



Springfield Wood

Management Plan

2020-2025

MANAGEMENT PLAN - CONTENTS PAGE

ITEM

Introduction

Plan review and updating

Woodland Management Approach

Summary

1.0 Site details

2.0 Site description

3.0 Public access information

3.1 Getting there

4.0 Long term policy

5.0 Key Features

5.1 Secondary Woodland

5.2 Connecting People with woods & trees

6.0 Work Programme

Appendix I: Compartment descriptions

Glossary

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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 (operations@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:	Springfield Wood
Location:	Salehurst, Robertsbridge
Grid reference:	TQ742245, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 199
Area:	5.52 hectares (13.64 acres)
Designations:	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

Springfield Wood is situated on the north side of the Rother valley between the villages of Robertsbridge and Salehurst in the East Sussex High Weald AONB. The site was planted as part of the Woodland Trust's Woods on Your Doorstep campaign in early 1999. There was a strong commitment from the local community during fundraising, designing and planting the site. It offers excellent views across the valley and provides a recreational resource for the local community.

The site (5.52ha / 13.63 acres) was formerly two fields of semi-improved grassland surrounded by ancient hedgerows with a good mix of locally native tree and shrub species. A small area of gill woodland along the north-western boundary provides another good wildlife habitat as well as a potential source of tree and ground flora species which, over time, should colonise the new planting.

Planted tree species included oak, ash, hornbeam, field maple, beech, birch, rowan, hazel, spindle and Guelder rose. Growth of the planted trees was good for the first 10-15 years but species such as oak and hornbeam then suffered extensive squirrel damage. Since at least 2014 the ash has been suffering from ash dieback (caused by the fungus *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) and by 2019 the majority of the planted trees were severely affected or dead. A programme of removing dead and diseased trees was started in 2015 as part of planned annual ride management which also included coppicing hazel. More extensive felling of diseased ash took place in 2019. Gaps created by disease and felling are being filled with regeneration of species such as oak, field maple, hazel, spindle, blackthorn and ash which may prove to be more disease-tolerant.

The site is crossed north to south by a public footpath and has several loops of permissive paths covering most of the site. These are mostly in the form of ride grassy rides which provide a contrasting habitat to the new woodland. The site is used predominantly by local people within walking distance.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

General location:

The wood is located north of Rotherview, Salehurst, Robertsbridge, just to the east of the A21. It is approx $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the centre of Robertsbridge village along Northbridge Street, crossing the A21 and entering Rotherview via the twittern at its western end. The wood is reached via the drive leading to the garages behind the houses on the north side of the road.

General overview of paths & entrances:

The main entrance into the wood is a wide kissing gate. From here the public footpath runs north across the site, exiting via a stile. There are various other rides and paths around the site. All are grassy and unsurfaced with moderate gradients. Conditions can be very wet and muddy underfoot

Parking:

There is limited parking by the entrance to the wood. Alternatively parking can be found just off the A21 to the west of Rotherview.

Public Transport:

Nearest train station: Robertsbridge, approx 1 mile from the wood.

Nearest bus stop: Rutley Close, Robertsbridge, approx 400m from the site. There are several services a day (Mon-Sat). Information obtained from Traveline website on 5/1/07. Further information on public transport can be obtained from Traveline: www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk or tel: 0870 608 2 608).

Public Toilets:

The nearest public toilets are in the car park on Station Road, Robertsbridge, approx $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the wood. There are disabled facilities accessible by a RADAR key. Information obtained on 5/12/07 from Rother District Council website: www.rother.gov.uk. Tel: 01424 787878.

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The area of planted trees will be allowed to develop in to high forest native woodland in the long term. Managed shrubby margins along the ride edges will ensure rides remain open and a diversity of structure is present. Periodic ride-side coppicing will be necessary to maintain this structure and prevent rides and paths from encroachment.

The planted trees will be supplemented by natural regeneration of trees and shrubs such as oak and blackthorn from the surrounding hedges and woodland. Gaps in the canopy of varying sizes will be formed by the death of the majority of the planted ash trees in the short term. This will allow natural regeneration to occur, creating another age-class of trees with greater species diversity. The gill woodland area will have minimal intervention and continue to develop naturally, probably losing its mature ash in the near future.

The entrance and path network will be maintained as appropriate for the level of public access which is expected to remain as low-key for local visitors arriving on foot. The ride management mentioned above will maintain the varied aspect of the paths.

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 Secondary Woodland

Description

The majority of the site is secondary broadleaved woodland, planted in 1999. Approximately 9000 trees and shrubs were planted on 4ha of the site with 1ha left as open ground in the form of wide rides and glades. The main tree species are oak, ash, hornbeam, field maple, beech, rowan and birch. The planting was mostly in the form of large single species blocks. Woody shrubs planted around the main blocks of planting include hazel, hawthorn, Guelder rose and spindle. Key grassland species on the rides include red clover, lesser stitchwort and vetches.

The underlying geology is the Cretaceous Ashdown beds and the soil is classed as a typical stagnogley - slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged clay.

Most of the planted trees established and grew well and at 20 years old are up to 10m tall. A lot of the oak has suffered from squirrel damage which will limit its potential to become part of the canopy in the future. The hornbeam has also suffered from damage but continues to grow. During the summer of 2014 some of the planted and mature ash on the site were showing symptoms of ash dieback. By 2019 approx 50% of the planted trees were dead with the rest showing advanced symptoms and unlikely to survive. The mature ash in the hedgerow and gill still had early to mid symptoms with one coppice stool near the entrance showing virtually no symptoms.

A programme of ride-side management was instigated in 2015 with planted hazel being coppiced and diseased ash being felled. Regrowth from the coppicing has been good and natural regeneration of a variety of tree and shrub species has begun to colonise the gaps created by the diseased ash.

There are ancient woodland ground flora species on the central hedge-bank and in the gill in the north-west including bluebells and cuckoopint and these are beginning to slowly spread into adjacent planted areas in places. Where they are gaps in the canopy due to ash dieback there is prolific bramble or grasses. Blackthorn suckers have invaded extensively from the northern boundary hedge.

Significance

This area of new woodland extends and buffers the remnant woodland in the NW corner of the site (probably ancient woodland) and forms part of a habitat network within a well wooded area.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: small site with poor access limits silvicultural options to manage ash dieback.

Factors Causing Change

Ash dieback affecting all planted and some older trees.
Squirrel damage, particularly to oak.
Natural regeneration of field maple, oak, ash, blackthorn and spindle.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

In the long term the site should develop into high forest, native broadleaved woodland with species and structural diversity achieved through natural processes (such as tree disease and natural regeneration) with additional management as needed. The site should contain areas of young and maturing trees, a variety of shrub species and 10-20% open habitat in the form of grassy rides and glades.

Due to ash dieback this species may be relegated to a very minor component of the woodland in the long term. Natural regeneration will be the preferred method of recruiting replacement trees rather than planting although protection from deer browsing may be necessary. Replacement species are likely to be oak, field maple and potentially some disease-tolerant ash.

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

To maintain the structural diversity of the woodland with open rides and scrubby edges to the planted woodland blocks and to deal with tree safety issues caused by ash dieback.

During the plan period (2020-24) this will include:-

- Annual ride management: coppice ride-side shrubs and fell diseased ash within falling distance of rides (approx 8m). Total for 5-year plan period: approx 500m of rides.
- Reinstate approx 100m of ride along northern edge of site, west of public footpath: clear blackthorn; fell ash. Close parallel ride south of this route due to concentration of diseased ash (2020).
- Annual assessment of ash dieback and re-stocking by natural regen in gaps.
- Undertake WT woodland condition assessment to inform next management plan review (2024).

5.2 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

Springfield Wood lies between the villages of Robertsbridge and Salehurst, approximately 10 miles north of Hastings and within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The population of the parish in 2010 was 2,641. The initial design of the wood, drawn up with local people, incorporated a network of wide rides, glades and smaller paths to allow circular walks of various lengths. The total length of the ride network is approximately 1400m.

The site is a WT access category B: moderate regular usage, 5 – 15 people using one entrance per day.

The access point for visitors from the villages is on the public footpath running north from Rotherview, via a kissing gate. The wide rides are predominantly grassy but become bare ground under the trees. The site is on a gentle to moderate slope and ground conditions become difficult after wet weather.

Visitors are predominantly local to the site, arriving on foot.

Significance

While the site is in a rural area with public rights of way, it provides the local population with the opportunity to have full access to a small area of native woodland.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: the site has had a history of anti-social behaviour including damage to trees and off-road motorcycling.

Opportunities: to provide a small-scale local amenity for quiet recreation close to 2 villages.

Factors Causing Change

Growth of trees changing the aspect of some paths and loss of views.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The site will continue to provide a low-key, small-scale natural amenity to the inhabitants of Robertsbridge and Salehurst. There will be a maintained network of routes with a variety of aspects, from narrow shaded paths to open wide rides. The site will continue to be used and valued by the local population.

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

The site will be maintained appropriately for the current level of access. During the plan period (2020-24) this will include:-

- Biannual mowing of approx 1400m of paths, rides and glades in June and September.
- Re-routing of 100m of path in the north of the site to avoid concentration of dying ash (2020).
- Entrance and signage maintenance/replacement as necessary.
- Annual Zone B tree safety inspection/ash dieback assessment.

6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By
------	--------------	-------------	--------

Not available at this time due to GDPR constraints

APPENDIX I: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
Ia	5.52	Oak (pedunculate)	1999	High forest	Diseases, Services & wayleaves	Connecting People with woods & trees, Secondary Woodland	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
<p>Formerly 2 fields of unimproved grassland used for horse grazing. The site was planted with native broadleaved trees in 1999. Major species: oak and ash. Minor species: field maple; hornbeam; birch; beech; rowan. Woody shrubs: hazel; hawthorn; spindle; Guelder rose. Tree were established at 2m x 2m spacing (2500/ha). Shrubs at 3m x3m spacing (1100/ha).</p> <p>Along the NW boundary of the site there is a shaw along a gill containing mature ash, oak, hazel and blackthorn. There is a mature hedgerow running N to S through the centre of the site.</p> <p>Since at least 2014 ash dieback (<i>Hymenoscyphus fraxineus</i>) has severely affected or killed the majority of the planted ash (25% of planting; 2500 trees). Older ash in the hedgerow and gill are much less affected. Ride management since 2015 has started to remove dead/dying ash from ride edges.</p>							

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.

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

The Woodland Trust is a charity registered in England and Wales no. 294344 and in Scotland no. SC038885.

A non-profit making company limited by guarantee. Registered in England no. 1982873. The Woodland Trust logo is a registered trademark.