be a valued amenity for the village of Newick, providing low-key access (as part of the wider landscape) and a location for activities such as Forest School and volunteering.

4. KEY FEATURES

4.1 f1 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Description

This key feature covers the whole wood although not all of it is ancient in origin. Mill Wood (Cpt 1a) is mostly ancient semi-natural woodland of National Vegetation Classification (NVC) W10a: oak/bracken/bramble, typical subcommunity. It has a canopy predominantly of pedunculate oak (100 years+ old) over a sparse hazel understorey. Along the stream the main species are alder, goat willow and hazel. Also present as part of the understorey and as occasional canopy trees are wild cherry, ash, sweet chestnut, holly, silver birch, hornbeam, crab apple, hawthorn and beech. Along the southern edge of the wood there is much evidence of damage from the 1987 storm. The wood has good displays of spring flowers, particularly bluebells with wood anemone, dogs mercury and Ribes spp.

The area of Cpt 1b along the stream also has ancient woodland characteristics with oak (approx 70 years old), hazel, alder, willow, beech and field maple. Ground flora includes bluebell, wood anemone, wood sorrel along with bramble and nettle.

The maturing planted area of Cpt 1c has an intimate mix of tree species including ash, oak, small-leaved lime and wild cherry along with hawthorn, crab apple and the occasional southern beech (*Nothofagus* spp). Some of the ground is bare of flora but bluebells are colonising from surrounding areas. Bramble is becoming dominant in areas where the ash canopy is declining.

As well as the earthworks relating to the previous industrial use of part of the site, there are various woodbanks within and around the site probably relating to medieval land divisions.

Significance

Woodland is the most extensive semi-natural habitat in Sussex. Much of this woodland is ancient in origin and of intrinsically high nature conservation value. Beechland Mill Wood forms part of an extensive network of wildlife habitats, connecting with shaws, hedgerows, parkland and along the stream to the river Ouse beyond. The wood is known locally for its show of bluebells in spring.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: poor access across neighbouring farmland, slopes, earthworks and heavy clay soils prevent silvicultural management.

Factors Causing Change
Squirrel damage. Loss of species due to disease eg ash.
Long term Objective (50 years+)
<p>The semi-natural areas of the site will continue to develop by natural processes. In the long-term this will include the windthrow or death of large canopy trees leading to the formation of small temporary gaps in the canopy. These will then regenerate with a mixture of trees likely to include birch, hazel and alder initially and oak in the longer term.</p> <p>Ground flora species will also benefit from the change in light conditions although dense bramble may inhibit species such as bluebell. The accumulation of coarse woody debris will improve the biodiversity of the site significantly. Holly may become more dominant in the understorey at the expense of hazel. It is likely that ash will mostly be lost to disease although the occasional disease-tolerant tree may survive.</p> <p>The planted area may lose some of its dominant species such as ash and cherry to disease. Replacement species from natural regeneration may include alder and birch.</p>
Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)
<p>During the 5-year plan period (2022-27) there will be no silvicultural interventions in the wood. Management will be focused on maintaining rides and paths throughout the site (including laying the northern boundary hedge) and maintaining some of Cpt 1c for safety to enable the Forest School to have a semi-permanent site for appropriate activities within the wood.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coppice shrub species on ride edges along approx. 500m during the plan period. - Annual Zone B tree safety inspection/ash dieback assessment. - Woodland Condition Assessment prior to next plan review (spring 2027).

4.2 f2 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description
<p>The wood is approx 500m south of Newick (population approx 2500). It can be reached via various public footpaths from Allington and Church Roads with access points at the north-east, north and north-west points of the wood. Two of these footpaths cross the wood and continue to the south to join Cornwell's Bank. All entrance points are pedestrian only, have low-key WT signage and include stiles and kissing gates. To the west the footpath network links to the Sussex Ouse Valley Way.</p> <p>Within the locality there is other public access land at Chailey Common (ESCC), Sheffield Park (NT) and Park Wood (FC). Other Woodland Trust sites in the area are Costells Wood (Scaynes Hill, 5 miles) and Views and Lake Woods (Uckfield, approx 5 miles).</p> <p>Within the site there is a network of paths (approx 1000m) giving access to much of the wood. The stream is crossed by 4 footbridges. The paths become muddy after wet weather and alternative routes are often made by walkers.</p> <p>The site is well used by local people, mainly for dog walking (WT access category B: 5 - 15 people using one entrance per day). In addition the wood currently hosts Forest School sessions for Newick CE Primary School. Local footpath volunteer group Newick Rootz undertake occasional tasks within the wood to help maintain and improve the rights of way and also participate in an annual hedgelaying day.</p>
Significance
<p>Beechland Mill is a small but attractive ancient woodland mainly enjoyed by the people of Newick. It is well connected to the village and the wider landscape by a network of public footpaths.</p>
Opportunities & Constraints
<p>Constraints: access on foot only, across fields, limits access by less-abled people.</p>
Factors Causing Change
<p>House building in the village and nearby will lead to an increase in visitor numbers which may be detrimental to sensitive aspects of the woodland habitat such as ground flora.</p>
Long term Objective (50 years+)
<p>The wood will continue to be well used and appreciated by local people. There will continue to be opportunities for the community to be engaged with the site and its management via volunteering, Forest School or informally by activities such as litter-picking and reporting.</p> <p>The provision of signage, infrastructure and path maintenance will be in keeping with the level of use and will not detract from the rural surroundings. Likely increases in visitor numbers and their effect on the ancient woodland habitat will need to be monitored to ensure there is minimal impact.</p>

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

The wood will be maintained in a safe condition, suitable for the level of use, with annual inspections of infrastructure. There will be opportunities for community engagement via Newick Rootz volunteer group and Forest School (for as long as these continue under their own arrangements).

- Path maintenance by strimming (1000m) as required.
- Annual infrastructure inspection: signs; bridges; steps; stile; gates.
- Annual tree safety inspection including Forest School area in Cpt 1c.
- Annual hedgelaying event with Newick Rootz (Jan-Mar).
- Woodland Condition Assessment prior to next plan review (spring 2072) will include human impacts on the woods ecology.

5. WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
2022	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing pot-holes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc,	July
2022	WMM - Ride Management	Works associated with the management of existing rides/open areas for biodiversity - ride edge coppicing and thinning programmes, ditch works	July
2024	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing pot-holes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc,	July
2026	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing pot-holes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc,	July

APPENDIX 1 : COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
1a	2.58	Oak (pedunculate)	1900	Min-intervention	Archaeological features, No/poor vehicular access to the site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland
<p>Mill Wood. Ancient semi-natural woodland (NVC W10a). Predominantly P1900 oak over hazel. Other species include hornbeam, wild cherry, beech, sweet chestnut, yew, crab, holly and hawthorn. Ground flora is dominated by bluebell with wood anemone, dogs mercury and Ribes spp. A small stream runs through the northern part of the Subcpt. The western end includes a water-filled depression and various earth structures that appear to relate to historic water management (pond, bay and spillway). The northern boundary of this Subcpt is a hazel hedge that has been laid in sections over several years, starting in 2012.</p>						
1b	1.42	Oak (pedunculate)	1935	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site	
<p>Part ancient semi-natural and part secondary but long established broadleaved woodland. Includes a small but important area of wet woodland along the stream with tree species including alder, birch, willow, hazel, pedunculate oak, elder, ash and birch. There is a small area of pure hazel coppice immediately to the east of the public footpath. Ground flora includes bluebell, wood anemone, lesser celandine, dogs mercury, wood sorrel, bramble and nettle.</p>						
1c	0.8	Mixed broadleaves	1982	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access within the site	
<p>Secondary woodland. P82 mixed broadleaved plantation. Species include oak, ash, wild cherry, small-leaved lime, field maple, crab, hawthorn and southern beech. Ground flora includes bluebell colonising from area to N and old hedge/shaw forming southern boundary with neighbouring farmland.</p>						

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.

Registered Office:

The Woodland Trust, Kempton Way, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 6LL.

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