

Planning your woodland

Writing a management plan



WOODLAND
TRUST

WRITING A MANAGEMENT PLAN

If you have run through all the questions in the 'Getting to know your wood' advice sheet you will have a much better understanding of your wood and can think about writing a management plan. It might take some time to gather all this information but don't worry it is worth spending the time.

Your management plan needs to take into account the current state of your wood, your own objectives and the priority accorded to each, constraints such as legal requirements, with all of these set within a sustainable forest management framework. It needs to be a living document, regularly consulted, monitored, and updated, ideally with the input of your wider community of woodland volunteers and users.

If you are in England and applying for grant aid from the Forestry Commission, you will need to produce a management plan that complies with UK Forestry Standard. Forestry Commission England have produced detailed guidance and templates for woodland owners that you can use to produce a management plan, detailed plan of operations, and associated maps, with a simplified version for small woods. These are available on the Forestry Commission's website. Forestry Commission Scotland also has sample forest plans on their website, including for small community woodlands.

Even if you are not applying for grants, or do not live in England or Scotland, you might find the guidance, templates and samples above useful in drawing up your own management plan.

Your management plan should include the following elements:

- 1. Basic site details** - set out the name, address, grid reference and hectareage of the wood here, along with any statutory designations that apply to all or a specified part of it, such as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA).
- 2. Site description** - keep this succinct and non-technical, starting with a physical outline of the wood – its age and species structure, its general condition, overstorey, understory and ground flora. Is it steep or flat, north or south facing, wet or dry? What are the soils like? Does it include a percentage of non-woodland habitats? And what about its context in the wider landscape? You should also summarise the history of the site, and mention any notable man-made features or significant constraints on management.
- 3. Public access information** - what public rights of way and informal footpaths or byways exist already, and in what condition? Where are the main entrance points to the wood, including car parking if appropriate, and are they well-maintained? Do horse riders, bicycles or other vehicles frequent the wood? You could also sum up the current level of use by the public here, and the forms that takes.
- 4. Long-term vision** - this section summarises your vision for the wood, painting a picture of the site and how its key features will be conserved or enhanced over 50 or more years. This could embrace not only your aims in terms of conservation, but recreation, community involvement and commercial activity. Briefly outline how you want your wood to look in decades to come, and the rationale behind the management options you've chosen to achieve that. Avoid setting unrealistic targets or being over-specific, but (equally) try not to be so general that your group's vision could be misinterpreted.
- 5. Short term objectives and work plan** - this is where you plan and manage specific operations for preserving or enhancing your wood's key features over the coming years. When writing your plan, include a full five-year programme, linking it to specific target dates and setting out who is responsible for completing the work. List the tasks in chronological order, along with any income or expenditure that applies to each. Don't forget to include anything you'll do to ensure your wood is safe, tidy and well-maintained. This programme is likely to be the section of the management plan you refer to most often. It needs to take into account all the information you gathered about your wood's current condition and any threats such as tree disease, over grazing and browsing by deer.
- 6. Monitoring** - any monitoring you plan to do to ensure you are meeting your objectives. This should include recording activity and management work that has taken place in the wood and the dates when it was done. It could also include records of change in your wood as management work progresses. This could be done through formal, regular surveys of specific features.
- 7. Public engagement** - how you are going to engage any stakeholders in the management process.

- 8. Maps** - if your site is large or more complex, you may need to break it down into compartments or even sub-compartments with separate operations for each. These need to be shown clearly on your maps.

Management plans should be reviewed and updated around every five years but annual reviews to the programme of works should take place to ensure things are still on track. Remember to consult stakeholders when you produce your management plan, and when you review it.