

# Kinclaven Bluebell Wood

## (Plan period – 2023 to 2028)



WOODLAND  
TRUST

# Management Plan Content Page

Introduction to the Woodland Trust Estate

Management of the Woodland Trust Estate

The Public Management Plan

Location and Access

## Introduction to the Woodland Trust Estate

The Woodland Trust owns and cares for well over 1,250 sites covering almost 30,000 hectares (ha) across the UK. This includes more than 4,000ha of ancient semi-natural woodland and almost 4,000ha of non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites and we have created over 5,000ha of new native woodland. We also manage other valuable habitats such as flower-rich grasslands, heaths, ponds/lakes and moorland.

Our Vision is:

“A UK rich in native woods and trees for people and wildlife.”

To realise all the environmental, social and economic benefits woods and trees bring to society, we:

- **Create Woodland** – championing the need to hugely increase the UK’s native woodland and trees.
- **Protect Woodland** – fighting to defend native woodland, especially irreplaceable ancient woodland and veteran trees; there should be no loss of ancient woodland
- **Restore Woodland** – ensuring the sensitive restoration of all damaged ancient woodland and the re-creation of native wooded landscapes.

# Management of the Woodland Trust Estate

All our sites have a management plan which is freely accessible via our website

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

Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) under licence FSC-C009406 and through independent audit.

The following principles provide an overarching framework to guide the management of all our sites but we recognise that all woods are different and that their management also needs to reflect their local landscape, history and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives.

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene in our woods when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity, safety and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.
2. We establish new native woodland for all the positive reasons set out in our Conservation Principles, preferably using natural regeneration but often by planting trees, particularly when there are opportunities for involving people.
3. We provide free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe. Where possible, we pro-actively engage with people to help them appreciate the value of woods and trees.
4. The long term vision for all our ancient woodland sites is to restore them to predominantly native species composition and semi-natural structure, a vision that equally applies to our secondary woods.
5. Existing semi-natural open ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained and new open ground habitats created where appropriate.
6. The natural and cultural heritage value of sites is taken into account in our management and in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.
7. Land and woods can generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We therefore consider the appropriateness of opportunities to generate income from our Estate to help support our aims.
8. We work with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders in developing the management of our woods. We recognise the benefits of local community woodland ownership and management. Where appropriate we encourage our woods to be used for local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.
9. We use and offer the Estate where appropriate, for the purpose of demonstration, evidence gathering and research associated with the conservation, recreational and sustainable management of woodlands. We maintain a network of sites for long-term monitoring and trials leading to reductions in plastics and pesticides.
10. Any activities we undertake are in line with our wider Conservation Principles, conform to sustainable forest management practices, are appropriate for the site and balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

## The Public Management Plan

This public management plan describes the site and sets out the long term aims for our management and lists the Key Features which drive our management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site – their significance is outlined together with our long, 50 years and beyond, and our short, the next 5 years, term objectives for the management and enhancement of these features. The short term objectives are complemented by an outline Work Programme for the period of this management plan aimed at delivering our management aims.

Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and we continually monitor our sites to assess the success of our management, therefore this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme.

Please either consult The Woodland Trust website

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

or contact the Woodland Trust

[operations@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:operations@woodlandtrust.org.uk)

to confirm details of the current management programme.

A short glossary of technical terms can be found at the end of the plan.

## Location and Access

Location maps and directions for how to find and access our woods, including this site, can be found by using the following link to the Woodland Trust web-site which contains information on accessible woodlands across the UK

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/find-woods/>

In Scotland access to our sites is in accordance with the Land Reform Act (of Scotland) 2003 and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

In England, Wales and NI, with the exception of designated Public Rights of Ways, all routes across our sites are permissive in nature and where we have specific access provision for horse riders and/or cyclists this will be noted in the management plan.

# The Management Plan

1. Site Details
2. Site Description
3. Long Term Policy
4. Key Features
  - 4.1 F1 Connecting People with woods & trees
  - 4.2 F2 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland
  - 4.3 F3 Secondary Woodland
  - 4.4 F4 New Native Woodland

Appendix 1 : Compartment Descriptions

GLOSSARY

Compartment Map

## 1. SITE DETAILS

### **Kinclaven Bluebell Wood**

Location:	Stanley. Grid reference: NO139376. OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 53
Area:	81.02 hectares (200.20 acres)
External Designations:	Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin
Internal Designations:	Welcoming Sites Programme

## 2. SITE DESCRIPTION

### LOCATION

The land is situated in Kinclaven, Perthshire, and is approximately 11 miles north of Perth, 7 miles SW of Blairgowrie, 3 miles east of Murthly and 4 miles NE of Stanley.

Kinclaven lies in the middle of a bend of the River Tay, between 1 and 2 miles away on its northern, eastern and southern sides.

The woodland is bounded by the minor Murthly to Kinclaven Bridge road to the North, and the minor narrow road connecting this road to Woodend Farm to the West. The Kinclaven to Stanley Road is not far to the south of the property.

Adjacent land uses are arable and pasture fields, forestry and housing.

### PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

The land gradually rises from the road to the north at about 50m above sea level, up to 82m above sea level at the highest point in the fields known as Court Hill, and back down slightly steeper to about 50m towards the southern edge. The land is formed of a ridge, orientated in a South-West to North-East direction. This gives the wood a NW aspect and the Court Hill fields a SE aspect.

The underlying bedrock consists of Old Red Sandstone of the Devonian period (dating from c.400 million years ago). The solid geography in the area is however obscured by a considerable depth of unconsolidated drift deposits from the late glacial period (c 12,000 - 15,000 years ago). The glacial meltwater deposits, consisting of sand and gravels, give the characteristic mounds and hummocky topography.

The soil type is mineral podzols in the Corby series, described as freely drained, and gravel derived mainly from Highland rocks. The climate conditions in the area is characterised by low annual rainfall and high sunshine hours.

### WOODLAND DESCRIPTION

#### Oak Woodland

The oak wood is one of the largest areas of Oakwood in Scotland (50 hectares) and is well known locally for its extensive carpet of bluebells in spring.

The oak is planted in origin, predominantly with pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*), and lacks much structural diversity. There is some regeneration of birch within the deer fenced area and there is scattered oak regeneration within the wood, but this is being browsed by deer and often in areas where there is a lack of light for seedlings to establish.

There is a good proportion of over mature trees and dead trees, mostly standing but also as fallen trees and branches.

Within the oak wood, there are some characterful veteran beech trees, mostly lining the old paths. These are believed to be have been bundle planted (many trees planted together as one group) which gives the multi-stemmed trees. Other species are occasionally present in the oak wood, particularly at the southern and western edges, including Scots pine, Douglas fir (at the edge of the wood), yew (in small groups to west of wood), birch (on southern edge), rowan, holly and elder. There are also a few older oak in the western part of the wood, including one believed to be around 300 years old.

There was an understorey of *Rhododendron ponticum* at the western side of the oak wood, but this has now been cut down. Four rhododendron bushes remain, but these are believed to be a Crest variety and not the invasive *ponticum*. Bracken dominates the ground flora throughout after the bluebells have finished flowering. The oak wood provides an ecologically rich habitat for a range of flora and fauna. Other than the ubiquitous bluebells and bracken, other flora includes wood anemone, pink purslane, greater stichwort, nettles and honeysuckle. There is also a good variety of fungi.

The wood is classified in the Ancient Woodland Inventory (Scottish Natural Heritage) as Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin. Ancient woodland has important biodiversity and cultural values by virtue of its antiquity. However, research shows that the wood is most likely to be Ancient (see Site History below).

The Native Woodland Survey of Scotland classes the oak wood as native oakwood with 100% semi-naturalness and 80% canopy cover. There is very high herbivore impact and between 0 - 25% invasives.

The National Vegetation Classification for the oak wood is classed as one of the woodland communities "mixed deciduous and oak/birch woodlands" group, with both W10 (*Quercus robur* - *Pteridium aquilinum* - *Rubus fruticosus* woodland) and W11 (*Quercus petraea* - *Betula pubescens* - *Oxalis acetosella* woodland).

There is also a narrow strip of mature trees in the fields, consisting of oak, beech and Scots pine. This is believed to be the edge of the old woodland on Court Hills, which was felled in the 1940s / 1950s. This area was previously grazed and there is no structural diversity or understorey.

#### Conifer Secondary Woodland

The conifer plantation on the north-western edge of the wood is first shown on the second edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1899 as mixed woodland. By 1959, the Ordnance Survey map shows this area to be all coniferous.

The species are predominantly Norway spruce, with some Sitka spruce, and 2 strips to the north with hybrid larch and Scots pine. The conifer wood was thinned before Woodland Trust acquired the land with occasional groups of windblown trees. Most of the area to the east of the car park blew down in Storms Arwen and Makek in 2021/22 and this area was clear felled, deer fenced and partially planted at the end of 2022.

There is little structural diversity or understorey, apart from a little elder. There is some regeneration and plenty of deadwood from the felling.

Groundflora is mostly mosses, ferns, wood sorrel and pink purslane. Invasive non-native Himalayan balsam has been controlled since we acquired the wood, but is still present in small numbers (control ongoing).

#### New Native Woodland

When the land was acquired, 3 fields surrounding the woodland were also purchased: Court Hill – a complex of unimproved pasture fields to the south; Knapp – an improved pasture field to South West; and a smaller arable field to the west of the car park. These were all planted between 2018 and 2020 with 32,000 native trees. Court Hill and Knapp were deer fenced, and car park field planted in tree shelters. Species planted were oak, birch, rowan, cherry, Scots pine, hazel, crab apple, holly, hawthorn, blackthorn, and elder. All the planting was carried out by school children, volunteers and the public at planting events. Some apple and cherry trees were also planted around the car park, using old Scottish varieties.

There are also some older trees growing in Court Hill, two small plantations of native broadleaved trees and shrubs planted in the 2000s, a group of mature birch growing on a slope and 4 individual mature Scot's pine trees growing at the eastern edge of the Court Hill.

The Court Hill fields were used to be woodland as shown on the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1899, but had been felled by the 1959 revision (1st series 1:25,000 OS map).

Ground flora is mostly grass, with bird's-foot trefoil, hairbell, creeping thistle, common mouse-ear, dock and heath bedstraw.

#### OTHER HABITATS DESCRIPTION

Two of the Court Hill fields under power lines have been retained as grazing areas for biodiversity of flowers and open space. This area is stock-fenced.

There is a stone built cairn to the east of the Court Hill fields which is a memorial to those that served in the 2nd world war.

The open space and glades in the wood are important habitats, providing structural diversity and corresponding biodiversity, particularly for invertebrates. The open area at the SE corner of the oak wood is one of the most important habitats within the wood for rarer species, because of its openness and warmth due to receiving sunshine within the shelter of the wood. The oaks on the south-facing edge are also important as open to the sun, providing particularly warm conditions for the developing life stages for invertebrates.

#### WILDLIFE AND FUNGI

There is a varied population of birds including woodpecker, crossbill, cuckoo, linnet, nuthatch, pied wagtail, redpoll, siskin, spotted flycatcher, redstart and tree creeper. Mammals include roe and fallow deer, pine martin, badgers, red squirrels, fox, voles and bats. There is a variety of butterflies including purple hairstreak, orange tip and comma. Fungi are common including porcelain fungus, common earthball, hen of the woods, and several different boletes, amanitas and brittlegills. There are many different invertebrates including dung (dor) beetle - often seen on the path, common blue damselfly, common darter dragonfly, ant, grasshopper, ladybird and ticks.

#### SITE HISTORY

The wood and fields were bought by the Woodland Trust in July 2017 from Ballathie Estates, with a legacy from a generous supporter.

The name of the wood on the Ordnance Survey map is North Wood, and initially was called Ballathie Bluebell Wood, but after local consultation soon after acquiring the wood, we asked people what they knew the wood as, and it was decided to change the name to Kinclaven Bluebell Wood. This was a combination of the two most frequently used names.

The following is a summary of Preliminary Notes on North Wood, Ballathie by Christopher Dingwall, July 2017 (full details in reference file).

There is map evidence that the area has been wooded a very long time. Timothy Pont's map in c.1595 shows three tree symbols to the west of Kerkock, but due to the sketchy nature and crude draughtsmanship of Pont's maps it is difficult to equate the planting with present day features. The map also includes the names 'Kincleuy', 'Balathy' 'Kerkock'.

John Adair's Manuscript Map of 1685 shows a detached block of woodland to the north of 'Balathe' and to the west of 'Kinclavin'. The woodland is again shown on John Adair's Printed Map of 1723, and in 1783 on Stobies Map of Perth & Clackmannan, and in more recent Ordnance Survey maps.

However the area is not shown as wooded on Roy's Military Survey of Scotland in 1750. The woodland may have been missed or the wood may have been felled at that time (and not marked on the map as not suitable for



concealing troops).

The New Statistical Account of Scotland for the Parish of Kinclaven (1843) describes many thriving and valuable oak coppices which are cut down every 20 or 25 years.

The older maps show the wood to be of mixed broadleaved and conifer trees, right up to the Ordnance Survey National Grid Plan in 1973.

Significant changes occurred between 1899 and 1959, when the Court Hill wood was felled and returned to grazing.

The whole of the woodland area is marked as 'Court Hill' on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1864), but divided into two separate sections on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey map (1890) named 'Court Hill' and 'North Wood'.

A long concrete structure is shown on the OS 1973 map for the first time. Local intelligence suggests that this concrete base was used as a cattle feeding area.

There is a historical path which goes to Kinclaven Church and may have been a drove road with banks along the path visible in places.

#### PUBLIC ACCESS

There is a circular, way-marked, earth path route around the woodland, approximately 2.5km (1.5 miles), and additional paths at the west end a further 1km (0.6 mile) in length. There are also minor paths from the roadside into the wood at several locations. The paths are generally flat with a slight rise at the east and west ends. The path can be muddy at times and is uneven with roots and stones. The circular path is signed as part of the core path network, and connects to the path to Kinclaven church at the south-east corner. There are also mown grass paths within the young woodland areas, which are of a gentle gradient, totaling approximately 5km (3 miles).

There is a car park at the north-west side of the wood, with a height barrier (2.05m) and room for 30 cars, plus several informal laybys to the north and west of the wood. There are several entrances from the north and west, plus there is a little used pedestrian entrance from the Kinclaven church core path to the east, and an entrance to the south near the Ballathie Hotel back entrance drive. Entrances are either through gaps in fencing or through pedestrian gates in the deer fenced areas.

### 3. LONG TERM POLICY

The oak woodland will continue to be a valuable habitat with abundant bluebells, and plenty of standing and fallen deadwood. There will be a slight increase in the structural and species diversity, but with oak being the dominant species. Several large glades within the oak wood will be maintained as open space to provide habitat diversity. The existing veteran beech trees will be retained as long as it is safe to do so. There will be no invasive non-native plants (rhododendron and Himalayan balsam), and little non-native regeneration.

The conifer wood will be retained as long as possible, although vulnerable to wind damage, and will be gradually converted to a native wood (including Scots pine).

The new woodland will develop into an attractive wood of mixed native species and open ground, for the benefit of people and wildlife. Once the woodland is established, the deer fences will be removed.

The woodland will be a popular place to visit for quiet informal recreation and the visitor facilities will provide a welcoming experience.

## 4. KEY FEATURES

### 4.1 F1 Connecting People with woods & trees

#### Description

The wood is well loved by both local people and those from further afield, especially when the bluebells are in bloom. Oak woodland of this size is not common in Perthshire and the veteran beech trees are a real feature. Although there is only a small community near the wood, (Kinclaven Green and individual houses), walkers travel from surrounding towns and villages, including Perth which is a 30 minute drive away.

There is a circular, way-marked, earth path route around the wood (2.5 km or 1.5 miles in length), additional paths at the west end of the oak wood (1 km or 0.6 mile), and grassy mown paths in the young planted areas (approximately 5 km or 3 miles in length). There are also minor paths from the roadside into the wood at several locations.

The circular path is signed as part of the core path network (STAN/111 & STAN / 124), and connects to the path to Kinclaven church at the south-east corner. It is generally flat with a slight rise at the east and west ends, but is uneven with roots and stones and can be muddy.

Signage on site includes ladder boards at the main entrances (3), information board at the car park and Court Hill east entrance, finger posts for the core path network and way markers for the circular path, and welcoming signs at all entrances. There are 2 benches in the woodland area and a further 4 benches in young planting areas.

There is a car park to the NE of the site with a height barrier (2.05m high) and space for 30 cars, and there are also lay-bys on the northern and western sides.

The main entrance is from the car park, with other minor entrances on the northern and western roads. There is also a little used pedestrian entrance from the Kinclaven church core path to the east of the wood and an entrance to the south near to Ballathie Hotel back drive. Entrances are either unrestricted, through gaps in fencing, or through pedestrian gates in deer fencing.

Two fields on the east side of Court Hill are stock-fenced and grazed by livestock seasonally. There are pedestrian gates into the grazing area with signs to say when livestock are present. Alternative paths are available.

There is a stone built cairn in the field with good views to north and south. The dedication plaque says:

Parish of Kinclaven

Erected

By the people of this parish

in thanksgiving for victory

in the war

1939 - 1945

There is a much loved rope swing at the north - east side of the oak woodland which is enjoyed by many.

There is an enthusiastic Woodland Working Group with over 50 volunteers who undertake practical work in the woods on a regular basis. Tasks have included clearing up old pheasant feeding equipment and old fences, pulling Himalayan balsam, planting trees, tree shelter maintenance, rhododendron control, bracken trampling, removing vole guards from young trees, repairing fences, and pruning apple trees. The volunteers also help to educate the public on how fragile the bluebells are, to reduce trampling.

A number of practical volunteer events have been held in the wood since the Trust acquired it, to clear up old pheasant feeding equipment and old fences, pull Himalayan balsam, and protect young trees from browsing with tree shelters. These have been enthusiastically attended and given us the opportunity to engage with the local community.

There are many primary schools in the area, many of which were involved in the tree planting in 2018 – 2020. The woods are a popular place for group walks. Stanley Development Trust have a leaflet which includes the circular walk in the wood.

### **Significance**

The wood is really popular place to visit during the bluebell season, with only one other smaller bluebell wood in the area near Blairgowrie. This is one of the best bluebell woods in Scotland with the woodland floor being carpeted with bluebells. The attractive nature of the oak wood and the veteran beech trees means people will travel a distance to walk in it, out with the bluebell season too. People also come to the wood for the ornithological and fungi interest, dog walking and it is also popular with photographers.

There are other core path networks nearby, but apart from the link to Kinclaven church, the paths here do not connect with other paths. There is a historical path which goes to Kinclaven Church and may have been a drove road with banks along the path visible in places.

The veteran beech trees are of special interest and are believed to be bundle planted (many trees planted together as a bunch). They may be of a similar age to the nearby Meikleour beech hedge (1745).

The Trust aims to inspire everyone to enjoy and value woodland and trees.

### **Opportunities & Constraints**

The local community, schools and corporate partners were involved with tree planting between 2018 - 2020. There are many local primary schools nearby - including Murthly, Stanley, Glendelvine, Royal school Dunkeld, New School Butterstone, Newhill, Rattray, Auchtergaven, Luncarty, Guildtown, Collace, Burrelton, Coupar Angus, and Kettins. It would be good to re-engage with these schools and corporate partners to show how well the trees are coming on. It would also be good to find other ways to encourage schools to use the wood for outdoor learning.

There are other core paths in the area that do not link directly with the wood (including one from Stanley). Any possibilities for extending paths to the wood should be considered.

The wood gets extremely busy when the bluebells are in bloom during May, and requires extra visitor management to ensure the fragile bluebells do not get trampled. Face to face contact and signage gives us the opportunity to educate the public to limit any damage.

<b>Factors Causing Change</b>
Wetter climate and more people using the paths, which has made the paths muddier, resulting in the paths becoming wider as people walk around the muddy parts.
<b>Long term Objective (50 years+)</b>
<p>The site will provide a place for quiet informal recreation for local users and visitors from further afield.</p> <p>The main paths will be maintained in a safe, usable condition - free from obstacles and encroaching vegetation, excessive muddiness and litter. Access provision will be in keeping with Woodland Trust Access Guidelines and access coding B (moderate usage site), and main entrances will be welcoming with Woodland Trust signs.</p> <p>A car park will provide a welcoming place to park.</p> <p>Community involvement will continue with volunteer activities.</p> <p>The bluebells will continue to attract a lot of interest.</p>
<b>Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)</b>
<p><b>Paths</b></p> <p>Paths in the wood will be kept free of encroaching vegetation, with edges cut if needed to stop bracken falling on the path (cpt 1a, 3.5km / 2 miles, annually).</p> <p>Grass paths in the young planting will be mown regularly (cpts 2a, 3a, 4a, 5km / 3 miles, up to 6 times a year).</p> <p>Trees along the path and roads will be regularly inspected for safety purposes and any work carried out as necessary (cpt 1a, 1b, 1c as per safety inspection timetable). The logs and branches from any tree safety work will be left in the wood as deadwood habitat.</p> <p><b>Path Improvements</b></p> <p>Three quarters of the circular path around the existing woodland will be surfaced with aggregate (MOT type 1 and dust) to stop the path becoming wider when muddy, causing bluebell trampling on the path edges. This will be from the rope swing in the east, past the car park to the north (including the path to the car park) and onto the Knapp gate to the west. (ctp 1a &amp; 1b, 1850m by 2025).</p> <p>Although the Woodland Trust would prefer to keep the paths in a natural earth state, the path has become much wider over the last 5 years, now up to 4 metres wide in places. This is as a result of people avoiding muddy bits by walking on the path edges. By creating a firm dry surface, this should encourage people to stay on the path, and stop the path from further widening. Parts of the existing path is already stoned and blends in after a while.</p> <p>The aggregate will be laid on top of the existing path to minimize any damage, with any earth movement limited to sections of cross slope or where drainage is required. The surfaced path will be 1.8m – 2m wide.</p> <p>The path on the southern edge of the existing woodland has not been affected as much by the muddiness or path widening so will not be surfaced as part of this operation.</p> <p><b>Entrances</b></p> <p>The entrances will be welcoming with Woodland Trust signage (ladder boards , information boards, wooden and plastic welcoming signs, finger posts and seasonal posters). These will be maintained and replaced when needed (Cpt 1a, 1b, 2a, 3a, 4a). A further interpretation board will be installed at the Court Hill NW gate (similar to one at NE gate) and a new ladder board at Knapp entrance to reduce signage clutter (cpt 1a &amp; 4a by end 2025). Any fly tipping will be removed promptly.</p>

### Benches and dedications

There are two benches in the wood and a further four in the young planted areas. A further new 2 benches will be installed in the oak wood (with dedications) to allow people to sit and enjoy the bluebells, not far from the car park and northern layby (Cpt 1a, no more than 2, by end 2026). The existing curved bench will also be replaced (cpt 1a by end 2028). There are also several logs near the edge of the path, suitable for sitting on.

Other virtual dedication products (e.g. dedicate ¼ acre) will be available to help with costs of managing the wood, but with no markers on the ground (whole wood).

### Car Park

The car park will be maintained as necessary and two wheelie bins emptied fortnightly by the Council (cpt 2a, annually).

### Volunteers

The Woodland Working Group, led by volunteer leaders, will continue to help deliver practical conservation work on the site. Tasks will include Himalayan balsam pulling, fence removal, control of any rhododendron regeneration, young tree maintenance, removing non-native tree regeneration, vole guard removal, bracken bashing (all cpts, up to 12 times a year).

Volunteer Wardens will also help keep an eye on the site, monitoring, carrying out minor tasks and helping visitors with enquiries to help people get the most from their visit.

### Community Engagement

Re-engage groups that have previously helped plant trees (schools and corporate volunteers). Send a 'Thank you' email with images or a short video of how the trees are doing by end June 2024, and invite groups back to site to do some other activities (e.g. nature day, vole guard removal) by end 2025.

Engage with public about importance of bluebells and issue of trampling. Signage, staff and volunteers on site to engage with public during busier times, invite membership team to have a stall (all annually). Host an activity stall on busy days (2 days in May 2024, and if successful, consider in future years).

Encourage people to learn more about the woods, but organising 2 public events (fungal foray in 2024, plus one other in 2026).

Engage with groups by responding to requests for guided walks to learn more about the wood, and invite other groups, especially those who are not confident being in a woodland environment. (At least 2 walks per year, and more if capacity allows. Walks led by volunteer guided walk leader).

### Rope Swing

The rope swing in the SE of the site will be inspected regularly and the rope replaced when needed (cpt 1a, twice a year).

## 4.2 F2 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

### Description

Although designated in the Ancient Woodland Inventory as Long Established Wood of Plantation Origin, there is historical map evidence that the area has been wooded since at least 1685. The tree species is predominantly oak (pedunculate oak / *Quercus robur*), which is planted in origin, with some special veteran beech trees along the circular path, some birch trees in the southern edge, and a few Scots pine, Douglas fir and yew on the western side. There are

many dead and senescent oak trees which are a great habitat for wildlife, with woodpeckers being heard regularly. The veteran beech trees are a significant feature and we believe they were mostly bundle planted which is why they have multiple stems.

There is little structural diversity with most of the trees being of similar age, with little understorey. In spring time the woodland is carpeted with bluebells, and over the summer bracken dominates.

Bracken is growing extensively over the site. It can inhibit natural regeneration by depriving other species of light and it produces a deep litter which stops seeds reaching the ground. Bracken also produces allelopathic chemicals, which inhibit seed germination and seedling growth of other plants, with bluebells being the exception. There is limited regeneration under the bracken.

Other ground flora includes wood sorrel, pink purslane, dog violet, wood anemone, bugle and primrose.

There is also a mature woodland strip, in the middle of cpt 4a, which was the southern edge of trees on Court Hill felled in the 1940s or 1950s, as it follows a similar line on historical maps. Trees comprise of beech, oak and Scots pine and are around 80 - 100 years old. There is a little lying deadwood from fallen branches.

### **Significance**

Ancient woods are our richest land-based habitat for wildlife and are irreplaceable. Woodland has been at this site for hundreds of years and the rich biodiversity of the wood reflects this. This wood is one of the biggest oak woods in the area, and with many dead and senescent trees, it provides a valuable habitat for a range of plants, birds and insects. Ancient woodland covers only around 2% of the UK's land area.

Over 50% of the world's population of Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) can be found in the UK and are threatened by habitat destruction and hybridisation with Spanish bluebells. In the oakwood the bluebells are abundant.

### **Opportunities & Constraints**

There is an opportunity to start to diversify the age structure of the wood by encouraging natural regeneration of native trees and halo thinning around some of the older (future veteran) trees to give them more room to grow. Also to diversify the species composition by planting an understorey of native shrubs.

A major constraint is deer browsing natural regeneration and bracken making it difficult for regeneration to establish.

### **Factors Causing Change**

There is some regeneration of beech and spruce, which will reduce the light level when matures and therefore limit the ground flora growing underneath it.

Although the invasive non-native rhododendron bushes have now been cut down, there is regrowth from some stumps and young seedlings appearing which need to be removed to stop it taking over again.

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

The Oak Wood will continue to be a special place, with the dominant species being oak. There will be diversity of ages and structure in the oak, including older trees and deadwood. Other native trees, including Scots pine, rowan and birch, and an understorey of native shrubs including hazel and holly will make up the diversity of species.

No invasive non-natives will be present (rhododendron and Himalayan balsam).  
Bluebells will be thriving and the wood will be a good habitat for wildlife.

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

#### Oak Wood diversification.

The oak wood consists mostly of a single species and age class, lacking much structural or age diversity. Although now adjacent to young woodland, it would be beneficial to start diversifying the structure of the oak wood by:

- Protecting groups of existing young natural regeneration from deer browsing, in areas where there is enough light for the trees to establish, by erecting small fenced areas (up to 6 further fenced enclosures, approx. 10-20m<sup>2</sup> big, by end of 2025, in cpt 1a). Including bracken control and hand scarification if necessary. (Cpt 1a, bracken bashing 2-4 times a year annually). Consider planting or direct seeding next plan period if regeneration is not establishing.
- Remove the deer fenced enclosure in the oak wood. The purpose of the deer fenced enclosure is to protect any regeneration from deer browsing. However, most of the fenced area has full canopy cover with not enough light for any tree regeneration to establish, apart from a few smaller glades, where the bracken is limiting any regeneration. Rather than fence off a big area, which creates barriers to access and is difficult to keep deer-proof, individual smaller areas will be fenced. (Cpt 1a, 900m by end 2028).

#### Control of non-natives

Rhododendron regrowth and regeneration will be controlled, by pulling up if small, or spraying with glyphosate for stumps (cpt 1a, 0.8ha, annually).

Any non-native tree regeneration will be pulled or cut by volunteers, to stop future shading of the vegetation – predominantly Spruce and beech (cpt 1a, 1b, 1c, 2a, annually).

Maintain a healthy population of red squirrels in the wood, by working in partnership with Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels to control non-native grey squirrels (Cpt 1a, annually).

## 4.3 F3 Secondary Woodland

### Description

Secondary woodland comprises the conifer plantation to the NW of the oak woodland, two young native plantings within the fields, and the group of birch growing in the field to the eastern side.

The conifer area (cpt 1b) was first shown as wooded on the 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey 1899 map. The present crop was planted in the 1960s and the species is mainly Norway spruce, with some Sitka spruce, and a strip of Hybrid larch and a strip of Scots pine. The trees have been well thinned with enough light for some regeneration of oak, birch, beech, spruce and elder. There are a few pockets of windblown trees.

Ground flora is mostly wood sorrel, ferns, pink purslane and mosses, with understorey being limited to the occasional broom and elder bush. There is a diverse range of fungi and the conifers offer a different habitat to the oak woodland. There is also a small area of the invasive Himalayan balsam growing between the western road and the main path. Regeneration is sparse with oak, holly, spruce, and beech. There is occasional lying deadwood, and rare standing deadwood.

There are also some mature Douglas firs along the road to the west (cpt 1a & 1b).



The area east of the car park (cpt 1c) used to be mainly spruce but this area blew down in Storm Arwen and Malik in 2021/22. This area was cleared and deer fenced in 2022. About 40% of the area was planted in 2022 with native broadleaves (blackthorn, hawthorn, hazel, crab apple), 20% of the area direct seeded with acorns collected from the wood, and the rest of the area left for natural regeneration (oak, rowan and birch in evidence).

The two young native blocks (cpt 4a) were planted in the 2000s. Trees are a mixture of oak, cherry, birch, Scots pine, ash, hazel, and hawthorn, In the southern block, some broom is growing as an understory. Ash dieback (chalara) is present in the young trees.

The area of birch trees on a slope at the western side of the grazing field (cpt 4g) are about 50 years old and are not fenced. It is not known if they were planted or regenerated.

### **Significance**

Secondary woodland is a valuable habitat for biodiversity and the conifer woodland provides a contrasting habitat with the oak woodland. It provides a home for the red squirrels, as well as supporting a wide range of fungi.

### **Opportunities & Constraints**

There is an opportunity to gradually convert the conifer plantation to a more native and varied structure over time, whilst retaining a native conifer habitat (Scots pine).  
The conifer plantation will become more unstable with time, and more wind-blown trees will be expected.  
A major constraint is deer browsing natural regeneration.

### **Factors Causing Change**

Wind blow in the conifers  
Invasives (Himalayan balsam) continuing to spread if not controlled.  
Tree diseases (ash dieback and phytophthora potentially affecting larch), and decay fungi (Phaeolus schweinitzii & Sparassis crispa)  
Non-native regeneration establishing

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

To retain the conifer plantation as long as possible and convert it gradually to more native and mixed structure.

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

Continue with control of the Himalayan balsam, pulling before flowering if possible, until eradicated (cpt 1b, 0.5ha, annually).  
Cut or pull any non-native regeneration before it gets too big to control with hand tools (cpt 1b & 1c annually).

Establish native trees in the deer fenced area east of the car park (previously restocked with a mixture of planting, direct seeding and regeneration) (cpt 1c, 1ha). No further establishment work planned this plan period.

#### 4.4 F4 New Native Woodland

##### Description

The young woodland was planted between 2018 and 2020 in ex-grazing fields to the south of the oak wood with a mix of native trees . Over 32,000 trees were planted by local schools and volunteers. Species includes oak, rowan, birch, cherry, Scots pine, hazel, crab apple, hawthorn, blackthorn and holly. Two areas are deer fenced (cpt 3a and 4a/g) with the trees planted in vole guards. A third area (cpt 2a) was planted in tree shelters. All areas were inversion mounded before planting. In 2023 the trees were establishing well with no further beat-up or weed-control anticipated, other than some hand weeding.

Open ground has been incorporated in the planting mosaic for habitat diversity and views. Two fields under the powerlines (cpt 4g) are being kept open by seasonally grazing with livestock, to encourage more diverse flora.

There is a mixed native hedge planted on the western edge (cpt 2a & 3a) including hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, and a range of flowers including red campion, foxglove, black knapweed, ox-eye daisy and stitchwort.

An over-ground power line crosses the eastern side of the fields (cpt 4g), an underground private water pipe crosses the Knapp area (cpt 3a), and a phone line runs parallel with the northern road (mostly underground) (cpt 2a).

##### Significance

The UK is one of the least wooded countries in Europe. Planting trees helps to fulfil the Trust's vision of a UK rich in native woods and trees, for people and wildlife.

Open land is an important part of a mosaic of habitats, so some areas of open ground have been left unplanted.

##### Opportunities & Constraints

The young native woodland, is expanding and buffering the existing woodland, and connecting up the existing areas of wood to create a habitat network, in a location that can benefit both people and wildlife.

Deer numbers are high in the area, so all new planting has been protected by fencing or tree shelters, which will remain in place until establishment.

Wayleaves (overhead power line and underground water pipe and telephone line) run through cpts 3a, 2a and 4g.

##### Factors Causing Change

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

To create a well-established new native woodland, with a diversity of species, and structural diversity through open ground and shrubs, thriving with wildlife and well-used by local people. Once the trees are well established the deer fences, tree shelters and vole guards will be removed.

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

The young woodland will be maintained to ensure successful establishment by tree shelter maintenance, hand weeding of trees and fence maintenance as required (cpts 2a, 3a, 4a annually).

The vole guards will be taken off when no longer needed (cpt 4a by end of 2028). Bracken encroachment from the oak wood into Court Hill will be controlled by mowing the path along the deer fence and hand pulling / cutting any bracken that encroaches to the south of this mown path (cpt 4a, regularly each year).

The hedges on the roadside will be left to become shrubby thickets, to encourage maximum amounts of berries and seeds (cpt 2a & 3a, western edge). The Knapp hedge will be cut to stop the hedge encroaching on the road (cpt 3a, 350m, annually).

The old rabbit fence along the western edge of car park field will be removed as no longer needed (cpt 2a, 200m by end of 2026).

The open ground fields will continue to be grazed with cattle and sheep to encourage more diverse flora (cpt 4g, 3.3ha, seasonal grazing).

The 14 apple trees planted around the car park, will be pruned and the netting cages removed or replaced to protect them from deer damage (cpt 2a, annual pruning, 14 cages by end of 2025).

## APPENDIX 1 : COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
1a	41.85	Oak (pedunculate)	1960	High forest	Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site	Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin
<p>The oak wood is one of the largest contiguous areas of oakwood in Scotland and has an amazing display of bluebells in spring. It contains a large proportion of over-mature and dead oak trees, which are a really valuable habitat for wildlife. The dominant canopy species is pedunculate oak, which were planted and there is little structural diversity. There are also some notable veteran beech trees mostly lining the main footpaths. Along the southern edge there are some birch trees, with birch thickets regenerating inside the deer fenced area. In the west end of the wood there are some older oak (P 1900s), occasional Scots pine, yew and some mature Douglas fir. There used to be dense <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> bushes at west end, but these have all been cut down (2022). Small amounts of regrowth and seedlings still occur (but are controlled) Ground flora is dominated by bluebells and bracken. Other flora includes wood sorrel, pink purslane and primrose. A deer fenced enclosure is present to the south end of the wood.</p> <p>This sub-compartment includes a track with access to the south-west with open ground and few mature oak on boundary bank. There are some old log piles from previous harvesting work that are a good deadwood habitat. There is a large quantity of Himalayan balsam on the neighbour's woodland to the east of the track.</p>						
1b	5.4	Norway spruce	1960	High forest		
<p>Mature Norway spruce plantation with some Sitka spruce, and a band of Hybrid larch and then a band of Scots pine on the northern side. The wood has been thinned previously with enough light for ground flora - mainly wood sorrel. There is lying dead wood and the occasional hung up trees and also some windblown. There is an area of Himalayan balsam in the south-western part of the wood between the road and the path.</p>						
1c	1.42	Mixed native broadleaves	2022	Wood establishment		
<p>Area of spruce (similar to cpt 1b) which mostly blew down in Storm Arwen and Storm Malik n 2021/22. This area was cleared and deer fenced in 2022. About 40% of the area was planted in 2022 with native broadleaves (blackthorn, hawthorn, hazel, crab apple), 20% of the area direct seeded with acorns collected from the wood, and the rest of the area left for natural regeneration (oak, rowan and birch in evidence).</p>						
2a	3.05	Mixed native broadleaves	2018	Wood establishment		

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
<p>The area west of the car park was an arable field, which was planted in 2018 with a mix of native broadleaves and Scots pine in tree shelters (1.5m).  There is a mixed hedge along the western boundary and a healthy population of wild flowers throughout.  In the NE corner, there is a car park for 30 cars (and a height barrier 2.05m high at the entrance). There is an underground telephone wire that runs parallel with the road.</p>						
3a	4.56	Mixed native broadleaves	2019	Wood establishment	Services & wayleaves	
<p>The Knapp, situated at the SW corner of the property, was planted in 2019 with native trees inside a deer fence. It was an unimproved pasture field when acquired.  There is a mixed native hedgerow running along the road to the west side. An underground water pipe crosses this field.</p>						
4a	21.33	Mixed native broadleaves	2020	Wood establishment	Services & wayleaves	
<p>Court Hill, to the south of the oak wood, was pasture fields which was planted with native trees in 2019-2020 inside a deer fence. The northern part of this area used to be woodland until the 1940s or 1950s. The southern part (separated by mature strip of trees) was improved pasture. The soils are well-drained but have a high stone content and are quite compacted.</p> <p>This sub-compartment includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a thin strip of trees which survived when the rest of Court Hill was felled. Consists of beech, oak, birch, rowan, and Scots pine (P1940 / 50s) with no understorey due to past grazing. There is some deadwood, both standing and fallen. [This used to be cpt 1c].</li> <li>- two separate areas of mixed broadleaved plantations consisting of birch, oak, rowan, ash, gean (wild cherry), hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, with Scots pine, which were planted in tree shelters in the 2000s. The northern area was planted by the scouts as a Millennium project. Ground flora is dominated by grasses. There is no deadwood. There are a couple of old rabbit burrows in the southern block and broom growing. There are the remains of an old dyke running north to south in the southern plantation (which used to be cpt 4b).</li> <li>- two individually grown granny Scots pines (and a further one just in cpt 4g).</li> </ul>						
4g	3.4	Open ground	1940	Non-wood habitat		
<p>Open ground, stock fenced and grazed on a seasonal basis with sheep and cattle, for the benefit of flora diversity and open space.  There are a few mature trees: a thin strip of broadleaves through the middle of the fields, a group of birch on the NW slope, and an individual Scots pine tree to the NE. A further dead pine, on the ground was believed to have been struck by lightning.</p>						

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
<p>Overhead powerlines cross the 2 fields (north to south).</p> <p>There is a stone built memorial cairn dedicated to those that served in the second world war on the high point, with good views to north and south.</p> <p>There is a small area of gorse to the south of the cairn, and old rabbit burrows.</p> <p>[This area used to be part of cpt 4a and 4d].</p>						

### **Ancient Woodland**

Ancient woods are defined as those where there has been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD. In Scotland ancient woods are defined strictly as sites shown as semi-natural woodland on the 'Roy' maps (a military survey carried out in 1750 AD, which is the best source of historical map evidence) and as woodland all subsequent maps. However, they have been combined with long-established woods of semi-natural origin (originating from between 1750 and 1860) into a single category of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland to take account of uncertainties in their identification. Ancient woods include Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (see below). May support many species that are only found in ancient woodland.

### **Ancient Semi - Natural Woodland**

Stands in ancient woods defined as those consisting predominantly of native trees and shrubs that have not obviously been planted, which have arisen from natural regeneration or coppice regrowth.

### **Ancient Woodland Site**

Stands in ancient woods that have been converted to plantations, of coniferous, broadleaved or mixed species, usually for timber production, including plantations of native species planted so closely together that any semi-natural elements of the understorey have been suppressed.

### **Beating Up**

Replacing any newly planted trees that have died in the first few years after planting.

### **Broadleaf**

A tree having broad leaves (such as oak) rather than needles found on conifers (such as Scots pine).

### **Canopy**

The uppermost layer of vegetation in a woodland, or the upper foliage and branches of an individual tree.

### **Clearfell**

Felling of all trees within a defined area.

### **Compartment**

Permanent management division of a woodland, usually defined on site by permanent features such as roads. See Sub-compartments.

### **Conifer**

A tree having needles, rather than broadleaves, and typically bearing cones.

### **Continuous Cover forestry**

A term used for managing woods to ensure that there are groups or individual trees of different ages scattered over the whole wood and that some mature tree cover is always maintained. Management is by repeated thinning and no large areas are ever completely felled all at once.

**Coppice**

Trees which are cut back to ground levels at regular intervals (3-25 years).

**Exotic (non-native) Species**

Species originating from other countries (or other parts of the UK) that have been introduced by humans, deliberately or accidentally.

**Field Layer**

Layer of small, non-woody herbaceous plants such as bluebells.

**Group Fell**

The felling of a small group of trees, often to promote natural regeneration or allow planting.

**Long Term Retention**

Discrete groups of trees (or in some cases single trees) that are retained significantly past their economic felling age. Operations may still be carried out within them and thinning is often necessary to maintain stability.

**Minimum Intervention**

Areas where no operations (such as thinning) will take place other than to protect public safety or possibly to control invasive exotic species.

**Mixed Woodland**

Woodland made up of broadleaved and coniferous trees.

**National vegetation classification (NVC)**

A classification scheme that allows an area of vegetation to be assigned to the standardised type that best matches the combination of plant species that it contains. All woodlands in the UK can be described as being one of 18 main woodland types (W1 - W18), which principally reflect soil and climatic conditions. For example, Upland Oakwoods are type W11, and normally occur on well drained infertile soils in the cooler and wetter north and west of Britain. Each main type can be subdivided into numerous subtypes. Most real woods contain more than one type or sub-type and inevitably some woods are intermediate in character and can't be properly described by any sub type.

**Native Species**

Species that arrived in Britain without human assistance.

**Natural Regeneration**

Naturally grown trees from seeds falling from mature trees. Also regeneration from coppicing and suckering.

**Origin & Provenance**

The provenance of a tree or seed is the place where seed was collected to grow the tree or plant. The origin is the geographical location within the natural range of a species from where seeds/tree originally derives. Thus an acorn collected from a Turkey oak in Edinburgh would have an Edinburgh provenance and a southern European origin.



**Re-Stocking**

Re-planting an area of woodland, after it has been felled.

**Shrub Layer**

Formed by woody plants 1-10m tall.

**Silviculture**

The growing and care of trees in woodlands.

**Stand**

Trees of one type or species, grouped together within a woodland.

**Sub-Compartment**

Temporary management division of a compartment, which may change between management plan periods.

**Thinning**

The felling of a proportion of individual trees within a given area. The remaining trees grow to fill in the space created.

**Tubex or Grow or Tuley Tubes**

Tubes placed over newly planted trees or natural regeneration that promote growth and provide protection from animals such as rabbits and deer.

**Weeding**

The control of vegetation immediately around newly planted trees or natural regeneration to promote tree growth until they become established.

**Windblow/Windthrow**

Trees or groups of trees blown over (usually uprooted) by strong winds and gales.

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# Compartment Map

