WOODLAND TRUST

Bilton Beck & Rudding Bottoms

Management Plan

2017-2022

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MAPS

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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 or contact the Woodland Trust (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.

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. 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.

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

Site name:	Bilton Beck & Rudding Bottoms
Location:	Scotton
Grid reference:	SE307583, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 104
Area:	17.11 hectares (42.28 acres)
Designations:	Nidd Gorge Countryside Management Project - Harrogate Borough Council, Planted Ancient Woodland Site

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

A towering stone viaduct built to carry the now-defunct Harrogate-Ripon railway line over the River Nidd is one of the highlights of a visit to Bilton Beck and Rudding Bottoms. On a walk along the beautiful riverside path you will discover there are lots of birds to see too, including dippers, grey wagtails and kingfishers.

2.2 Extended Description

The site was acquired on the March1985 with funding from the Countryside Commission, Harrogate Borough Council, local residents and Woodland Trust members. The woodland is located approximately 2 miles to the north of the centre of Harrogate, in the steep sided well-wooded valley called ‘Nidd Gorge’. The River Nidd runs west to east through the bottom of the gorge with the Trust’s woodland extending to 17.06 on the southern side of the gorge. Private woods on the northern bank complimenting the wooded character of the area. The western boundary of the wood is marked by the now disused Nidd viaduct, which spans the gorge with an impressive 30m high stone-arched viaduct.

The wood contains steeps slopes with small cliffs. Springs within the wood form damp flushes, which together with the various trees species, shrubs and herb layer provide a rich mixture of vegetation communities and wildlife habitats.

The Nidd Gorge area, including the valley woodlands and the surrounding agricultural land are exceptionally popular with walkers, fishermen and local residents. Access to the woodland from Harrogate and Bilton is from Bilton Lane, across an area of public open space on a path, which follows the track of the old railway line. Access to the woodland from the east can also be gained from the riverside footpath, which links into the Trust's Nidd Gorge Wood, approximately half a mile downstream. The riverside footpath provides links to the town of Knaresborough and the village of Scotton. Access is also available from Old Bilton along an old bridleway, called Milners Lane, which runs through farmland to join the wood and the riverside footpath.

The wood is within the Nidd Gorge Project area, which was set up by Harrogate Borough Council, Countryside Commission and local conservation groups to conserve and manage the Nidd Gorge for both its ecological and recreational values. Funding from the Countryside Commission has ceased but a steering group still exist. Working as a forum to discuss proposals for any work within the project area, including the Trust's woodlands. The Bilton Conservation Group is an active member of that steering group.

In the Doomsday Book, written in 1086 before Harrogate existed and when the ancient hamlet of Bilton was the nearest settlement, Nidderdale is recorded as being cloaked with trees. However, Rudding Bottoms has not always been tree covered. At some point before 1850 these sheltered lower slopes had been completely cleared and fenced off from the wooded steepest slopes, presumably to allow animals to graze. The unusual name gives us a clue to its history –the Anglo – Saxon 'Rhydding' means a cleared area.

The wood was cleared of most of its hardwoods (oak, ash etc) by the beginning of the 20th century, with the exception of St John's Wood, which is the area of woodland from Nidd Viaduct to Bilton Beck. Conifer trees were planted including larch, pine and spruce.

The footpath from Old Bilton to the wood, called Milners Lane was the former route to Scotton Flax Mill, which is on the opposite side of the river. The mill opened in 1798 was powered by water from the river and produced yarn or thread from raw flax to be made into a hardwearing cloth. The mill had ceased to operate only 50 years later and is now converted into a house.

The Nature Conservancy Council, in its Inventory of Ancient Woodlands (provisional) identified the site as an ancient woodland site. The only exception being the southern half of the woodland either side of the stream (Bilton Beck).

Within the woodland 42 species of birds have been recorded include the dipper, grey wagtail and kingfisher. Roe deer, grey squirrels, water voles, mink and foxes have been seen in the wood, but sadly, no otters current live in this part of the gorge. The wood contains a rich mixture of broadleaf and coniferous species, including, larch, pine, spruce, oak, sycamore, field maple, elm, wild cherry, ash, beech, alder, rowan, holly, hazel and willow.

The wood is bordered by agricultural land on the southern and eastern boundaries with the River Nidd forming the northern boundary. To the west is a large area of public open space, which is managed by Harrogate Borough Council.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

By bus:
The nearest bus stop is at Bilton. The bus (2B) into Harrogate takes eight minutes. For further information on public transport, contact Traveline on 0871 200 2233 or visit traveline.org.uk

By train:
The nearest stations are at Starbeck, 1.5 miles (2.4km) away, and Knaresborough, two miles away (3.2km). For information on services contact Traveline on 0871 200 2233 or visit traveline.org.uk

By car:
From the A59 Skipton to Knaresborough road turn onto Bilton Lane. After about one mile there is a small car park on the right-hand side of the road. Directly opposite the car park a permissive footpath leads to a dismantled railway line before reaching the wood at Nidd Viaduct. Follow the path to the east of the viaduct to find the riverside public footpath.

3.2 Access / Walks

An information board at the entrance to the site provides a map of the woodland and the surrounding Nidd Gorge area.

From the western, Bilton end of the wood, access is from Bilton Lane and follows the old railway line. This main access route from the car park has a kissing gate at its entrance with a flat cinder track leading to the viaduct.

Access from the east is via a wooden stile from the riverside footpath, which links into the Trust's Nidd Gorge Wood. This footpath provides links to Scotton and to the town of Knaresborough, which is about three miles (5km) away. The riverside path is rough in places with steep slopes, and steps and can be slippery.

Another route to the woodland uses a public bridleway that leads from the Gardeners Arms, Old Bilton, heading north through farmland to the wood and riverside footpath.

Volunteer work in the wood
Bilton Conservation Group's volunteers meet on the first Saturday morning of every month and undertake maintenance and project work in the Nidd Gorge area. Find out more at biltonconservationgroup.co.uk

The Knaresborough Nidd Gorge Conservation Group also holds regular volunteer work days. Visit https://vinspired.com/organizations/163

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long-term intention is to develop and maintain a diverse broadleaved high forest encouraging self-sustaining woodland, dominated by broadleaved species, with a mixed shrub layer and diverse age structure. The dominance of conifer species will be reduced within sections of the wood so that it has the character of a broadleaved woodland. This work will help to re-establish a diverse woodland ground flora on areas generally devoid of vegetation beneath the conifers. Whilst dependant on regular ground flora monitoring, to assess the intensity of conifer thinning, it is hoped that the conifer element will be reduced to less than 20% by 2030. Open public access will be maintained throughout the woodland with the main riverside footpath maintained to a high standard to allow easy use all year round.

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.

5.1 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Description

The wood is listed in the Nature Conservancy Council's Draft Inventory of Ancient Woodland (1987) as an ancient woodland site. Compartment 1a, which contains approximately 90% broadleaves, the majority of which are mature oak, perhaps provides an insight in to what the rest of the woodland may have looked like before being felled and replanted with conifers. Compartments 2a, 3a and 4a are planted ancient woodlands although natural regeneration and some remnant broadleaved trees do exist in these areas. Compartment 4a was planted with native broadleaved species. The wood contains 7 shrub species and has a rich herb layer of NVC classifications type, W10 and W8. Unfortunately, compartment 3a is dominated by larch with a small number of spruce and pine. Gradually reduction in the dominance of confers will be achieved by repeated thinning operations favouring the few broadleaves which exist and encouraging natural regeneration of broadleaved species. The woodland is located within the Nidd Gorge, which contains extensive areas of ancient woodland sites on both sides of the river. This includes the private woodland on the opposite side of the river to Bilton Beck and Rudding Bottoms as well as the Trust's other woodland (Nidd Gorge Wood) a half-mile downstream, which extends to 120 acres.

Significance

Woodland cover in the Yorkshire area is one of the lowest in the country at about 2.7% (Source NCC - provisional1989) Only 6% of this figure is considered as Ancient Woodland. The site is therefore exceptionally special for this part of the country.

Opportunities & Constraints

The ground vegetation is sparse in the dense areas of confers and thinning work is needed to try and improve the shrub and herb layers, as well as giving room for natural regeneration of native broadleaves. The major constraint on this is the difficulty of access to the site, steep slopes and wet ground conditions in many areas. Small thin to waste operations are therefore favoured over any large-scale operation, which might affect the wet flushes and ground vegetation.

An opportunity may exist to convert some of the timber on site and use it for repairs to boardwalks and other footpath facilities.

Factors Causing Change

Natural Succession to sycamore, Squirrel Damage, Deer Damage, Rabbit Damage

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long-term vision is to develop and maintain a diverse broadleaved high forest encouraging self-sustaining woodland, dominated by broadleaved species, with a mixed shrub layer and diverse age structure. The dominance of conifer species will be reduced within sections of the wood so that it has the character of a broadleaved woodland. This work will help to re-establish a diverse woodland ground flora on areas generally devoid of vegetation beneath the conifers. Whilst dependant on regular ground flora monitoring, to assess the intensity of conifer thinning, it is hoped that the conifer element will be reduced to less than 20% by 2030.

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

To undertake thinning operations in compartments 2a and 3a to reduce the percentage of conifers to less than 20% by the year 2030. The thinning work will aid the recovery and maintenance of the ground flora and also ensure that any broadleaf trees are given the opportunity to develop and also encourage natural regeneration. Small scale thinning work will be undertaken in 2019 following an assessment of the impact of ash dieback. As poor access to the site the work will leave the timber within the wood as fallen deadwood and some trees ring barked to leave standing deadwood where safe to do so.

5.2 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

This site is part of the Welcoming Sites Programme, which aims to improve the visitor experience to this site. The Welcoming Site Programme will lead to a series of lasting upgrades that will improve the visitor experience and will likely increase the number and range of visitors to the wood. An attractive and serviceable network of tracks and paths will further encourage the appreciation of the woodland both on the site and in the locality. The site will be managed to meet the required high standards of the Welcoming Site Programme and will provide a clear welcome: well-maintained car park, entrances, furniture, signs and other infrastructure as well as sustainable path and track surfaces across the variable ground conditions. Access will better facilitate use by a wider range of visitors. An engagement plan will set out a developed programme of engagement activities and events further enhancing public visits to the site. The site will be a truly valued resource in the local community and well respected.

'Its position in the landscape'
Bilton Beck & Rudding Bottoms form part of the Woodland Trust Nidd Gorge Woodland, and also part of the wider Nidd Gorge. The two woodlands are seperated by the River Nidd, Bilton Beck being on the south sie and Nidd Gorge Wood on the north. The car park and access from Nidd Gorge on the North side of the river, approximately 1 miles west of the town of Knaresborough, forms the key access point for both woodlands.

The woodland is located in the steep sided well wooded valley called 'Nidd Gorge'. The River Nidd runs east west through the bottom of the gorge, dividing the Woodland Trust woodlands of Nidd Gorge and Bilton Beck & Rudding Bottoms into two almost equal parts of 24.8ha and 20.5ha. The wider Nidd Gorge area, including the valley woodlands and the surrounding agricultural land are exceptionally popular with walkers, fishermen and local residents. There is a small car park at the Ripley Road entrance on the northern edge of the woodland. A forest road from the car park meanders down through the northern bank to the river with footpaths connecting to it at various points. A substantial timber pedestrian bridge crosses the river and forms an important link to the footpath network on the southern bank. The river sculpted the sheer gorge and dramatic landscape in the last ice age. It's a planted ancient woodland site with the conifers gradually being thinned out to allow natural regeneration of the native broadleaf trees and shrubs.
The Gorge nurtures a huge variety of species, there is plenty to see throughout the year. Ancient and coniferous woodland provide a patchwork of habitats appealing to more than 80 species of birds. The hammering of the spotted and green woodpeckers can be heard among the trees and at dusk and dawn the calls of tawny owls. Down on the riverbank you may catch a glimpse of a fishing heron as it surveys the waters or the dart of the bright blue kingfisher. Mammals are also in abundance, the shy roe deer lurk on the edge of the woodland and agile bats hunt for insects over the river on summer's evenings. Watch your step in the autumn as 91 species of fungi are found on the floor of the wood including puffballs, cup, jelly and bracket fungi. Wild garlic and bluebells are some of the first flowering plants in spring.
Tribes inhabited the site during the Bronze age and constructed protective earthworks to improve visibility of approaching threats. Flint artefacts from this period have been found at Gates Hill Camp. With the River Nidd Leading to Knaresborough Castle it isn't surprising that the surrounding woods were central to Civil War siege of the castle in 1643. while a warning beacon was lit here during the Napoleonic Wars. The woodland has served local people for generations, , the remains of bellpits hark back to a time when the site was used for coal excavation. Similarly a lime kiln provided vital

materials, supporting the country's industrial boom.
During both world wars the site was used by the armed forces for assault practice, this was particularly important during World War 11 as preparation for the D-Day landings took place here. In more recent years Scotton Banks Isolation Hospital treated patients for the likes of scarlet fever and tuberculosis. The hospital stood for 1929 until it was demolished in 1991 and replaced by the housing you see today.

'General description of the access'
The woodland is signposted from the B6165 between the Village of Nidd to the west and the market town of Knaresborough to the east, by large roadside welcome signs adjacent to the access to the large gravel surfaced car park, which is suitable for approximately 15 cars. From this main access point a network of approximately 10-15km of permissive and public footpaths criss-cross the woodland and the wider Woodland Trust ownership including Bilton Beck. Initial route-finding can be difficult and disorientating given the terrain, path surfaces and number of routes. The paths are mostly unsurfaced, and during wet weather do become wet and muddy quickly. Along the north bank, and forest road gives good surfaced access for 1.5km from the car park through to the bridge crossing and beyond. Boardwalks on the southern bank provide good walking across the wettest sections of path, but underfoot conditions in places can still be very difficult. Within the path network are a multitude of viewpoints, and vistas, through woodland but often incorporating the River Nidd as the focus. Occasional sculptures are dotted around, part of previous accessibility and engagement projects. There is no formal access provision made for bikes or horse access.

The paths are very well used by locals and by visitors who can expect to enjoy magnificent woodland walks through varied woodland, with the previously mentioned features being popular waymarks for those in the know. The paths link with wider long distance trails in the vicinity, including the Harrogate Ringway to the south and the Sustrans cycleway to the west. The Woodland Trust holding forms the main accessible part of the wider Nidd Gorge woodlands which extend from Bilton in the west through to Knaresborough in the east.

'The visitor profile'
There are no current visitor numbers available, but the woodland and car park are generally busy throughout the day, and hugely popular at weekends and during holidays, catering for visitors from considerable distances as well as locals, with over 8,000 households within the immediate postcode, and with the population of the Harrogate district estimated to be 100,000 people within 5 miles.

'Events and activities'
There are currently no formal people engagement events planned for Nidd Gorge, but Increased visitor engagement is planned as part of the short term objectives for the woodland.

'Nearby Woodland Trust sites'
There are a significant number of Woodland Trust sites within the immediate vicinity, with Skipton Castle Woods a key destination site for visitors, along with Hackfall – a woodland of national importance.

'Volunteering'
There is currently a long established local group – the Bilton Conservation Volunteers, who undertake a wide range of activity within the woodland who do some excellent work which is primarily on the Harrogate/ Bilton side of the wood. They have been involved in boardwalk

construction, tree planting on adjacent land, archaeological digs and general wildlife walks and talks.

‘specific furniture/ access point description’
Currently the signage provision on site is limited to the standard sized name boards at each of the 7 entrances, along with the main large welcome sign at the roadside and a large covered information board by the car park access into the woodland. On Gates Hill, there is also an interpretation panel relating to the bronze age, Napoleonic and later civil war encampments. There are 16 access points into the woodland. The entire furniture, signage and access point will all be significantly revised during a significant expansion of the woodland management and access provision planned for 2018 – 2020.

Significance

Increasing enjoyment of woodland is one of the Woodland Trust’s key outcomes. Improving parking and trails and engagement opportunities is particularly important given the sites proximity to the significant populations of Knaresborough and Harrogate. Promoting access to other nearby local attractions and links with local businesses for events and facilities for visitors for visitors is also a key part of the Nidd Gorge development. This will help improve enjoyment of the site for existing users and encourage a more diverse range of new visitors to the site.

Opportunities & Constraints

Nidd Gorge is a beautiful historic woodland with lots of stories to reveal, it's close to significant centres of population. It is already well used by a variety of user groups and has a well defined network of paths
There is a significant expansion of the woodland management and access provision planned for 2018 - 2020. A large program of work is also planned to improve the access around the wider site with a surfaced path, upgrade of the car park and revamp of the entire site signage, way marking and existing entrances. The short term upgrades in infrastructure, trails and on site interpretation will support the needs of the identified key visitor groups, as well as providing development opportunities for events, volunteering and community engagement.
This infrastructure work is just part of a wider programme of woodland management on the site as a whole as harvesting work continues in this established woodland over the next plan period. This work will create a greater diversity of habitats, by creating a mosaic of age structures, restoring planted ancient woodland, and allow species diversity through regeneration, which in turn will give the woodland more resilience for the future

There is the opportunity for a sustainable events and schools programme to be established, including demonstrations and workshops, as well as opportunities for innovation and rural businesses to utilise the woods to produce marketable products that come from the Woodland Trusts sustainable woodland management.

Education and involvement of the community are a key priority for this site. There are 54 Schools registered for the various Woodland Trust Schools schemes (Green Tree Schools, DEFRA and People Postcode Lottery programmes) within 10km of the site. There is great potential for developing an onsite education area and resources. Given the size of the site and range of habitats and areas there is also potential to develop areas dedicated to forest Schools without having any major impact on the site or other users.

Community groups and Volunteers: The site offers great potential for engagement with volunteers and community woodland groups, especially given the age range and areas of woodland available as well as the development of the extension area. There are opportunities for site wardens, we have people who do help out on site on an ad hoc basis. There is the possibility of setting up a North Yorkshire Conservation group that could do practical tasks across a number of our key sites, Nidd Gorge being one of them. We can also explore the options for a volunteer welcome hub on site to meet at greet people at the car park or within the woodland.

As well as the very well established tourist market within Harrogate and Knaresborough, there are a host of nearby visitor attractions including Ripley Castle, Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal, Plumpon Rocks, Brimham Rocks, Stockeld Park and the Yorkshire Water sites along the Washburn Valley. There is significant scope to work in association with these existing tourist attractions to promote the work of the Trust and attract more visitors through the Nidd Gorge Woodlands.

Factors Causing Change

Increased numbers of visitors will require significantly improved infrastructure on the site and greater engagement with visitors, volunteers, businesses and community engagement. It will also require a greater level of annual maintenance, with a periodic (10 year) refurbishment of the entire welcome facilities as well as a higher expectation of the quality of the infrastructure and interpretation provided.

There is the potential major impact of the Harrogate ring road development. One of the suggested routes passes adjacent to Nidd Gorge. It is only one of the suggested options at this stage but if it went ahead could have a significant impact especially with any associated infill development. River flooding could worsen in future years which impacts on the woodland with the potential to do more damage to paths and riverbank.

The Woodland is also very popular with dog walkers and dog walking companies if this was to increase significantly it could have a detrimental effect on the visitor experience.

Ash dieback is becoming more evident and will probably have a significant impact on the tree species composition

The Bilton Conservation Volunteers have a constant challenge to attract new members to support the vital work they do in the woodland. If they were to become less effective it would have an impact on our ability at present to maintain some of the footpath network.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The woodland will provide an extensive area of quiet informal recreation to a wide range of users both from the local community and from further afield. The use of the site by tourists will be promoted through positive relationships with neighbouring tourist destination sites, with good signage and interpretation.

Entrances and signage will have a welcoming appearance and there will be a network of well-maintained paths providing a range of circular routes suitable for walkers with viewpoints over a range of varied habitat types, integrated with active woodland management and wherever possible linking to the surrounding path network. Interpretation and waymarking that is fully integrated with, or compliments existing routes and tourist opportunities will provide visitors with information on routes and points of interest.

The use of the site for education will have increased, with a sustainable events and schools programme established, including demonstrations and workshops, as well as opportunities for innovation and rural businesses to utilise the woods to produce marketable products that come from the Woodland Trusts sustainable woodland management. The site will be seen as a flagship woodland trust site also benefiting the local community and local businesses.

The restoration work within the areas planted with conifer species would be almost complete and the majority of the conifers have been removed and regenerating broadleaf species are thriving. A trail for children will be situated in the woodland and updated and maintained on a suitably regular basis. Other temporary (art) structures and installations could move between different woods

At the entrance to the woodland or within the wood we have a regular presence with a wooden structure to promote membership and the wider work of the Woodland Trust this could act as a refreshment kiosk too. Volunteer rangers are on hand to answer visitors queries and lead regular guided walks around the site with donations and membership to the Woodland Trust a key ask for all those who visit. There is also the possibility to work more closely with the Bilton Conservation group.

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

Access provision will be in keeping with WT access guidelines. Achieved by ensuring that:

entrances & signage are welcoming to visitors and well cared for (annually).

all managed paths are kept well-drained and free from encroaching vegetation by strimming, and that access features (e.g. bridges, steps, entrances, boundary features, etc. are kept in good order (annually).

the site is kept safe and welcoming by: repair of vandalism (when needed); clearing of fallen trees where access is obstructed (as needed); and regular site safety surveys (as per risk assessment).

The visitor welcome & experience will be further enhanced by the following infrastructure improvements by the end of the current plan period:

To overhaul the existing car park, redesigning the layout, surfacing, boundaries, access and height barriers and signage, to increase capacity and provide a welcoming entrance to the woodland, which will through an enhanced maintenance programme be kept at a high standard.

Significant improvement to the welcome signage, including refurbishment or replacement of the existing brown tourist information signs, roadside welcome signage, key signage and interpretation/ leaflet at the car park and at key locations through the woodland (eg viewpoints, restoration/ woodland management , historic locations) Minor entrances will be formalised with a consistent access standard (eg kissing gate and named welcome and exit signs)

The network of paths will be reviewed, providing a variety of paths, rides and glades so that people can continue to enjoy free access on foot throughout the wood, with a clear maintenance plan for the site. A number of waymarked routes will be installed and potentially additional surfaced routes. Paths, rides and open spaces will be maintained on an annual basis up to three times a year to ensure that access for walkers is maintained at all times.

The work proposed to be undertaken consists of 2 major sets of steps, 3 kilometres of paths and repairs or removal of 50m of boardwalk.

Seating will be replaced and new seats added where possible. We will explore the possibility for a mobile facility to meet and greet visitors with refreshment area along with the opportunity for a longer promoted footpath route starting and finishing outside of the woodland.

New volunteer activity and volunteer roles will be developed and encouraged, along with the existing Bilton Conservation Group volunteers. Volunteers will be encouraged to attend events and taking part in activities with the regular volunteer group. There could be scope for a lead volunteer on site. This person and the group could work just at Nidd Gorge or could look at opportunities to have a work party that covers a number of sites in the Yorkshire area such as Hackfall, Nidd and Skipton for example.
Identified areas of the woodland will be used for education or informal play, with forest schools and other local user groups suited to the aims and objectives of the Woodland Trust will be encouraged wherever possible.

An events programme will be established, including demonstrations and workshops, as well as encouraging opportunities for innovation and rural businesses to utilise the woods to produce marketable products that come from the Woodland Trusts sustainable woodland management.

6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By

APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	4.46	Oak (pedunculate)	1900	High forest	Gullies/Deep Valleys/Uneven/ Rocky ground, No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/ mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland	Planted Ancient Woodland Site
Compartment 1a contains approximately 90% mature oak with a fairly dense understorey of holly. Beech sycamore, and Scots pine accounting for the other 10%, which whilst being non-native species does provide some species diversity without affecting the overall character of the compartment.							
2a	3.03	Mixed broadleaves	1900	High forest	Gullies/Deep Valleys/Uneven/ Rocky ground, No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/ mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland	Planted Ancient Woodland Site
Compartment 2a is situated in the steep sided valley, which contains Bilton Beck and contains mixed broadleaves with mature larch (p1937), which is fringed with Scots pine along the western boundary. The larches, which now account for approximately 30% of the tree species, were heavily thinned in 1998 to promote the broadleaves and encourage natural regeneration. A small number (200) of native provenance broadleaved trees were replanted. Bramble and bracken dominates the shrub layers.							

3a	3.54	European larch	1940	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/ mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland	Planted Ancient Woodland Site
The compartment comprises of a mixture of broadleaf and conifer species. Broadleaved species include ash, oak, elm, alder, mountain ash, birch, holly and hazel. Conifer species are mainly larch but the compartment also contains Scots pine mostly on the woodland edge and Norway spruce in the centre of the compartment, near the weir. The conifers were planted in approximately p1950. Broadleaf species which accounts for approximately 10-15% of trees overall, although the compartment has some very mixed areas from predominately broadleaved to predominately conifer. Several springs emerge within the woodland making it very wet in places and producing a very variable ground flora. Ancient woodland ground flora can be found throughout the compartment, although where the conifers is dense only remnants exist, mainly bluebell.							
4a	6.04	Mixed broadleaves	1988	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/ mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland	Planted Ancient Woodland Site
Approximately 50% of the compartment is formed of flat land bordering the river, which forms the northern boundary. The remainder is a relatively steep embankment, which runs up to the southern boundary. The majority of this compartment (4.4ha) was felled in 1988 and replanted with oak, cherry and ash. The remainder of the area is made up of riverside trees including alder and sycamore and areas of young trees confined to mainly the steeper slopes.							

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.