

Mill Field Wood

(Plan period – 2024 to 2029)



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

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
2. Site Description
3. Long Term Policy
4. Key Features
 - 4.1 f1 Informal Public Access
 - 4.2 f2 Secondary Woodland
 - 4.3 f3 Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat
5. Work Programme

Appendix 1 : Compartment Descriptions

GLOSSARY

1. SITE DETAILS

Mill Field Wood

Location:	Fleckney	Grid	reference:	SP657935	OS	1:50,000	Sheet	No.	141
Area:	7.76 hectares (19.18 acres)								
External Designations:	No designations for this site, Site of Special Scientific Interest								
Internal Designations:	Tree For All Site, Woods on Your Doorstep								

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

Mill Field Wood lies on the rising ground on the east side of the Grand Union Canal and is 1 kilometre from the village of Fleckney and two kilometres from Kibworth. The woodland was acquired in 2000 and established as part of the Woodland Trust's 'Woods on your Doorstep' project, which was supported by the Millennium Commission, Forestry Commission and the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trust.

The site is on west-facing gently rising former agricultural field that was land bounded by mature hedgerows containing a number of mature ash trees. The original design for Mill Field Wood sought to enhance the local landscape by creating new native woodland in an area that is easily accessible by people from nearby towns and villages and which is otherwise predominantly agricultural land. The site is connected to well-used footpaths and bridleway along the canal and between Fleckney and Kibworth.

Species choice was a balance between native broadleaf species growing in the vicinity and also a reflection of the lower portion of the site's rather wet soil conditions. In this area of stagno-gley soils a higher proportion of species such as alder and willow have been added to the mix.

All trees were planted at a density of 2250 trees per hectare at 2 metre by 2.2 metre spacing, with the woodland establishing well and developing into a dense young native woodland plantation. When Mill Field was planted an area of approximately 1 hectare at the lower end of sub-compartment 1a, and known as "Wedwood" sponsored and planted by a local couple for their Wedding Anniversary when the property was first planted.

There is a spur of land situated at the southern end of the site which was created by spoil from the construction of the Grand Union Canal in the 18th century has been designated as part of the Grand Union Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest and consequently retained as meadow. This area is floristically rich and in addition contains a number of anthills of the yellow meadow ant (*Iasius flavous*) species.

Key features for this site are Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland and Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat.

3. LONG TERM POLICY

The long-term intention at Mill Field Wood will be to increase the structural and habitat diversity over the whole 7.76ha. This will be achieved by breaking up the even aged plantation, whilst mitigating the impact of ash dieback, and promoting the development of the other planted native tree species. Eventually creating a diverse age and species structure with abundant natural regeneration and standing and laying deadwood habitat which will be done through retaining areas of dead ash where they do not pose a hazard to the public.

The open ground habitat, will be retained and managed as an important ecological feature in recognition of its SSSI status and floristic diversity.

A good standard of access provision will be maintained at Mill Field Wood. The entrances will be accessible and clearly signed as per WT Spec 1.1 It shall be clearly visible from approach routes, attractive and inviting, easy and safe to use. The existing path network will be kept open for use and any new desire line paths that are created and are sensible will become official paths and be maintained.

The wood will be made as safe as practical for visitors through regular tree safety inspections as per Woodland Trust Internal Guidance and best practice.

4. KEY FEATURES

4.1 f1 Informal Public Access

Description
<p>The site contains a good well used network of permissive pathways for the general public to enjoy the young woodland. There is also a busy bridle path that runs through the centre of the woodland, connecting Mill Field to Kibworth and the wider local footpath network. Total length of the path network on site is roughly 2.5km, none of which is surfaced. There are 4 entrances, with the main ones being at either end of the bridleway. The site sits adjacent to the Grand Union Canal and there is easy access into the woodland from the tow path attracting walkers and users of the canal.</p>
Significance
<p>Created as part of the Woods on your Doorstep project, the local community were involved in the design and planting of the site, the property is well used locally being a significant area of publicly accessible green space for local people in what is otherwise predominantly farmland.</p>
Opportunities & Constraints
<p>The property ties in nicely into the surrounding public access network via a footpath from Fleckney and a bridle path from Kibworth also being accessible via the tow path on the Grand Union Canal. There may be opportunities to promote the property more widely as part of access and promotional opportunities in the wider area as and when they arise.</p> <p>The incursion of a small minority of horse-riders off the designated bridle paths can make walking conditions for visitors difficult during wet periods.</p>
Factors Causing Change
<p>Ash die back will reduce the dominance of ash within this woodland and create a lot of standing dead wood, which will need to be monitored to ensure it does not pose an excessive risk to the public.</p>
Long term Objective (50 years+)
<p>A good standard of access provision will be maintained at Mill Field Wood. The entrances will be accessible and clearly signed as per WT Spec 1.1 It shall be clearly visible from approach routes, attractive and inviting, easy and safe to use. The existing path network will be kept open for use and any new desire line paths that are created and are sensible will become official paths and be maintained.</p> <p>The wood will be made as safe as practical for visitors through regular tree safety inspections as per Woodland Trust</p>

Internal Guidance and best practice.
Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)
<p>Maintain rides, paths, entrances, and internal infrastructure in an attractive, safe, and useable condition. There will be a minimum of four ride cuts a year to the Woodland Trusts standard path and entrance cutting specification as the site is very well used and undergrowth can be particularly vigorous within Mill Field wood.</p> <p>Work Programme</p> <p>Cut paths four times per year with final cut including verge/edge vegetation, cut around all woodland entrances and internal infrastructure such as benches. Clean and check all signage is in good order – May, July, August, and September.</p>

4.2 f2 Secondary Woodland

Description
7.41 ha of new native woodland adjacent to the Grand Union Canal, planted in the year 2000 in an area consisting predominantly of agricultural land near to the settlements of Fleckney and Kibworth. The woodland consists of 22 native species and adds substantially to the habitat diversity of the local area.
Significance
In an area of predominantly farmland the planting of Mill Field Wood added significantly to the habitat diversity of the local area, the importance of this habitat will improve further as the woodland matures and develops.
Opportunities & Constraints
<p>Potentially the opportunity to engage with the local community in the longer-term management of the property.</p> <p>The woodland is quite isolated with management access via a track on adjacent property, this could make future thinning operations and extraction of timber difficult.</p>
Factors Causing Change
Threats from squirrels and ash die back.
Long term Objective (50 years+)
To allow the woodland to develop into native high-forest with trees and shrubs of varying age classes and species types. The woodland will be subject to occasional interventions, as informed by periodic WCA's, but allowing natural

processes to shape the wood as much as possible. Woodland Condition Assessments will inform management going into the future, interventions only taking place if highlighted as necessary by these assessments; the aim being to ensure the long term resilience of the woodland in perpetuity.

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

36-month tree safety inspection by site manager to check woodland health and tree safety inspection. Works to be ordered through observation actions as required. Ash Dieback has caused the ash within the wood to decline. Remove the declining ash within falling distance of the pedestrian path, whilst continue small scale coppicing of ride edges to reinvigorate the ride edge scrub habitat that has become heavily suppressed. Any ash that are showing signs of tolerance should be retained. Undertake 30% silvicultural thinning operation throughout the wood to open canopy and increase light levels to stimulate development of existing stored natural regeneration and remaining suppressed shrubs/understorey.

Prior to the next management plan review carry out a Woodland Condition Assessment.

4.3 f3 Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat

Description

The southern section of sub-compartment 2a and the whole of 3a were formed from the spoil that was created by the excavation of the Grand Union Canal in the 18th Century. The grassland area has remained comparatively un-disturbed and has become floristically diverse with a number of yellow meadow ant colonies present creating their distinctive mounds showing that the open ground habitat has been undisturbed for some time. It has been designated as part of the Grand Union Canal SSSI.

Significance

A floristically rich patch of meadow in an area dominated by intensive agricultural land.

Opportunities & Constraints

The canal side bank is covered by blackthorn which has the tendency to encroach onto the species rich grassland. The southern section is difficult to mow because of the yellow meadow ant hills. The removal of the mown grass has proved to be difficult but is something that should be investigated if the opportunity arises, or alternative options investigated.

Factors Causing Change

Scrub encroachment.

Inability to remove mowed grass.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The meadow will be retained and managed as an important ecological feature in recognition of its SSSI status and floristic diversity.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)
Annually manage meadow but undertaking early autumn cut and collect operation in September and remove arisings where possible. Manage southern section of open ground habitat to reduce scrub encroachment to maintain open ground habitat.
To engage with local volunteers to help in the management of the meadow for as long as it is practical to do so.

5. WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
2024	NWH - Maintenance Work	Works associated with the maintenance of non-woodland habitats – mechanical management, hay cutting, fence and wall maintenance etc	September
2024	WMM - Ride Management	Works associated with the management of existing rides/open areas for biodiversity - ride edge coppicing and thinning programmes, ditch works	December
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,	March
2025	NWH - Maintenance Work	Works associated with the maintenance of non-woodland habitats – mechanical management, hay cutting, fence and wall maintenance etc	September
2027	WMM - Secondary Silviculture	Works associated with silvicultural operations within secondary woods to meet our primary aims of conserving woodlands and encouraging public enjoyment– such as the removal of non-natives, thinning and promotion of native trees and shrubs, creating and managing view points and providing welcoming sites for visitors	March

APPENDIX 1 : COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
1a	3.46	Mixed broadleaves	2000	Wood establishment		
<p>Compartment 1a is located at the northern extremity of the site. The triangular planting areas are divided by a broad grassed ride beneath the electricity transmission lines. The area is predominantly of native broadleaves with 4 yew trees marking the area of the “Wed Wood”. There is a higher proportion of species such as alder and various willow species, which thrive in wetter conditions in the lower section of the compartment. All the trees have grown vigorously over the last years. During volunteer days most of the compartment has been relieved of its tree-shelters and some willows have been coppiced and selected trees had their crowns lifted in order to create some structural diversity.</p> <p>Recently the trees have become severely etiolated and the sub-canopy light environment such that sub-dominant trees have become suppressed and the shrub and ground layer shaded-out. In some areas the ash has over-topped the oak which has resulted in the death of many stems. The situation has been made more severe by the incidence of die-back on ash and squirrel attack on oaks.</p>						
2a	3.02	Mixed broadleaves	2000	Wood establishment	Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site	Site of Special Scientific Interest
<p>Compartment 2a is a stand of mixed broadleaved species. The area has a shallow westerly aspect running down to a small stream situated towards the western end of the compartment. The stream runs in roughly north-west south-east direction entering the Grand union canal at the north western end of the compartment.</p> <p>A wide ride has been left along the northern side of the compartment and follows the route of the public bridleway. The 10 tonne granite Millennium feature is situated toward the eastern corner, bought locally from Croft Quarry. All the planted trees have grown vigorously over the last years. During a volunteer day in 2007 tree shelters were removed and some specimens formatively pruned in the lower section of the site. Recently the trees have become severely etiolated and the sub-canopy light environment such that sub-dominant trees have become suppressed and the shrub and ground layer shaded-out. In some areas the ash has over-topped the oak which has resulted in the death of many stems. The situation has been made more severe by the incidence of die-back on ash and squirrel attack on oaks.</p>						
3a	1.28	Open ground		Non-wood habitat	Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site	Site of Special Scientific Interest
<p>Compartment 3 is a long narrow spur situated at the southerly end of the site. This is mainly an area of grassland with some encroachment of shrub species from the surrounding vegetation. The area is noticeably less rich in true grassland species, and has a higher proportion of ruderal plants. The area does however contain a species of ant</p>						

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
<p>'Lasius flavus' which is a subterranean species requiring the warmth of the sun to allow the ants to become active. 80+ mounds have been identified and a number of them have been estimated at being 150 years old or more. The whole of this sub-compartment lies within the Grand Union Canal SSSI.</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.