



# I. Community woodland plan

This is the second edition of the Manor Road Community Woodland Management Plan. It has been written to reflect the current management of the woodland and also to provide a vision of how Manor Road Community Woodland could be managed in the future. It sets out the options for management and ways of turning these options into action.

There have been two marked phases in the history of the Community Woodland. It was established in 1993 in the very early days of the Forest of Avon. With no management plan or maintenance schedule drawn up at the outset, management was fragmented and under-resourced. While maintenance of the trees was adequate for their establishment, there was still much potential to improve management of the site as a community woodland for the benefit of local people and wildlife.

In 2001 a further 10 000 trees were planted with a major input from the local community. From this event a Friends group was created with support from B&NES, BTCV and initially Envolve and was formally constituted in 2002. This group has been well supported from the outset and has been very important both in consultation phase and also in carrying out regular task days on site.

A management plan was written and therefore management throughout the woodland has been far more coherent. However it is still under resourced.

This Community Woodland Plan therefore sets out wide ranging proposals for future management. It is inspired by the ideas of people who live near to the woodland, organisations (including Keynsham Town Council, the Forest of Avon, the Forestry Commission, BTCV, Avon Valley Partnership and the Friends of Manor Road Community Woodland), local schools and officers / members of Bath & North East Somerset Council.

By setting out these ideas into a prioritised plan of action, we therefore hope to:

- Acknowledge the views expressed and the management work carried out by the Friends of Manor Road Community Woodland.
- Provide planned long term good management of the woodland for the benefit of the local community and wildlife.
- Reflect good practice and priorities outlined in key national strategies such as England Forestry Strategy (Forestry Commission), and Towards Tomorrows Countryside (Countryside Agency) and local strategies such as the Forest of Avon Forest Plan, Bath & North East Somerset Council Strategy and the B&NES Biodiversity Action Plans.
- Enable the Council to allocate resources needed to meet its commitments as land owners.
- Encourage a stronger partnership between the Council, local people and environmental organisations.

This Community Woodland Plan provides direction and priorities for action. It is **not** intended as a technical manual - it assumes that an active partnership of tree specialists, environmental organisations and local people will take these priorities forward.

## 2. Manor Road Community Woodland

### Site Details

Name:	Manor Road Community Woodland
Local Planning Authority:	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Ownership:	Freehold by Bath & North East Somerset Council
Area:	22 Hectares
Grid Ref:	TL666672
Conservation Status:	Local Nature Reserve (declared in 2005). Forest of Avon Community Forest gateway site. Green belt land designated in the Wansdyke District Plan
Byelaws:	There are no byelaws
Access:	There is open access throughout with 9 pedestrian gates entrances and one stile. There are padlocked 3 field gates into the site; keys are held with the Countryside Management Officer at B&NES, the chairman of the Friends of Manor Road, the Landscapes Programmes Manager at the Forest of Avon and 3 contractors.

### Site Description

The community woodland lies on the eastern edge of Keynsham and close to Salford Parish. This area forms part of an important green gap between the two settlements, reflected in its designation as Green Belt in the Wansdyke Local Plan.

The woodland also lies within the Forest of Avon area. The Forest of Avon is an initiative that aims to create a greener and healthier environment for the future – right on people’s doorsteps. In the Forest of Avon Plan, the Manor Road Community Woodland has been identified as one of several ‘gateways’ to the Forest. The idea of ‘gateways’ reflects its potential to encourage greater local use through better information and improved access.

Over 19 000 trees and shrubs have been planted on the 21-hectare site since 1993 with grant aid from the Forestry Commission. Most of these trees and shrubs are native broadleaves and reflect some of the species already found in the area. There is a wildflower meadow (planted in 2005) and a pond.

Small scale access improvements as well as wildlife and landscape conservation work have been achieved through funding from B&NES Council, the Countryside Agency, Forest of

Avon, Avon Valley Partnership, plus various grants from Keynsham Town Council, The Woodland Trust and other donations.

The Community Woodland is owned entirely by Bath & North East Somerset Council and currently managed by Planning Services.

### **Community interest and consultation**

There is open access to the public throughout the whole site. There are 4 interpretation boards on the site and 3 dog bins. Section 1 (Middle Tynning) has surfaced paths through out. It is very popular with local dog walkers and there has been a good turn out to public activity days run in the community woodland in the past.

In 1998 a summer event was held, with help from Wellsway School, to find out what local people felt about the site and ideas they had for future improvement. Approximately 150 people attended, and their thoughts have formed the basis of this Plan.

Public tree planting events have been held in 2001, 2005 and 2007 and have attracted hundreds of people.

Local schools have also been involved in various environmental workshops and practical workdays run by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) in partnership with the Council.

The Friends of Manor Road are now the principle point of contact between B&NES council and the local community. The group meets bi-monthly and is attended on average by 15 to 20 members. The group also organises and runs monthly task days in the woodland. The Countryside Management Officer attends these meeting and occasionally the task days to provide the link. The Friends also raise awareness by monthly task days on site and various events throughout the year including a stall at Keynsham Music Festival.

## **3. Principles for future management**

Before looking at specific issues and proposals relating to the woodland, there are broad principles that all proposals in this Plan will encompass. These principles come from good silvicultural and environmental practices, views expressed by local people and objectives of Bath & North East Somerset Council relating to the sustainability agenda.

- The woodland will be managed primarily for the benefit of local people, wildlife and the local landscape.
- Good management should develop an uneven aged woodland to enhance its biodiversity and landscape value.
- Management of the wildlife value of the woodland will meet some of the objectives and priorities of the Local Biodiversity Action Plans.
- Timber production is not a key priority for the management of the woodland, but any timber and wood produced from standard management practices should be used to benefit the local community.

- The community should remain an important emphasis of the woodland – by ensuring local peoples views are embodied in this plan and encouraging local people to be involved in the planning and management.
- Young people should be invited to be involved in the long-term decision making and management of the woodland.
- Access to and around the woodland should be improved to meet requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) Part III by using Countryside for All standards & guidelines and with advice from local disabled people.
- Access improvements to the woodland should be for local people and visitors arriving by foot, bike or public transport – no additional car parking will be provided with the exception of parking for disabled people if considered appropriate.
- The woodland should fulfil its' role within the Forest of Avon, as a 'gateway' site with emphasis on provision of basic information and interpretation, links to public transport and provision of a circular walk and as a woodland contributing to tree cover targets set out in the Forest of Avon Plan.
- The safety of people using the woodland is very important and should be assessed regularly.
- Potential to use the woodland as an outdoor classroom for local schools should be maximised, and opportunities for informal education also developed.
- Public and environmental art should be used as a medium for involving local people in the woodland, and celebrating the community woodlands' identity.
- Where possible, local materials and local contractors and artists should be used to encourage local distinctiveness and sustainable use of materials.
- All work should comply with the contract conditions set out by the Woodland Grant Scheme and any future requirements under the Forestry Act 1967.
- All working practices must be carried out in accordance with current health & safety regulations.

## 4. Key issues

This section identifies specific improvements that could be made to the community woodland. These originate from local people, environmental organisations and officers of B&NES Council and all embody the principles laid out in Section 3.

They are ordered into 4 topics, which are prioritised based on knowledge of the site and resources available. The 4 topics are:

- **Tree management**
- **Access, enjoyment & education**
- **Wildlife & landscape management**
- **Building stronger partnerships**

## 4.1 Tree management

### Issues

Over 19 000 trees and shrubs have been planted in three main phases since 1993. Newly planted trees all need maintenance in the form of spring/summer weeding, checking shelters, selective pruning and thinning while they are establishing. With no management plan and protected budget, this work has been done on an ad hoc basis using a number of different local contractors in the past.

Trees planted in 2001 have been maintained by a local contractor under a 5-year establishment contract. However, no resources have been made available for a long-term contract on established compartments.

The trees that will be planted in 2005 and 2007 will be managed by a local contractor under a 5 year establishment contract. However, no resources have been made available for a long term contract on the established compartments.

Once trees are established, there will be opportunity to extract 'wood' during coppicing and thinning work. The Forest of Avon Wood Products Group can advise on how this wood could be used locally e.g. for bean sticks, greenwood crafts and charcoal making.

Local people have shown considerable interest in the trees in the past and should be involved in the management of the trees where appropriate.

### Proposals

#### Short term

- Carry out maintenance work on *established* trees and shrubs planted 1993-96 using contractors and the Friends of Manor Road. Work to include formative pruning, thinning and coppicing for Compartments 1, 2, 3a & b, 4a & b, 5a & b.
- Carry out maintenance work on *establishing* trees and shrubs planted in 2005 & 2007 through 5-year contract with local tree care company. Work to include weed control, shelter maintenance, beating up and firming in for Compartments 6a and 6b. (this to include the 4 small groups of trees planted in 2007)
- Continue to support the Friends group local people to help monitor trees and appropriate practical work such as formative pruning and coppicing.

## 4.2 Access, enjoyment & education

### Issues

There is access to all areas of the community woodland in varying different levels. The most formal access is in Middle Tynning where there are surfaced paths created of crushed stone. The paths in Hurn and Poor Hurn that are the most used and hence get the muddiest have woodchips laid down in the winter months by the Friends group. All the paths are mown three times a year between May and September.

Two permissive bridleways have been created and are being used. There are still opportunities to improve the accessibility of the pathways in a way that does not compromise with the character of the woodland

Access into the site has been improved over the past few years with all stiles replaced by gates. However, there are still improvements that could be carried out to improve access for all such as further path surfacing around gateways.

There are four up-to-date signboards in the wood – three in Middle Tynning and one in Hurn. to welcome and orientate people. There is seating in all compartments of the woodland.

A free leaflet is available for the woodland showing a map and giving a small amount of information about the site. This has been funded through a grant awarded to the Friends group.

Footpath links to the woodland could be better, with opportunity to link with the Avon Valley including Saltford, the Bristol & Bath Railway Path, the Avon Walkway, the Avon Cycleway and the Forest of Avon Path through better signing.

The boundaries to the community woodland are distinct apart from one. This area needs to be addressed as it causes confusion with visitors who are unsure where the boundary is and the neighbouring landowner suffers from unwelcome visitors on his land. There is a great opportunity to further emphasise the boundaries of the site by using artworks or boundary trees, a project which local schools may be interested in planning.

Environmental activities have been run by BTCV for children during the school holidays in the past and have proved popular, though no funding has been available for such activities since 1998. BTCV have also involved local schools with activities such as tree planting and hedge & wall surveys. There is more scope to develop such work.

Many woodland users consider car speeds on Manor Road to be too fast and a risk to pedestrians and horse riders alike.

There are three dog bins on the site as the woodland is well used by dog walkers. However dog mess remains a low level problem. Dumping of garden waste has been an additional boundary problem in Compartment I



## Proposals

### **Short term**

- Continue to carry out an annual safety inspection of the woodland and implement any work needed e.g. removing dead elm, dangerous trees, repair of gates, filling potholes in path.
- Continue the maintenance schedule to mow pathways 3 times during summer months and open spaces once a year.
- Work with local disabled people and existing users to improve access for all throughout the woodland.
- Monitor the horse riding use on the two permissive bridleways through the woodland
- In partnership with the Friends group organise occasional guided walks and events to explore woodland issues and keep people informed, and promote the woodland at local events such as Keynsham Music Festival.
- Empty dog bins

### **Medium term**

- Boundary marking project with local schools using artworks or special trees to be worked up with local artist.
- Local after school play clubs / youth clubs could be contacted and invited to use the Community Woodland for outdoor and environmental activities, with BTCV if funding allows. Explore links with the B&NES 'Play Ranger' scheme.
- Promote access to woodland by established public transport.
- Establish better links to existing longer distance recreation routes outlined above and develop a map to promote links with other paths in the area.
- Boundaries should be repaired where they are causing a problem with neighbouring landowners. Potential to plant new hedgerows alongside fences should be assessed.

## 4.3 Wildlife & landscape management

### Issues

A wildlife survey was done by Avon Wildlife Trust in 1993, prior to tree planting, and showed a good range of habitats that benefit local wildlife. The wildlife value of the site was not high enough to warrant a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) designation. A second survey was carried out by BRERC in 2003 and showed that the diversity of the site had improved since the first survey, (however it is still not of SNCI level).

BRERC have also carried out training with the Friends group to enable members to survey the woodland and send their results back to BRERC as well as keeping their own record.

As part of the B&NES Wildspace! Project Manor Road Community Woodland was designated as a Local Nature Reserve in 2005.

Both **hedgerows and dry stone walls** make an important contribution to the local landscape and act as safe corridors through the area for wildlife.

There are mature hedgerows along many of the boundaries to the site though they suffer from lack of management. Some of these have been replanted to improve value for wildlife and the local landscape and are growing well. There are opportunities to lay or coppice other hedgerows on the site.

Fallen / dead trees & logs along the boundary of the woodland provide an important deadwood habitat environment for fungi and ferns, and food & shelter for minibeasts.

There are many dry stone walls within the site, though most had been allowed to fall into disrepair. Several walls have been repaired using BTCV, the Friends Group and a local contractor. In particular the restored stone walls along Manor Road have become well loved landscaped features. There are other walls within the site that could be rebuilt but the cost of doing this would need to be taken into account.

In some areas, a mix of **grassland** and wildflowers exists, particularly in margins along walls and hedges. Since 2002 all areas of grassland have been cut once a year in early September and the arisings removed. This is already beginning to improve the biodiversity of these areas. Some areas of dense **scrub** exist and these benefit birds, small mammals and butterflies. Common species of bird and butterflies were recorded in 1993. Although there have been no more formal surveys carried out, local people have been recording birds and the results are now held by the Friends group and BRERC.

An area of 4.75 hectares in Plaishets has been sown with a calcareous grassland mix. Part of the field was sown in autumn 2005 and the other in spring 2006. During the first year summer after sowing the autumn sown area is the more species rich. A hay crop is taken in late summer.

There are several **water** features - springs and streams within the woodland and a pond in Plaishets. The pond has suffered with poor water quality in the past – no doubt not helped by the chemical run off from the arable field. However in the last couple of years the quality has improved and there are a reasonable amount of plant species and both frog and common newt in the pond. The Friends group have carried out some management work to control

the spread of Bur reed. There are opportunities to create a new pond within Plaishets in the future.

There are some small amounts of invasive species such as ragwort in the woodland, which need to be controlled before seed sets.

## Proposals

### **Short term**

- Continue to monitor the site with the help of the Friends group and any other interested recorders. All results collected to be sent to BRERC
- Carry out a bat survey
- Carry out a Great Crested Newt survey
- Monitor grass-cutting regime
- Take a hay crop annually from wildflower meadow and find a source for the hay created.
- Control outbreaks of ragwort, with help from the Friends group and, if it is a particularly bad year, with contractors.
- Supplement existing habitats with bird, bat and bee boxes and log & stone piles.

### **Medium term**

- Implement latter phases of hedgerow management and dry stone wall rationalisation
- Actively manage areas of scrub as scrub habitat
- Create new pond in Plaishets

## 4.4 Partnerships

### Issues

As outlined in section 3, various events on site involving local people and schools have been very successful. Also, individuals who use the site regularly have been very helpful at reporting problems such as rubbish dumping and damage to trees.

The Friends of Manor Road are a constituted group who were formed in 2001. They have a membership of over 50 and have good attendances at both meetings and task days. The group have been successful in applying for funding from Keynsham Town Council, The Woodland Trust, Bath & North East Somerset Council Voluntary Sector grants as well as attracting other private donations

Wellsway School 'Green Team' is linked with Manor Road Community Woodland and has carried out tree planting and survey work.

There is liaison between the local Keynsham group of Avon Wildlife Trust and there are future possibilities for joint events.

### Proposals

#### *Short term*

- Make sure training needs of the Friends group are met e.g. tree warden training, wildlife surveying, practical skills through local organisations.
- Keep woodland users informed of any major works planned in the woodland through on-site posters and consult on plans if appropriate.
- Encourage partnership with and use by local wildlife interest groups.
- Make stronger links with adjacent farmers and landowners.

## 5. Action Plans

This section is updated on a yearly basis:

<b>Action Plan 2009 /2010</b>				
<b>1.1 Tree Maintenance</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Where</b>	
Coppicing Goat Willow	Friends & Contractors	winter	Poor Hurn, Hurn, Breeches	
Formative Pruning	Friends	spring / summer	All	
Weeding, beating up etc	Landcare	throughout year	Plaishets	
<b>4.2 Access &amp; Enjoyment</b>				
4 Dog bins emptied	Keynsham Town Council	every 2 /3 days	Middle Tyning, Hurn and field by minsmere rd	
Paths mown 3 times a year	Ledbury's	Summer	All	
Annual safety inspection	B&NES	June	All	
Chippings on footpath	Friends	winter	Hurn & Poor Hurn	
Continuation of the boardwalk by pond	Friends and Contractor	Autumn	Plaishets	(Funding dependant)
Meadow interpretation board	Friends,	Autumn/Winter	Plaishets	
<b>Wildlife &amp; Landscape Management</b>				
Wildflower Meadow cut and baled	Peter Collins	September	Plaishets	
Open spaces mown and cuttings removed	Ledbury's	September	All	
Stone walling	Friends	Autumn / winter	Hurn	
Hedgerow trimming	Friends	Summer	All	
Birdbox checking and cleaning	Friends	Winter	All	
Pond Clearance	Friends	Winter	Plaishets	
Ragwort pulling (if necessary)	Friends	Summer	All	
Wildflower bulb planting	Friends	winter	Breeches, Hurn, Middle Tyning	

<b>Partnership working</b>				
Training event - birds	Friends	Spring	All	
Training event – moths & bats	Friends	September	All	
Training event - Grassland species	B&NES	Summer	All	