

# Rushlye Wood

(Plan period – 2022 to 2027)



WOODLAND  
TRUST

# Management Plan Content Page

Introduction to the Woodland Trust Estate

Management of the Woodland Trust Estate

The Public Management Plan

Location and Access

## 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](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.

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](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk)

or contact the Woodland Trust

[operations@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto: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
2. Site Description
3. Long Term Policy
4. Key Features
  - 4.1 f1 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland
  - 4.2 f2 Connecting People with woods & trees
5. Work Programme

Appendix 1 : Compartment Descriptions

GLOSSARY

## 1. SITE DETAILS

### Rushlye Wood

Location:	Bells Yew Green, Frant Grid reference: TQ609364 OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 188
Area:	4.38 hectares (10.82 acres)
External Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Tree Preservation Order
Internal Designations:	N/A

## 2. SITE DESCRIPTION

Rushlye Wood is small ancient semi-natural woodland on the edge of the village of Bells Yew Green, near Tunbridge Wells, in the East Sussex part of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Natural Character Area (NCA). The NCA is characterised by east-west sandstone ridges and valleys covered by a mixture of fields, small woodlands and farmsteads connected by historic routeways. Woodland accounts for 26% of the NCA with the majority being ancient (defined as existing since at least 1600AD). The wood was acquired by the Woodland Trust from a private landowner in 1988. Previously it had been part of the Camden Estate.

Up until the late 1970s the wood contained many mature trees, both conifer and broadleaved. Most of these trees were illegally felled and extracted in 1979 leaving the wood in very poor condition. The mature trees that were left standing around the western and southern boundary and in the roadside strip following this felling were protected by Tree Preservation Orders in 1980 and 1984.

Subsequently the understorey of mainly sweet chestnut coppice has re-grown and birch regeneration has filled many of the gaps created by the felling. In addition the central part of the main wood and the roadside strip were planted with native broadleaves in 1991. The poor condition of the wood was exacerbated by the presence of invasive and ecologically-damaging cherry laurel, *Rhododendron ponticum* and *Lonicera nitida* (shrub honeysuckle). These species have been cleared and subsequent re-growth controlled with herbicide. Ground flora includes extensive bluebell as well as wood anemone, yellow pimpernel, honeysuckle and ferns as well as much bramble and bracken.

The wood is reached from Bells Yew Green cricket field across which there is public and management access by permission of the Camden Estate (via their agents, Cluttons). There is a good network of rides within the main wood which is mainly used by local dog-walkers.

### 3. LONG TERM POLICY

The wood will largely be left to develop by natural processes. The small size of the wood with its predominantly young tree stock and poor management access largely excludes a policy of active silvicultural intervention. The wood will be kept free of any damaging invasive non-native species such as rhododendron and cherry laurel. The ride network will require periodic maintenance to keep the wood accessible by visitors. Where safe to do so, standing deadwood will be retained.

Over time some of the remaining mature canopy trees, particularly oak, will develop veteran characteristics that will support important populations of invertebrates, fungi, birds and mammals associated with very old trees. Tree diseases may alter the species composition of the wood, reducing the current dominance of sweet chestnut.

Low-level public access will continue with appropriate maintenance of the ride network. It is not anticipated that visitor numbers will increase significantly and visitors will still largely be residents of Bells Yew Green, accessing the site on foot.

## 4. KEY FEATURES

### 4.1 f1 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

#### Description

Rushlye Wood is an ancient woodland which is now recovering to a semi-natural condition following a period of commercial timber management and exploitation and a subsequent invasion by ecologically-damaging species such as cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), *Rhododendron ponticum* and *Lonicera nitida*. These species have now largely been eradicated. There are several large sections of timber left from this period which now add to the decaying wood component of the site.

The woodland is classed as NVC W10a (oak/bracken/bramble, typical subcommunity) on acidic, seasonally-waterlogged soils. The dominant tree species is coppiced sweet chestnut with abundant birch. Semi-mature oak, beech and sweet chestnut are restricted to the western part of the wood. Other species include crab apple, yew, holly, rowan, hawthorn, broom and hazel. Much of the chestnut coppice is in very poor condition, suffering from ink disease (*Phytophthora* spp) and subsequent windblow.

The ground flora includes abundant bramble, bracken and honeysuckle and has good displays of bluebells and wood anemones. There is a network of grassy rides throughout the wood.

The roadside strip (Cpt 1b) is secondary woodland and contains mature oak, beech, Douglas fir and Scots pine with birch and holly.

#### Significance

Ancient woodland now occupies only 2% of land in the UK. It is home to more threatened species than any other habitat in the UK. Rushlye Wood is within the High Weald area of ancient woodland concentration.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: small site with poor management access; gas pipeline.

#### Factors Causing Change

Natural succession to high forest.

Squirrel and deer damage.

Invasive holly.

Tree disease: ink disease in sweet chestnut.

Decline in mature trees along SE boundary due to recent developments on the adjoining cricket ground (raised ground level/trenching).



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

The wood should continue to develop its semi-natural characteristics with long-lived mature trees such as oak and sweet chestnut beginning to develop veteran tree characteristics. Unmanaged coppice and maturing birch will collapse in places to create gaps for subsequent tree regeneration. Species such as birch and holly should continue to thrive but sweet chestnut may become much less dominant due to disease.

Ground flora associated with ancient woodland such as bluebells and wood anemones should continue to spread without being threatened by invasive species such as laurel, rhododendron and Lonicera and to a lesser extent holly. The rides will be well-defined providing some open canopy across the site.

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

During the plan period the wood will be managed as necessary to maintain the ride network, ensure invasive species are controlled and deal with hazardous trees.

- Annual Zone A tree safety survey (alternating summer and autumn).
- Woodland condition assessment to inform management plan review including presence of invasives, tree disease, deer and squirrel impacts etc. (Spring 2027).

## 4.2 f2 Connecting People with woods & trees

<b>Description</b>
<p>The main part of the wood can be accessed from Cricketers Close, Bells Yew Green, via the western edge of the cricket field. This access has been permitted by the Executors of Lord Camden via their agents RH and RW Clutton (East Grinstead).</p> <p>There is a squeeze gap leading into the wood and onto a network of unsurfaced rides throughout the site. These rides are maintained biennially and can be wet and muddy in places. The wood is mainly used by local dog walkers from the adjoining village. It has a WT access category C: low usage (fewer than 5 visitors per day) with maintained paths.</p>
<b>Significance</b>
<p>This is a significant area of amenity land on the edge of a small village.</p>
<b>Opportunities &amp; Constraints</b>
<p>Constraints: permissive public access to the site is only at the discretion of Bayham Estate Land Agents; no parking nearby.</p> <p>Opportunities: to provide low-key public access to woodland in an area of largely privately owned woodland.</p>
<b>Factors Causing Change</b>
<b>Long term Objective (50 years+)</b>
<p>The site will continue to be used and enjoyed by the local population. The entrance will have appropriate access infrastructure and signage in keeping with its setting and low-key use. A significant increase in visitor numbers is not anticipated.</p>
<b>Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)</b>
<p>The ride network will be maintained as necessary to permit continued safe access.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Biennial strimming of ride edges: 2022; 2024; 2026.</li><li>- Biennial Zone B tree safety survey. Due: summer 2022; 2024; 2026.</li><li>- Assessment of access infrastructure and signage to inform next management plan review (2027).</li></ul>

---

## 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
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	4.02	Sweet chestnut	1980	Min-intervention	Services & wayleaves	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Tree Preservation Order
<p>A small isolated ASNW - NVC W10a. Poor quality sweet chestnut coppice (approx 30 years old) with naturally regenerated birch. Some mature oak and beech remain mainly on the western side. P91 restocking (oak, wild cherry, beech) in centre of wood. Other tree species include beech, rowan, holly and aspen. Ground flora includes bramble, bracken, honeysuckle, bluebell and wood anemone. The whole site formerly had extensive areas of invasive cherry laurel and Rhododendron ponticum which have now been cleared. The wood is surrounded by a mixture of farmland, housing, light industry and a cricket ground.</p>						
1b	0.3	Mixed broadleaves	1900	Min-intervention	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Tree Preservation Order
<p>A strip of mixed woodland between Bells Yew Green cricket ground and Hawkenbury Road. It contains some mature trees including birch, oak, beech, sweet chestnut, Douglas fir and Scots pine. There is an understorey of planted and naturally regenerated trees including wild cherry, rowan, oak, beech, hazel, elder and ash. Ground flora is dominated by bracken and bramble.</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.**

The Woodland Trust is a charity registered in England and Wales no. 294344 and in Scotland no. SC038885. A non-profit making company limited by guarantee. Registered in England no. 1982873. The Woodland Trust logo is a registered trademark.