

Eaton Wood

Management Plan

Date:	2003	to	2022
Owner / tenant:	Mr G Good		
Agent / contact:	Mr R Robertson		

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 Location

Nearest town, village or feature	Craven Arms
Grid reference	SO500879
Total area (ha)	58

1.2 Description of the woodland(s) in the landscape

The woodland is a very prominent feature in the landscape on the North West facing dip slope of the Wenlock Edge escarpment. The Wenlock Edge is noted as being the longest continuous length of woodland in England.

The Wood is within the Shropshire Hills AONB.

1.3 History of Management

Eaton Woodlands have been in the ownership of the Good family since 1952, when the then Forestry Commission Officer was noted as describing them as mainly "scrub, briar & bracken". The wood has been continuously within the Forestry Commission Grant system since 1952 - from dedication through to the current Woodland Grant Scheme.

Since 1952 restocking has been the main focus using a hardwood/softwood nurse mix of mainly oak/Norway spruce and beech/Norway spruce mixtures. Although much of the Norway spruce has now been removed and sold as Christmas trees. Advantage has been taken of the prolific regeneration and good form of the ash that has been nurtured within this system and now forms a major component of the wood.

The Western Red Cedar had a good local market until recently. Ash, beech and oak supply local markets with firewood to support the ongoing thinning work.

Within the last 10 years a pond within the wood has been restored (see Constraints map).

2. WOODLAND INFORMATION

2.1 Areas and features

2.1.1 Designated Areas	In Woodland	Adjacent to Woodland	Map
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)	X		Constraints
Other designations eg: National Parks (NPs), Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)	X		
Details Shropshire Hills AONB Eaton Track Geological SSSI			
2.1.2 Rare and important species	In Woodland	Adjacent to Woodland	Map
Red Data Book or BAP species	X	X	Ecological
Rare or threatened species	X	X	Ecological
Details Ecological survey carried out in late summer 2003 recorded: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 badger setts • Raven: resident locally and could be breeding • Small Leaved Lime: 1 large coppice specimen • Broad Leaved Heleborine: one spike found of this uncommon orchid • Dormouse: not confirmed in the wood, present nearby. Suitable conditions currently small areas. • Song thrush: Several individuals of this 'RED list' bird. • Bluebell: large colonies of this protected species 			
2.1.3 Habitats	In Woodland	Adjacent to Woodland	Map
Ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW)	X		Constraints
Other semi-natural woodland	X		Constraints
Plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS)	X		Constraints
Semi-natural features in PAWS	X		Constraints
Woodland margins and hedges		X	Constraints
Veteran and other notable trees	X		Constraints
Breeding sites	X		Constraints
Habitats of notable species	X		Constraints
Unimproved grassland		X	Constraints
Rides and open ground	X	X	Constraints
Valuable wildlife communities	X	X	
Feeding areas	X		
Details <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASNW & PAWS across the site • Ancient small leaved lime stools • Good network of mown and other open rides & glades • Unimproved grassland adjacent to south east (see Constraints map) 			

2.1.4 Water	In Woodland	Adjacent to Woodland	Map
Watercourses	X		Constraints
Ponds	X		Constraints
Details			
2.1.5 Landscape	In Woodland	Adjacent to Woodland	Map
Landscape designated areas	X		
Landscape features	X		
Rock exposures	X		Constraints
Historic landscapes	X		
Areas of the woodland prominent from roads	X		
Areas of the woodland prominent from settlements	X		
Details			
Shropshire Hills AONB. Visible from Eaton village and neighbouring settlements, as well as from country roads. Reasons for SSSI notification: the banks of this sunken track provide important exposures of a sequence of mudstones and limestones, part of the Wenlock Series of rocks, of the Silurian System. This is an internationally important locality for geological study as it is now designated as a standard or reference section for one of the 'Stages' (the Homerian) of the Silurian Period of Geological history. The section also spans an important junction between two 'zones' finer sub-divisions of the Silurian, which are defined by the changing make-up of diagnostic fossils known as graptolites. This zonal junction, used for accurate dating of the strata, is discernible worldwide and of key importance in comparing rock sequences internationally.			
2.1.6 Cultural Features	In Woodland	Adjacent to Woodland	Map
Public rights of way	X	X	Constraints
Prominent viewing points	X	X	Constraints
Details			
The Jack Myton Way and another public footpath run through the wood. (see map)			
2.1.7 Archaeological Features	In Woodland	Adjacent to Woodland	Map
Historical features	X		Constraints
Details			
Archaeological feature noted. Information available in Ecological survey.			

2.2 Woodland resource characteristics

Species and age classes

The majority of the wood is hardwood/softwood nurse mix of mainly oak/Norway spruce and beech/Norway spruce mixtures planted between 1945 and 1960. Other broadleaved species present include sycamore, sweet chestnut, southern beech, small leaved lime, wych elm, hazel, hybrid poplar, willow and aspen. Conifers extend to European Larch, Western Red Cedar, Douglas Fir and both Scots & Corsican Pine. (A map is maintained by the owner which includes full details of species, area and planting years.)

Age class is diverse due to the staged thinning over the past 20 years, together with recruitment of ash regeneration which has come through in the plantation areas and the retention of shrub species and suppressed conifer growth under the thinned oak and ash. This has met timber, conservation and shooting objectives by providing cover.

Growth and yield Management

The policy is to continue with the thinning work in areas as yet un-thinned and to continue selective thinning of those already thinned. In broadleaved areas the policy is to thin to best stems, removing a maximum of 35% standing volume.

Over the past 5 years this has resulted in approx. 200m³ thinned hardwood material sold as firewood and approx. 350 tonnes of softwood thinnings. This is the level of production expected over the next 5-year period.

Estimates have been arrived at from records of past sales of firewood and softwood thinnings and visual inspection of stands, which are all well stocked. There is also a photographic record demonstrating the thinning and overall development of the wood since 1952.

2.3 Site description

These woods are part of the Wenlock Edge series of woodlands and long term they are to be preserved as a prominent landscape feature in the Shropshire Hills AONB. Access for extraction is good in those areas where harvesting has taken place, with stone on the main access tracks and others being regularly mown. Further work is needed to access parts of the wood proposed for thinning in the next 5 years.

Maps of geology, soils & topography are with the owner.

It is on the steep North West facing dip slope of the Wenlock Edge escarpment. The soils are mainly free draining over limestone. Elevation is from 170m to 240m.

2.4 Significant hazards, constraints and threats

The terrain is both steep and wet, posing a hazard to anyone extracting timber as well as inflicting rutting and compaction on the ground. Timing of operations and use of low impact extraction systems should be considered. There are some steep faces to both the SSSI and some of the rides that should be made apparent to anyone working on the site.

Grey squirrel pose a significant threat, inflicting damage particularly on the oak and beech, through bark stripping. This is reduced by trapping, undertaken by the owner.

Public access is a constraint (see constraints map). Anyone carrying out works should be made aware of the presence of public rights of way and where they affect operations.

3. LONG TERM VISION, MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY

3.1 Long term vision

The long-term policy of restoration to enhance the lowland mixed broadleaved character found on the Wenlock Edge. Over the next 30 years, it is hoped to bring the majority of the woodland up to a condition where quality timber is being produced.

The owner is committed to management in compliance with the UKWAS standard, as is demonstrated by adherence to best practice applied within these woods.

3.2 Management Objectives

No	Objective
1	Maintain prominent landscape feature on the North West slope of Wenlock Edge escarpment.
2	Target management for biodiversity, mainly through diversification of age structure, stand types and provision of open space, balanced with non-intervention areas. Provision of habitat for dormice.
3	Personal recreation in the form of a pheasant shoot carried out with due consideration of associated codes of practice, whilst maximising the revenue from this activity to fund operations within the woodland.
4	Maintain public rights of way, whilst discouraging disturbance to other parts of the woodland by encouraging public access through guided outings for local interest groups.
5	Ancient Semi Natural Woodlands (ASNW) and other semi-natural woodlands: enhancement or restoration will be a priority and no exotic species will be introduced.
6	Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS): the woodland will be managed to ensure that it makes a significant contribution to the conservation of biodiversity.

3.3 Strategy

The strategy is to continue to thin the main blocks in the woodland as set out on the operations map attached. The rationale behind this is to:

- Improve timber quality and promote regeneration of native broadleaves;
- Increase light reaching the forest floor to benefit the characteristic ground flora;
- Improve the diversity and age structure to benefit the amenity value and landscape character.

Within this strategy access through the woodland will be maintained and improved. The rationale behind this is to facilitate extraction throughout the areas being thinned and to maintain recreational access for the owner and the shooting syndicate, as well as for guided walks along public rights of way.

4. MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS/OPERATIONS

4.1 Silvicultural systems

4.1.1 Harvesting

Over the next 20-year period no clear felling is planned. No burning takes place in the woodland and any lop and top are left to break down.

Thinning is to continue in the main blocks to produce a system of group selection, favouring ash and oak where present, to maintain landscape and wildlife value both within the ownership and the wider landscape context. The canopy will need to be open enough for the ash to have free crowns, but not to encourage too much bramble growth. A cycle of between 5 and 10 years will be adopted between thinnings, based on assessment over time of the stand structure and on markets. The Operations map illustrates this approach for the next 5-year period.

Small areas of coppicing are planned. There is historical evidence from the names of the woods and the history of the Wenlock Edge that this was historically coppice, prior to 'enrichment planting'. This would add temporary glades and improve dormouse habitat, as well as further diversifying structure, particularly at the edge of the wood.

Future felling and restocking will be informed by the ecological survey and take note of landscape recommendations from the AONB.

4.1.3 Establishment, restocking and regeneration

The long-term aim is to restock with natural regeneration of ash as the primary species, but this will not exceed 65% and will include appropriate proportions of other species within those required by UKWAS. Oak will form the main secondary species and will be favoured along with other broadleaved components of this lowland mixed broadleaved woodland. At this stage beech and conifers form a major component, but are not favoured in the long term.

4.2 New planting

None

4.3 Other operations

Roads and other constructions

Future decisions on placement and choice of fill material on existing tracks and the placement of new tracks will consider any information that is in the ecological survey along with any other environmentally sensitive issues that arise out of the certification process.

FC guidelines will be consulted on placement and construction of roads and any permission required will be sought.

Fencing

No fencing is used within the wood, other than to construct pheasant pens, to demarcate the geological

SSSI and to stock proof the wood. These are to be maintained.

4.4 Protection and maintenance

4.4.1 Pest and disease management

No synthetic chemical pesticides and fertilisers have been used in the past 5 years and there is a policy of continuing non-use.

Grey Squirrel is a significant pest within the wood. The owner controls them by trapping, which has proved a successful strategy, significantly reducing damage. Records indicate that on average 100 squirrels are trapped each year.

Fallow deer are present, but not a significant pest at present and the owner monitors their impact and would implement a strategy of control should they become a greater threat.

4.4.4 Protection from unauthorised activities

Horse riders occasionally use non-bridleway tracks and every effort is made to discourage this, if they are encountered and by signage to direct them along existing bridleways.

4.5 Game management

The owner runs a shooting syndicate within the wood. Members are required to join BASC and adhere to their codes of practice and carry adequate insurance. Game rearing is also carried out to the relevant codes of practice.

4.6 Protecting and enhancing biodiversity

4.6.1 Management of designated areas

The Geological SSSI is managed in accordance with an agreement drawn up between the owner and English Nature.

4.6.2 Measures to enhance biodiversity

An ecological survey has been undertaken as part of the Native Woodland Plan. This is available as an appendix to this document. The following management recommendations are made:

- Continue encouragement of ash regeneration as replacement for conifers in the canopy.
- Creation of uneven age structure throughout, leading to continuous cover
- Retention of more deadwood on floor and as standing trees
- Scalloping of ride edges.
- Creation of small ride side glades.
- Annual mowing of rides.
- Retention of shade in vicinity of cliffs and hollow-ways to maintain damp, enclosed conditions.
- Select suitable trees for long term retention as veterans
- Avoid damage to wet areas and springs
- Avoid crossing bluebell areas during spring & summer.
- Avoid woodland operations during the nesting season.
- Avoid damage to wood banks & other historical features.

These points are addressed within this plan and can be viewed on the Operations maps, constraints map and ecological map accompanying the ecological survey. All of these items should be consulted before works are undertaken.

4.6.3 Special measures for ASNW and SNW

See details given in 4.6.2 and Operations maps

4.6.4 Special measures for PAWS

The semi natural character of the wood is being restored through gradual removal of conifers, increased light levels favouring ground flora and use of natural regeneration of native species. Further details are included in the attached maps.

4.7 Management of social and cultural values

4.7.1 Archaeology and sites of cultural interest

(See Constraints map & Operations Maps)

4.7.2 Public access

(See Constraints map) These are kept accessible and well sign posted throughout the wood.

5. CONSULTATION

Organisation/individual	Comment	Response/action
Neighbouring woodland owners in Newhall Coppice and Black Wood.	Both are aware of long term plans for Eaton Woodlands and there is no dispute over this.	
Public - prior to work being carried out all sites are posted with explanatory signs	No comments received.	Keep using signs.
English Nature	Maintenance of SSSI.	SSSI management plan agreed.
Shropshire Hills AONB Office	Landscape recommendations.	Follow recommendations during felling and restocking.
Shooting syndicate		Maintain communication.

6. MONITORING PLAN SUMMARY

Objective number, issue	Indicator	Method of assessment	Monitoring period	Responsibility	How will information be used
Landscape feature	Prominence in the landscape	Fixed point photography from prominent viewpoint	Every 10 years	Owner	Feedback into felling and thinning planning.
Structural diversity	Structure and regeneration following harvesting and enhancement/restoration work in ASNW/PAWS sites	Fixed point photography. Walkover survey.	Every 5 years Annually	Owner	Feedback into planning of harvesting and need for additional regeneration and tending.
Increase habitat suitable for dormice	Area of dormouse habitat	Survey wood noting areas with appropriate habitat	Annually in autumn	Wildlife Trust partner	If the area is not increasing by 2% per year plans will need to be revised in collaboration with Wildlife Trust

Objective number, issue	Indicator	Method of assessment	Monitoring period	Responsibility	How will information be used
Game management	Compliance with BASC Code.	Survey rearing areas for damage. Monitor game bag returns	Annually	Owner	Change management if not compliant with code.
Public access	Condition of footpaths Number of guided walks	Walkover survey of footpath Number of visitors	Annually	Owner	Identification of problems with footpaths will facilitate remedial action. Feedback into planning schedule of guided walks.
Damage through pests	Squirrel and deer damage extent	Survey damage, noting areas most effected. Record number culled.	Annually in spring/summer	Owner	Feedback into planning for control levels.

See agreement with English Nature for monitoring of management of Eaton Track SSSI.

7. WORK PROGRAMMES

7.1 Outline long-term work programme (2008 to 2022)

Compartment or area	Activity	Year		
		6-10	11-15	16-20
All	Thinning	*		*
All	Selective Fell	*	*	*
All	Restore Coppice	*		*
All	Natural Regeneration	*	*	*

7.2 Short-term work programme (2003 to 2007)

Compartment or area	Activity	Year				
		1	2	3	4	5
2 & 3	Thinning (see Operations Map & 4.1.1)	*	*	*		
1	Selective Felling (see Operations Map & 4.1.1)				*	*
All	Ride Maintenance (see Operations Map)	*	*	*	*	*
1	High Pruning (see Operations Map)				*	*
All	Squirrel Control (see 4.4.1)	*	*	*	*	*

8. MAPS

Map No/Title	Description
Operations Map 03-07	Including thinning/felling, tenure, regeneration and maintenance and species distribution.
Constraints Map	Showing rights of way and special features. This will be added to when Ecological Map is available.
Operations Map 20-year Vision	Depicting broad use of silvicultural systems, long term retention areas and management proposed to maintain and enhance special features.
Ecological Map	(As part of Ecological Survey) to be included on completion.