



Hedley Hall

Management Plan 2017-2022

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THE WOODLAND TRUST

INTRODUCTION

The Trust's corporate aims and management approach guide the management of all the Trust's properties, and are described on Page 4. These determine basic management policies and methods, which apply to all sites unless specifically stated otherwise. Such policies include free public access; keeping local people informed of major proposed work; the retention of old trees and dead wood; and a desire for management to be as unobtrusive as possible. The Trust also has available Policy Statements covering a variety of woodland management issues.

The Trust's management plans are based on the identification of Key Features for the site and setting objectives for their management. A monitoring programme (not included in this plan) ensures that these objectives are met and any necessary management works are carried out.

Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATING

The information presented in this Management plan is held in a database which is continuously being amended and updated on our website. Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations. Please either consult The Woodland Trust website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk 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:	Hedley Hall
Location:	Sunniside
Grid reference:	NZ218559, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 88
Area:	93.61 hectares (231.32 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Community Forest, Green Belt, Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance, Site of Special Scientific Interest

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

This tranquil site is a mix of ancient woodland, which cloaks the long, narrow valley of Ridley Gill, and established new native woodland planted in 1992, where medieval farmsteads once stood. The wood is brimming with birdlife, and contains open grassland, wetlands, small woodland ponds and a grazed wildflower meadow as well as the extensive woodland, accessible by approximately 5km of unsurfaced paths from the car park.

2.2 Extended Description

Hedley Hall is a large woodland creation site located in what was part of the Great North Forest and the site made a significant contribution towards creating the wider community forest.

Located on Hedley Fell overlooking the town of Stanley and Beamish Open Air Museum, the wood is already a significant landscape feature, with magnificent views to the south over the rolling farmed and wooded landscape towards Beamish, and out towards Washington and Newcastle, only 6.5km away to the East and North.

The wood covers an area of 55.22 ha and consists of 8.88 ha of Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) known as Ridley Gill (also designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest - SSSI) and 46.34 ha of woodland creation planted on former arable and pasture land between 1992 and 1995 with native broadleaved trees and shrubs, and which was designated a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) in 2004. It is surrounded on most sides by arable farmland but links into the Beamish woodlands to the south via Mill Wood and to the southwest through the remaining part of Ridley Gill currently outside Woodland Trust ownership.

The Hedley Hall extension that the Woodland Trust purchased in May 2017, extends to a further 13.6ha. The land has been split up into two fields that have been used for grazing and grass cutting for many years. There are the remnants of old coal mining activities reputed to be on site. Hares are often seen, along with roe deer, with short eared owls and kestrels regular visitors, observed hunting for the numerous voles over the open grassland. The extension makes a great addition to the current Hedley Hall site, this area allows the creation of a more diverse habitat on a piece of land that is currently fairly habitat poor.

The new Woodland (due to be planted at the end of 2018) will buffer the effects of farming, increase biodiversity by utilising the existing waterlogged areas to create wetland and a pond and by planting varieties of trees and shrub species suited to the local conditions and future proofing for our changing environment.

The woodland is signposted from local roads at both end of Hedley Lane with brown tourist information signs, and a final brown sign indicating the entrance to the large gravel surfaced car park, which is suitable for approximately 20 cars. From this main access point a network of approximately 5km of permissive footpaths and 350m of public footpaths criss-cross the woodland. Initial route-finding is difficult and disorientating given the similarity of the terrain, path surfaces and woodland age. The paths are all unsurfaced, and during wet weather do become wet and muddy quickly. Within the path network are open viewpoints, grazed wildflower meadows, peat bogs, lake, small woodland ponds and occasional sculptures dotted around. There is no formal access provision made within Ridley Gill SSSI, and there is no provision made for bikes or horse access.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

By bus: There is a bus stop on the A6076 (Burdon Plain) near the Tanfield Railway and Tyneside Locomotive Museum. The wood is about 15 minutes' walk south along the A6076 and then along Hedley Lane (past Hedley West House Farm).

By train: The nearest train station is Chester Le Street, from where you can catch a bus to the woods.

For up-to-date information on public transport, visit traveline.org.uk or telephone 0871 200 22 33.

By car: From Newcastle, head south along the A189 and continue to the A184. Keep left at the fork and then merge onto the A1. After 3.2km (two miles,) take the exit towards Team Valley. At the roundabout, take the fourth exit, then at the next roundabout take the third exit. Turn left onto Birkheads Lane, then drive for 1.6km (one mile) and turn left onto Hedley Lane. There is parking for around 10 cars at the main entrance.

3.2 Access / Walks

There is access from the Hedley Lane car park via a kissing gate, or from the public footpath further east along the lane. Another public footpath leads down to Hedley Hall Farm, and into the site. Access to Ridley Gill is from various points along the west side of Hedley Hall but no formal paths are maintained in Ridley Gill.

The site has many paths, rides and open spaces, which can be muddy in parts. Part of the Tyne-Wear Trail passes through the wood, linking it to the wider public footpath network.

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

By the mid 21st century, Hedley Hall Woodland will support healthy and vigorous native broadleaf trees and shrubs, broadly characteristic of Lowland mixed broadleaved woods and will continue to contribute to the Trust's corporate objective of increasing new native woodland.

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. Area will be well established as woodland, with well-established wetland and ponds, higher species diversity and range of habitats and wildlife for people to see and enjoy.

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 where 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.

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 New Native Woodland

Description

The Hedley Hall extension that the Woodland Trust purchased in May 2017, extends to a further 13.6ha. The land has been split up into two fields that have been used for grazing and grass cutting for many years. This will be planted with new native woodland in 2018. All of the land sites on a gently sloping south facing slope, and is bounded to the east and west by improved pasture and to the north and south by mixed woodland

Significance

Hedley Hall is a large woodland creation site located in what was the Great North Forest (now defunct) and therefore makes a significant contribution towards creating the community forest. The broadleaved species planted are similar to those of Ridley Gill and therefore are in keeping with the landscape. The new woodland lies within an ancient woodland concentration so plays an important role in providing a protective buffer for the Gill woodland and will, in the longer term, increase its core area. Located on Hedley Fell overlooking the town of Stanley and Beamish Open Air Museum, as it grows, the wood will become a significant landscape feature. Its creation also contributes to the Trust's corporate objectives of increasing new native woodland and increasing enjoyment and understanding of woodland.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities - This area can be planted with a wide range of species, not only for educational purposes but to future proof the site, as more and more tree pests and diseases are threatening the UK.

Constraints - There is a unknown element to the soils fertility on the site as the area is on reclaimed mining, so growth is very difficult to predict.

Factors Causing Change

Tree diseases, global warming and mammal browsing.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To ensure that native high forest broadleaved woodland is successfully established across the site and that this remains disease free and healthy and continues to grow so that, over the long-term, the wood becomes self-perpetuating through natural regeneration, ensuring its existence in perpetuity.

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

Within the new native woodland areas of cpt 4, 20,000 new trees will be planted in tube and spiral guards, weeded and beaten up for the period 2018 - 2021.

Within the site are areas of open ground, wide rides, ponds and wetland areas which will be managed to ensure a diverse range of habitat types exist on site.

Access tracks (2km) will be created through to the further reaches of the woodland to create management access routes and also to indirectly improve accessibility for visitors.

5.2 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Description

Ridley Gill is an Ancient Semi-natural Woodland (ASNW) and also a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) since 1985. The Trust owns 8.88 ha of this 12.2 ha wood that runs along the western side of Hedley Hall Community Woodland. The wood consists of three distinct types of high forest woodland cover as one moves from north to south: oak-hazel woodland, wet alder woodland and ash-elm woodland; the latter two both being uncommon types in this area.

Significance

Ridley Gill is both an ASNW and an SSSI and therefore is both a regionally and nationally important habitat. The wood contains three habitat types: wet woodland, upland oakwood and upland mixed ashwood, all of which are national and local Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats as recognised in the UK BAP and Durham plans. It also forms part of a much larger complex of linked woodlands that includes the rest of Ridley Gill and the Beamish Woods to the south.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities - Whilst to the east of Ridley Gill the new woodland both provides a buffer to protect the wood and will ultimately extend its core area, to the west arable land directly adjoins the wood increasing the potential for habitat damage to occur through loss of biodiversity due to run-off and drift from pesticides. Any opportunity to purchase a buffer and the remaining pieces of woodland outside the WT ownership to the west should be explored.

Constraints - The fact that some of the wood is not owned by the Trust introduces a number of problems. People we invite into the wood could trespass on our neighbour's land unintentionally. The fact that our neighbour shoots within the wood is clearly incompatible with the Trust's objective of allowing people to roam freely in our woods. A list of operations likely to damage the special interest of Ridley Gill and that require prior consultation with English Nature is kept on file at regional office, along with a copy of the SSSI citation and map. These must be consulted before any operation takes place in the wood.

Factors Causing Change

Invasive Rhododendron and Sycamore, Spread of bracken and of Himalayan balsam and tree diseases, squirrel and deer damage

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain, and where possible to enhance, the three distinct woodland types currently making up Ridley Gill, including their associated ground flora. Particularly, to maintain the wet flushes and the species they support, such as tussock sedge that is locally rare.

Public use of the wood should not be actively encouraged to avoid damaging this rare and valuable habitat.

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

During this plan period the short term objective is to:

- Monitor the condition of the wood,
- Control the invasive species,

This will include the following operational works:

1. Condition Assessment
2. Work with Natural England on new ways to control the spread of the Himalayan balsam within the woodland.
3. Control of the deer and grey squirrel populations will be undertaken where possible.

5.3 Secondary Woodland

Description

The established native woodland at Hedley Hall covers an area of 46.34 ha (not including the 5.95 ha meadow) and was planted between 1992 and 1995 with native broadleaved trees and shrubs on former arable and pasture land. The Hedley Hall extension that the Woodland Trust purchased in May 2017, extends to a further 13.63ha. The land has been split up into two fields that have been used for grazing and grass cutting for many years. This will be planted with new native woodland in 2018. All of the land sites on a gently sloping south facing slope, and is bounded to the east and west by improved pasture and to the north and south by mixed woodland

Significance

Hedley Hall is a large woodland creation site located in what was the Great North Forest (now defunct) and therefore makes a significant contribution towards creating the community forest. The broadleaved species planted are similar to those of Ridley Gill and therefore are in keeping with the landscape. The new woodland lies within an ancient woodland concentration so plays an important role in providing a protective buffer for the Gill woodland and will, in the longer term, increase its core area. Located on Hedley Fell overlooking the town of Stanley and Beamish Open Air Museum, as it grows, the wood will become a significant landscape feature. Its creation also contributes to the Trust's corporate objectives of increasing new native woodland and increasing enjoyment and understanding of woodland.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities - Overall, the wood is now generally well established. To improve the overall structure and resilience of the woodland, establishing a thinning programme and areas of coppice management will safeguard the diversity of habitats and age groups in the woodland. There is a high demand from groups to carry out work and gain products from local woodlands, so establishing a sustainable source of wood products is possible.

Constraints - There is no track/surfaced path network within the woodland, which means harvesting and extraction may not be possible in some wet areas and there may be some conflict with public use of the woodland.

Factors Causing Change

Ash disease, suppression of slower growing species, deer and squirrel damage

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain a vigorous and healthy forest of native broadleaved woodland with graduated margins of shrubs alongside rides and open spaces.

The break up the even age structure of the woodland and to establish areas of coppice management.

Have a sustainable source of products produced from this woodland for local markets.

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

During this plan period the short term objective is to:

- Monitor the condition of the wood,
- Start thinning and coppice programme,

This will include the following operational works:

1. Condition Assessment
2. Timber harvesting work, which will be elaborated on following the woodland condition assessment in early summer 2018
3. Within the site are areas of open ground, wide rides, ponds and wetland areas which will be managed to ensure a diverse range of habitat types exist on site
4. Control of the deer and grey squirrel populations will be undertaken where possible.
5. Access tracks will be created through to the further reaches of the woodland to create management access routes and also to indirectly improve accessibility for visitors.

5.4 Open Ground Habitat

Description

Sub-cpt 3a consists of 5.95 ha of grazed pasture previously managed as a hay and wildflower meadow up until 2007 when the management regime was converted to grazing. It was sown in September 1997 with 144.5 kg of mixed grass seed and 30.23 kg of mixed wildflower seed supplied by Naturescape of Nottingham. Three different wildflower seed mixes were used in its establishment (see cpt 3 general description) based on recommendations in a report supplied by David Collins of ADAS in June 1996.

In 2017 a survey of the meadow was carried out which recorded that over 50% of the planted species had been lost over the past 20 years.

Significance

Traditional species-rich lowland grazed pasture is now a rare habitat nationally. This pasture provides a valuable habitat adjacent to the new woodland, as well as being a significant feature in the landscape in its own right. The Trust has already invested considerable time and money to ensuring its successful establishment and is committed to its continued management.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities - As the pasture field is of a good size (5.95ha), once a species rich sward is achieved, finding a long-term grazer to manage this field should be possible. There is the opportunity to plant the area with trees and shrubs, therefore increasing woodland cover.

Constraints - Access to the field is poor. Finding people to graze the site in the past has not been very successful.

Factors Causing Change

Further loss of floristic value (the site from sowing in 1992 has lost approximately 50% of the original species, however parts are still classes as a site of significant importance in the local area given the remaining species)

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain and improve a floristically rich area of meadow.

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

During this plan period the short term objective is to:

- Not reduce the floristic value,
- Control the invasive species,

This will include the following operational works:

1. Find a grazer
2. Put together a programme and licence to graze for the period that best suits the meadow.
3. Look at the meadow as a whole and highlight areas of high floristic value and those where trees might be more suitable.

5.5 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'

Hedley Hall is a large woodland creation site located in what was part of the Great North Forest and the site made a significant contribution towards creating the wider community forest.

Located on Hedley Fell overlooking the town of Stanley and Beamish Open Air Museum, the wood is already a significant landscape feature, with magnificent views to the south over the rolling farmed and wooded landscape towards Beamish, and out towards Washington and Newcastle, only 6.5km away to the East and North.

The wood covers an area of 55.22 ha and consists of 8.88 ha of Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) known as Ridley Gill (also designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest - SSSI) and 46.34 ha of woodland creation planted on former arable and pasture land between 1992 and 1995 with native broadleaved trees and shrubs, and which was designated a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) in 2004. It is surrounded on most sides by arable farmland but links into the Beamish woodlands to the south via Mill Wood and to the southwest through the remaining part of Ridley Gill currently outside Woodland Trust ownership.

The Hedley Hall extension that the Woodland Trust purchased in May 2017, extends to a further 13.63ha. The land has been split up into two fields that have been used for grazing and grass cutting for many years. There are the remnants of old coal mining activities reputed to be on site. Hares are often seen, along with roe deer, with short eared owls and kestrels regular visitors, observed hunting for the numerous voles over the open grassland. The extension makes a great addition to the current Hedley Hall site, this area allows the creation of a more diverse habitat on a piece of land that is currently fairly habitat poor. The new Woodland with buffer the effects of farming, increased biodiversity also utilising the existing waterlogged areas to create wetland and a pond, variety of tree and shrub species suited to the local conditions and future proofing for our changing environment.

'General description of the access'

The woodland is signposted from local roads at both end of Hedley Lane with brown tourist information signs, and a final brown sign indicating the entrance to the large gravel surfaced car park, which is suitable for approximately 20 cars. From this main access point a network of approximately 5km of permissive footpaths and 350m of public footpaths criss-cross the woodland. Initial route-finding is difficult and disorientating given the similarity of the terrain, path surfaces and woodland age. The paths are all unsurfaced, and during wet weather do become wet and muddy quickly. Within the path network are open viewpoints, grazed wildflower meadows, peat bogs, lake, small woodland ponds and occasional sculptures dotted around. There is no formal access provision

made within Ridley Gill SSSI, and there is no provision made for bikes or horse access.

The paths are very well used by locals and visitors who can expect to enjoy a very pleasant walk through established young 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 Great North Forest Trail to the North and the Tyne and Wear Trail which passes through the wood and off to the south to meet the Great North Forest Heritage Trail just beyond Beamish Museum.

'The visitor profile'

There are no current visitor numbers available, but the woodland and car park are generally busy throughout the day, and with over 11,000 households within the immediate postcode, and with the huge population of Newcastle and Gateshead, estimated to be 750,000 people within 8 miles.

'Events and activities'

There are currently no people engagement events planned for Hedley Hall Wood, but during the planting the adjacent woodland extension there will be small scale community and schools and corporate events planned during the initial planting phase in 2018 and early 2019. 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 a 10 mile radius of Hedley, with Pontburn Woods to the west being the largest at 271 acres, with a concentration of woodlands to the east within Washington new town, mostly small urban woodlands. Langley Moor Wood to the south and Lotties Wood only a few miles to the North

'Volunteering'

There is currently a long established local group - Hedley Hall Woodland Group, who undertake woodland management activity within the woodland.

'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. Access points are all squeeze stiles or kissing gates, with a step over stile accessing the southernmost point from Beamish. Two large oak sculptures are present within the wood. 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 nearby huge population of Newcastle and Gateshead, estimated to be 750,000 people within 8 miles. Promoting access to other nearby woodland sites and links with local businesses for events and facilities for visitors is also a key part of the Hedley Hall site development. This will help improve enjoyment of the site for existing users and encourage a more diverse range of new visitors to the site. Hedley Hall Wood was the Woodland Trusts original flagship site within the Great North Forest and still has brown tourist information signage in place guiding visitors

Opportunities & Constraints

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 starts in this established woodland over the next 5 years. This work will create a greater diversity of habitats, by creating a mosaic of age structures, 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 30 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.

The 2017 land extension provides opportunities for a far greater level of engagement with schools, community groups, corporate groups and volunteers through tree planting and then longer term development of the site for a more diverse range of visitors.

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 could be potential to develop the wood allotment model or similar and there is also possible local business opportunities linked to coppicing, wood fuel, charcoal and events / training. The Trust is aiming to have the majority of the new woodland planted by volunteers and local children

There are a host of nearby visitor attractions including, Beamish Museum and Causey Arch (Beamish is a world famous open air museum, telling the story of life in North East England during the 1820s, 1900s & 1940s. It's a very popular museum and holds Visit England Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme Gold Award. The museum has existing links with nearby Hell Hole Wood a Woodland Trust site leased to the museum. Beamish is a world famous open air museum, telling the story of life in North East England during the 1820s, 1900s & 1940s). Along with the long distance walking trails to all sides, 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 Hedley Hall Woodland.

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.

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. Area will be well established as woodland, with well-established wetland and ponds, higher species diversity and range of habitats wildlife and for people to see.

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 where 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.

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).

all viewpoints are maintained free of encroaching vegetation, where it is obscuring the view (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, wildflower meadow, innovation areas, new woodland extension) 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 revised, providing a variety of paths, rides and glades on Hedley Hall 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 a surfaced all abilities trail as well as a longer/wider surfaced route which will also double up to simplify access for woodland management and

Paths, rides and open spaces will be mown on an annual basis up to three times a year to ensure that access for walkers is maintained at all times. This will include ride side coppicing to help keep the narrower rides and paths in the wood from being closed off by encroaching vegetation. Plans for the newly acquired Hedley Hall extension (13.63ha) will be taken forward, including planting the new woodland engaging Nationwide Building Society staff, volunteers and local schools. Paths linking with the existing network will be included within that design, along with features available for education such as the ponds.

New volunteer activity and volunteer roles will be developed and encouraged, along with the existing Hedley Hall Woodland Group volunteers

Identified areas of the woodland will be used for education, with forest schools and other local user groups suited to the aims and objectives of the Woodland Trust will be encouraged wherever possible.

A schools and events programme will 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.

6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By
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APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	8.88	Mixed native broadleaves	1850	High forest	Legal issues, Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access within the site		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Community Forest, Green Belt, Site of Special Scientific Interest
<p>Ridley Gill is a long narrow valley orientated along a NW-SE axis with a small stream flowing southwards through it, along which wet flushes occur at intervals. A small pond has been created at the extreme northern end of the wood sometime after 1960, probably for shooting. During the Second World War, an emergency shelter was built in the wood but exactly where and if this still exists has yet to be established. The woodland was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1985. The woodland is also classed as Ancient Semi-natural Woodland (ASNW) and as such is a regionally and nationally important habitat. The wood consists of three distinct types of high forest woodland cover as one moves from north to south: oak-hazel woodland, wet alder woodland and ash-elm woodland. The first occurs on acid soils over free draining sandstones and is dominated by pedunculate oak with a sparse understorey of coppiced hazel and holly. The ground flora is dominated by creeping soft-grass but also includes bluebell, greater stitchwort, wood sorrel, male fern, bracken and bramble. The wet alder woodland occurs on the wet flushes over Carboniferous shales and is dominated by common alder, goat willow and downy birch. The ground flora is dominated by reed canary grass, tufted hair-grass, marsh horsetail and soft rush but also includes herbs such as meadow sweet, marsh marigold, lady's smock, bugle, water avens, yellow flag, common valerian, wild angelica and broad buckler-fern. Tussock sedge also occurs in abundance here; one of only four localities for this species in Co. Durham and Tyne & Wear. Ash and wych elm dominate the wood at its southern end with elder forming an understorey in places. The ground flora contains sanicle, wood avens, hedge wound-wort and dog's mercury. Two small clearings dominated by bracken occur in this part of the wood containing a scattering of birch and rowan. Sycamore also occurs in this part of the wood, some of which probably originates from the dense stands growing in adjacent woodland.</p>							
1b	4.86	Ash	1850	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Community Forest, Green Belt, Site of Special Scientific Interest

<p>Part of the 2018/19 extension. Remaining part of Ridley Gill SSSI Ash and wych elm dominate the wood at its southern end with elder forming an understorey in places. The ground flora contains sanicle, wood avens, hedge wound-wort and dog's mercury. Two small clearings dominated by bracken occur in this part of the wood containing a scattering of birch and rowan. Sycamore also occurs in this part of the wood, some of which probably originates from the dense stands growing in adjacent woodland.</p>							
1c	0.73	Hawthorn species	1850	High forest			Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Community Forest, Green Belt, Site of Special Scientific Interest
<p>Part of the 2018/19 extension. Part of Ridley Gill west of the watercourse.</p>							
2a	8.05	Oak (pedunculate)	1992	Coppice	Mostly wet ground/exposed site		Community Forest, Green Belt, Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance
<p>This area extends to 8.05 ha and was the first part of Hedley Hall to be planted in 1992 by Economic Forestry Group (some volunteer planting was carried out in Dec 1991 as part of National Tree Week). Its boundaries are formed by Hedley Lane to the north, Hedley Hall Farm track to the east, horse paddocks to the south and the old hedge to the west. Public footpath number 17 runs through this sub-compartment and forms part of the Tyne-Wear Trail. The main tree species planted include oak (30%), ash (20%) and birch (19%), with lesser amounts of wild cherry, rowan, hazel and alder. Woody shrubs are mostly concentrated around the edges of the planting blocks, alongside open areas that make up around 18% of the sub-compartment area. Part of this open area consists of a dried up peat bog that extends into the adjacent sub-compartment (2c); the rest consists of paths, rides, glades and wildflower areas sown in April 2007. This block along the Hedley Hall Farm track is being coppiced by the Hedley Hall Volunteers, and a Forest Schools area is planned in 2018 in this block.</p>							
2b	19.77	Oak (pedunculate)	1993	Coppice	Mostly wet ground/exposed site		Community Forest, Green Belt, Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance

This area accounts for the bulk of the new woodland and was planted in 1993/94 by Northern Woodlands Ltd. Oak (40%) is again the most abundant species, followed by ash (25%). Other species planted in much lesser amounts include birch, wild cherry, rowan, hazel, alder, willow and crab apple. Woody shrubs are mostly concentrated around the edges of the planting blocks, alongside the rides, paths and glades. An old filled-in pond, covering approximately 0.09 ha was re-excavated in 1992 and is located at the north end of the sub-compartment. The undulating landform is quite pronounced in this part of the site and the open space reflects this in numerous small glades, paths and rides. Within the 5.92 ha of open space is included a 2.2 ha strip alongside Ridley Gill, left to regenerate naturally. An area of 0.2 ha at the northern end of this strip was fenced off ploughed, harrowed and sprayed with glyphosate in August 1996 then direct seeded with acorns and hazel nuts from Ridley Gill in November but failed to regenerate. Consequently, in 1999 the area was used to plant about 50 native broadleaved tree seedlings grown on by school children who attended the ToTAP events during the previous two years.

2c	11.74	Oak (pedunculate)	1995	Coppice	Mostly wet ground/exposed site		Community Forest, Green Belt, Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance
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This sub-compartment covers an area of 11.74 ha and is bound by Hedley Lane to the north, the old field hedge to the east, shrub plantings along the southern edge of the glade to the south and Ridley Gill to the west. Planted in 1995 by Northern Woodlands Ltd, this was the last part of the new woodland to be established. Pedunculate oak is most abundant, accounting for 30% of the plantings, followed by ash (20%) and birch (20%), with the remaining 30% being made up of hazel, rowan, common alder, wild cherry, goat willow, crab apple and holly. Due to delays in putting on shelters, the trees suffered rabbit and hare damage resulting in many having to be replaced. Therefore, planting was not completed until the autumn when the first beat-up was carried out and consequently, the first payment of grant was not received until March 1996. The 3.34 ha of open ground includes a 0.60 ha glade, 0.90 ha of peat bog and a 0.92 ha strip alongside Ridley Gill left as a natural regeneration plot but which failed to regenerate and so was ploughed and sown with wildflower seed in April 2007 to create a wildflower area. The rest of the open space consists of rides, paths and the public car park. The area around the carpark had thinning commence in the winter of 2017.

3a	5.95	Open ground	1997	Non-wood habitat	Management factors (eg grazing etc)		Community Forest, Green Belt, Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance
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A 5.95 ha hay and wild flower meadow sown in September 1997 and previously managed under a 10 year MAFF Countryside Stewardship Agreement (No: 11CSS000423) that expired on the 30 September 2005. Prior to sowing, the field was sprayed with 40 litres of Roundup in September 1996 then deep ploughed in early November by Tom Swinburn, who completed sowing the meadow in September 1997. Based on recommendations in a report supplied by David Collins of ADAS in June 1996, a seed mix of wild flowers and grasses were used (see record 7 under Wildlife Conservation in the Reference Information section). Since establishment and up until 2005, John Swinburn of Hedley West House Farm carried out hay cutting and other annual management works on this area but in December 2007, a holding pen, drinking pond and fencing were installed to move the management of this field over to grazed pasture in an effort to improve the condition and floral diversity of the sward.

A botanical survey in 2017 recorded that over 50% of the planted species had been lost over the past 20 years.

3b	0.83	Oak (pedunculate)	1993	Coppice	No/poor vehicular access to the site		Community Forest, Green Belt, Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance
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Two small areas of new woodland planted by Northern Woodlands in 1993 to the northeast (thinned in 2006 and again planned for 2018) and south of sub-cpt 3a. Both areas are dominated by oak (80%) with small amounts of ash (10%), hazel (5%) and other woody shrubs (5%). Both are located inside the hedge that surrounds the grazed pasture, forming the boundary of compartment 3.

4a	13.65	Aspen	2018	Wood establishment			Community Forest, Green Belt, Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance
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Open ground extension to the east, planted in Q4 2018 with mixed native trees;

- Pedunculate oak - 6%
- Downy birch - 6%
- Common alder - 6%
- Hazel - 6%
- Small-leaved lime - 7%
- Aspen - 14%
- Wych elm - 5%
- Hornbeam - 5%
- Scots pine - 10%
- Rowan - 3%
- Goat willow - 3%
- Sessile oak - 4%
- Wild cherry - 4%
- White willow - 2%
- Silver birch - 4%
- Crab apple - 4%
- Holly - 2%
- Elder - 2%
- Sweet chestnut - 4%
- Field maple - 2%

4b	5.48	NULL	2021	Wood establishment			Community Forest, Green Belt, Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance
Part of the 2018/19 extensions.							
4c	13.48	Oak (pedunculate)	2019	Wood establishment	Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site		Community Forest, Green Belt, Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance

Part of the 2018/19 extension planted in Q1 2019 with mixed native broadleaves.

Oak 14%

Birch 14%

Alder 14%

Hazel 14%

Small Leaf Lime 9%

Wych Elm 9%

Willow 9%

Rowan 7%

Hornbeam 7%

Aspen 2%

Holly 2%

Elder 2%

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2018	2a	Coppice	0.50	8	4
2018	3b	Coppice	0.50	8	4
2019	2a	Thin	2.00	13	25
2019	2c	Thin	6.00	42	250
2020	2a	Coppice	0.50	8	4
2020	3b	Thin	3.00	3	10
2021	2a	Thin	4.00	25	100
2021	2b	Thin	5.00	20	100
2021	2b	Thin	10.00	20	200
2022	2a	Coppice	0.50	8	4
2023	2a	Coppice	0.50	8	4

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.