Burkes Wood
MANAGEMENT PLAN
January 2016

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Burkes Wood Management Plan

Date: (From/till)	2016-2021
Owner:	Melton Parish Council
Agent/contact:	Ali Martin AlisonK-Arboriculture

1. Background Information

1.1 Location

Nearest town:	Melton
Grid reference (to car park):	627980 E – 250162
Total woodland area:	4.2Ha
Total area of Recreation ground:	6.9Ha

1.2. Description of the woodland in the landscape

Burkes Wood is an area of mixed woodland of high recreational value currently managed for the enjoyment of the local community. It is situated within the village of Melton on the Northeast boundary of Woodbridge and is partially covered by Tree Preservation Order (TPO) No 25. See APPENDIX A: Plan showing woodland location and extent of TPO.

The woodland is located at the top of a dry east-facing slope and because of this is visually important. It descends gently forming the backdrop to the Recreation Ground, which contains playing fields, equipment and sports pitches. The Recreation ground and wood is served by one car park with parking for approximately 20 cars, which is accessed, from the Melton Road.

Burkes Wood forms the front edge (when viewed from the rec ground) of larger woodland made up of Leeks Hill and private woodland. The area is extensively used by local residents for recreational use, especially dog walking being accessible on foot from several points, it has regular use as a link corridor between upper and lower Melton. This larger woodland area is surrounded by housing development to the southern and western boundaries.

There are no Public rights of Way through the site but there is one permissive footpath through the site on the Northern boundary. Over recent years with an increased use many more informal footpaths have been created and now criss-cross the site.

1.3. History of Management

Burkes Wood together with the playing fields were gifted to Melton Parish Council in 1954 by Sir Roland and Lady Burke, previous to that it formed part of the Melton Hall Estate and probably managed are parkland.

There is no documented evidence of systematic tree management available and only piece meal and reactive management to safety issues has been carried out in recent years.

There is evidence of management (approx. 20 years old) in some areas of TPO woodland where sycamore and sweet chestnut have been coppiced.

There is evidence that the two low-lying wetland areas (currently supporting cricket bat willow (CBW)) have been used in the passed for a CBW crop. Most recently, felling licence 017/230/96-97 was issued and the area to the north of the site cleared and replanted around 1997.

1.3.1 **Tree Safety Assessment**
Paul Masters of Wildwood Contracting Ltd was commissioned by Melton Parish Council in 2013 to carry out a tree safety assessment of the trees in Burkes Wood and the Recreation ground. Any tree works identified within this survey has been already carried out or will be completed during the coming winter 2015-16.
The survey undertaken looked at significant trees immediately adjacent to the main footpaths and identified around thirty larger, significant or veteran trees (all bar two with-in the TPO 25) within Burkes Wood. SEE APPENDIX B: Plan showing approximate location of significant trees.

N.B. Trees 50, 51, 55, 56, 58, 59, 60, 62, 63, 64, 66, 67, 68 and 69 have been mistakenly recorded as poplar and are in fact Salix alba 'Caerulea' cricket bat willow.

1.3.2 Friends of Melton Woods Volunteer Group have in the past carried out minor woodland management such as young tree planting and maintenance. This group is currently inactive

2. Woodland information

2.1 **Statutory designation**
2.1.1 TPO 25 Woodland Area Order:
The TPO area covers approximately 2.75Ha of the 4.2Ha total of Burkes Wood. SEE APPENDIX A. It is secondary woodland (predominantly broad leaf) with tree mixture of principally regenerated birch and coppiced sweet chestnut, much of which has occurred since the storm of October 16th 1987 when the woodland suffered extensive damage. There are also a number (approximately 28) large mature trees remaining, these are mostly located on the eastern edge of the dryer slope of the woodland running north-south.

2.2 **Habitats**
2.2.1 The predominant habitat on the higher is essentially secondary woodland with a mixture of tree species including some mature trees such as oak and beech trees some of veteran status (mainly located in TPO woodland area) and supporting the specialist flora and fauna associated these old trees.
2.2.2 The two wet areas of Burkes Wood are important being 'wet woodland' habitat and as such identified as priority habitat within the Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

2.3 **Public rights of Way**

2.3.1 There are no public rights of way across the site but there is one permissive footpath to the North/Northwest boundary, which is the main pedestrian thoroughfare from upper to lower Melton.

2.4. **Woodland resource characteristics**

2.4.1 Burkes Wood has two distinct areas of woodland.

2.4.2 The TPO 25 Woodland Area comprises of mainly mature standard oak, sweet chestnut and with a few scots pine and beech. The understory consists of young/young mature sycamore, sweet chestnut and birch. Some of these trees are coppice regrowth others are closely growing pole stage trees. Re-introducing a coppice regime could yield firewood and rustic fencing products for purchase by the local community but there are not likely to be higher-grade timber trees.

2.4.3 Two wetland areas (1a & 1h, not covered by TPO 25)

Northeast section of land between the playing field and opposite the car park is predominantly cricket bat willow, planted as a crop around 1997 and now ready for harvesting. The area also contains other species of tree associated with wet area and sycamore and oak in dryer parts.

2.4.4 Area Northeast of Jenners Close adjoining currently waterlogged area of playing field at the South of the Recreation Ground: Several large mature and over-mature cricket bat willows, some fallen some leaning and some standing amongst a few other wetland species trees scattered across area. Replanting this wetland area with cricket bat willow may help dry out the waterlogged area of playing field as the trees develop.

2.5 **Site description**

2.5.1 **Woodland Boundaries**

2.5.2 **North:** North of the Recreation ground and Burkes Wood is bounded by Hutchinson's Meadow, which is owned and maintained by Suffolk Wildlife Trust as an unimproved meadow. To the Northwest a shallow ditch forms the boundary with private land. Further to the Northwest a post and wire fence forms the boundary along side the woodland footpath between Burkes Wood and private woodland.

2.5.3 **South:** To the south of the Recreation Ground and Burkes Wood is Jenners Close, housing development.

2.5.4 **East:** The woodland boundary edge joins the Recreation Ground.

2.5.5 **West:** The boundary along the western edge of the woodland is the main slightly sunken footpath between the site and Leeks Hill.

2.6 **Geology and soils**

2.6.1 The geology of this site is distinct and unusual. Glacial sands and gravel can be found on the bank sides often on the surface where it meets the London clay. Water bubbles out from perched water tables, creating the rich peaty soils and wetland habitat. Shallow ponds and boggy areas result from seepage from the bank edges.

2.6.2 The higher ground (largely covering the TPO area) in complete contrast, is a freely draining slightly acidic sandy soil and low in fertility which is typical of a sandy soil composition.

2.7 **Access**

2.7.1 The main access to the Burkes woodland is from the car park on Melton Road across the playing field and sports pitches. Pedestrian access is from Melton Road near Jenners Close, and from Leeks Hill, leading to Saxon Way and Bury Hill.

2.8 **Flora**

2.8.1 Melton Parish Council carried out a comprehensive survey of existing flora in 2011 which is available of the Melton Parish Council website. The species list is unlikely to have change significantly since it was undertaken. The greatest diversity of flora is located in the wetland where a rich mix of interesting wetland plants exists.

2.9 **Fauna**

2.9.1 There is not currently a species list of fauna for Burkes Wood, however a survey was carried out of the adjacent site of Leeks Hill in 2008, when several birds of particular note were recorded including Bullfinch, Linnet and Spotted Flycatcher, all identified as priority species on the Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan. The presence of Nightingales was also recorded.

2.10 **Pond**

2.10.1 The permanently filled pond exists on site and is an important resource for wildlife and public alike.

It is becoming slightly overgrown and will be in need of management shortly. Management of the pond area is not covered by this management plan and advice should be sort from a specialist in this area.

2.11 **Public interest/relationship with local communities**

Currently there is no active community or voluntary groups directly associated with managing Burkes Wood however, there is interest in resuming working parties if given specific tasks and leadership.

2.12 **Significant Hazards Threats and constraints**

2.12.1 **Threats:**

Over use and lack of woodland management appear to be the main threats to the long-term resilience of the TPO woodland area, which is currently criss-crossed with numerous informal footpaths and lacks significant ground flora or understory shrub layer.

- A large dear population is known to exist around this area and is likely to be contributing to the lack of young trees from natural regeneration through browsing.
- Lack of regular woodland management has constricted light levels and will also have contributed considerably to the lack of natural regeneration and ground flora. Where some

management has been carried out and light levels improved, on the east-facing slope behind Jenners Close, one-year-old sycamore seedlings are evident.
- High levels of daily public use through the woodland means ground compaction is evident in many places. This can lead to deterioration of trees in those areas affected.
- There is no major evidence of a current vandalism problem but in an area so heavily this needs regular monitoring

2.12.2 **Hazards:**
- With the presence of large mature trees public safety will always be an issue. Tree safety inspections should be carried out regularly to ensure reasonable precautions are taken to help manage the risk of injury to people using the woodland.
- High level of public use means that footpaths are being eroded in places leaving trip hazards and other lower laying parts land becomes very wet. This can be a hazard both for people using the woodland and for anyone needing to carry out woodland work.

2.12.3 **Constraints:**
- Due to the high use by the public throughout the TPO woodland, limiting public access could be a challenging constraint for anyone carrying out tree works within the woodland
- The local community using the woodland are very likely to have a feel of ownership of the site. The agreed management plan and proposed work is likely to be better accepted with some form of consultation between Melton Parish Council and the local community.
- Until/unless a Forestry Commission felling license is in place, the presence of the Tree Preservation Order means that any tree work in the protected areas needs to by approved by the local authority unless it is for safety reasons.
- Timing of tree work should be planned to take into account, protected species (such as bird nesting and potential presence of bats) under the Wildlife and Countryside Act and the European Protected Species legislation. Adhering to this should be the tree contractor's responsibility.

3: Long Term Vision, management objectives and strategy

3.1 **Long-term vision**

To create and maintain a varied and resilient mixed woodland habitat, which affords an attractive recreational facility for the public to enjoy in perpetuity and which will also provide a small sustainable harvest.

3.2 **Management objectives**

- To fulfil, as far as is reasonable, the health and safety responsibilities of the owners.
- To retain, maintain and improve the public access and recreational provision of the site.
- To restructure and diversify the woodland canopy, species and age range.

- To enhance and maintain the biodiversity of the woodland and wetland areas.
- To redevelop and rationalize the footpath network in order to reduce its adverse effect on the woodland environment.
- To produce a small income from harvesting operations and marketing small woodland products.
- To work with the local community to assist and support the site's management.
- Promote the woodland as an educational resource.

3.3 **Strategy**

This management plan seeks to achieve a balance between the environment, economic and social benefits of the woodland whilst recognising the differing management objectives. The strategy to achieve the objectives will be to make regular interventions through the re-introduction of coppice management and thinning of trees at variable intensity. This will be combined with natural regeneration, enrichment planting, whilst introducing a regular monitoring system.

Existing and potential veteran/heritage trees will be identified and retained whilst they remain viable as character features through the woodland. Standing deadwood will be retained in areas where there is little threat to the public and the retention of fallen dead wood will be encouraged for habitat enhancement.

This management plan covers Burkes Wood, which is under the management jurisdiction of the Melton Parish Council. The other adjacent areas of the woodland are either privately owned or owned by Suffolk coastal District Council.

4. Management Prescription Operation

4.1 **Harvesting.**

4.1.1 TPO Woodland

It is important for the amenity of the area that the woodland remains as Continuous Cover.
No clear felling will therefore be carried out within the TPO woodland. During felling, thinning and coppicing operations no burning will be permitted. Depending on the quantity and value of the timber, it may either be left in situ as deadwood habitat, or extracted using low impact extraction systems for firewood. All brash can be either chipped and spread or used to make 'dead-hedges' to discourage access.

In order to achieve diversification in structure, thinning/coppicing is to be carried out in areas where there are closely growing even age trees. The aim of this operation is to improve species diversity and canopy structure; species such as oak, sweet chestnut, pine and hornbeam will be favoured over sycamore and birch.
Thinning is to be carried out in some areas in order to increase the amount of light reaching the woodland floor in readiness for replanting or natural regeneration.

Coppicing of sweet chestnut and sycamore where the practice has lapsed will be re-instated. It is estimated that a 10 to 20 year coppice cycle will produce small woodland products such as firewood and rustic fencing materials.

Where possible trees that have become hazardous should be made safe left as standing deadwood as additional habitat for insects.

4.1.2 **Wetland areas**
4.1.3 An agreement has recently been reached between Melton Parish Council and J. S. Wrights to harvest and replant the current cricket bat willow on both wetland areas. The crop when harvested in late summer 2016 will bring in £7,175.00

The agreement states that: "The trees will be felled to ground level and the brushwood burned, leaving the site clear for replanting in due season". The replanted cricket bat will crop should be ready for harvest somewhere between 2031 and 2035

Other existing trees on the wetland areas will be accommodated during felling and replanting with the aim of gradually reducing the cricket bat willow crop and eventually producing a more natural wet woodland environment.

4.1.4 In addition to those trees felled as part of silvicultural systems, it is anticipated that from time to time individual trees will need to felled as a result of disease/damage for the purposes of public safety.

4.2 **Establishment, restocking and regeneration**
4.2.1 TPO Woodland:
There is very little evidence of any young trees (under three years old) and the canopy of the woodland is closed excluding much of the light to the ground.
The use of Gengards (or other built enclosures) will help demonstrate the extent of any browsing problem and the regeneration potential of the woodland. Gengards form a 2.4 metre square enclosure and can be reused many times. They can be located around recently coppice stools and help establish new planting to provide protection.

Following woodland thinning and coppicing operations, it is anticipated that some new planting will be appropriate.

The following native species will form the bulk of the under-planting in order to help re-establish a shrub layer to the woodland: Hazel, field maple, blackthorn and hawthorn. Where appropriate standard and coppiceable species will also be planted. Species to include small leaf lime, sweet chestnut, English oak, beech and scots pine.

There is currently no major competition from invasive weeds, except one area of bramble on the south west of the woodland. This is not as yet considered a problem however, following the commencement of woodland management, control measures may need to be put in place.

4.2.2 Wetland areas: Restocking of these areas will be carried out the J. S. Wrights following felling of cricket bat willow.

Natural regeneration of native wetland will be encourages between the willow once planted.

4.2.3 New tree planting outside protective enclosures will be protected using in Tubex style tree guards.

4.3 **Other Operations**

4.3.1 Footpaths

The current informal footpath network through the woodland is extensive and in need of rationalizing. The numerous paths created from heavy daily public use has contributed to the degrading of the woodland structure, causing erosion and ground compaction around old vulnerable trees and also reduced available wildlife habitat. Works to create steps and improve footpath surfaces on desirable routes should encourage people onto preferred footpath routes and away from other less desirable woodland areas.

4.4 **Pest and Disease management**

In the short term there are currently no weed problems in need of control.
In the longer term, it is anticipated that coppice regrowth will suppress most weed growth and any small-scale weed problem can be managed without the use of chemicals.

The extent of damage through Deer browsing is not known and will only become evident with the use of exclusion enclosures over the next few years. It is not feasible to reduce the deer population in a woodland such as Burkes Wood so measures such as individual tree protection and fencing will need to be considered in order to establish new planting and maintain a healthy lower woodland structure.

4.5 **Public Access**

The woodland will continue to provide an area of public amenity, although some unofficial footpaths either need to be re-directed and use discouraged through planting or blocking routes with fallen trees or dead-hedges. This will allow some areas to recover from the overuse and hopefully become wildlife refuges maybe even encouraging the return of birds such as the nightingale, not heard in the woodland for the last five years.

5. Consultation

Organisation/Individual	Comment	Response/Action
Suffolk Coastal District Council (SCDC)	Any works to trees within the area covered by the Tree Preservation Order, other than works on safety ground will need an application to SCDC unless a Forestry Commission Felling Licence is in place, (which discounts the TPO)	
Forestry Commission	**A Felling Licence application needs to be made to and approved by the Forestry Commission** before any work is carried out within the TPO woodland area.	
Public	Prior to commencement and during woodland works, sufficient signs to be posted to inform the public of intended operations.	

6. Monitoring plan summery

In order to determine whether the management of the site is having an appropriate effect on health and biodiversity, it is important that monitoring is carried out on an on-going basis.

Objective	Indicator	Method of assessment	Monitoring period	Who is responsible?	How will information be used
Structural and species diversity	Improved structure of shrub layer & ground flora.	Survey of worked sub compartments	Every five years	Woodland Manager	Monitor and adjust plan as necessary
Natural regeneration and ground flora	Naturally colonised area within Gengard enclosures	Walkover survey	Annually	Woodland Manager	Gauge browsing pressure and regeneration potential
Damage though pests and Public	Extent and nature of damage	Walkover survey	Annually	Woodland Manager	Continuous planning and control
Habitat biodiversity	Improve rare/important species present	Carry out Flora and fauna re-survey	Every five years	SWT/ or other?	Continuous planning
Shade management	Weeds present	Walkover survey	Annually	Friends Group	Continuous planning and control
Management Plan review			Every five years	Melton PC	Continuous planning and adjust plan as necessary.

7. Work Programme SEE APPENDIX C. Plan of sub compartments areas 1a to 1h.
Suggested timetable of management operations 2016 - 2021

Sub compartment	Management projects	Season	Years	Carried out by
All	Visual Tree Safety Assessment	Winter	16-2021	Contractor
All	Carry out any reactive and identified tree safety surgery	Any (reactive works)	16-2021	Contractor
All	Carry out fauna survey	Summer	2016	Contractor
1a and 1h	Cricket bat willow harvest and replant	Late summer	16-2017	J. S. Wright CBW specialists
1a and 1h	Remove side shoots from newly planted cricket bat willow	Twice a year in Spring and Autumn	17-2020	Friend of Group
1g	Create steps and improve ground surface of footpath from Recreation Ground entrance through woodland	Summer/Autumn	16-2017	Contractor
1c and 1d	Creation of five deer/ rabbit proof enclosures to protect and encourage natural regeneration and ground flora using Gengards http://www.newwoods.co.uk	Any	16-2017	Contractor/ Friends group
1d	Coppice, thinning and replanting works and use brash to create a 'dead-hedge' along the sub compartment edge to discourage access	Winter	17-2018	Contractor/ Friend Group
1d	Plant lower shrub layer species. Hazel, blackthorn, hawthorn and field maple	Winter	17-2018	Friend Group/? Contractor
All permissive footpaths	Routine footpath maintenance (cut back vegetation, check for erosion/safety issues)	Any	16-2021	Friend of Group Grounds manager?
At entrances/ edge of sub-compartments	Provide information boards on planned woodland works	8 weeks before work commences	16-2021	Melton Parish Council/?
All	Routine patrolling/litter control	All (X4)	16-2021	
1c	Coppice and under-plant	Winter	18-2019	
1f	Thin/coppice and under-plant	Winter	19-2020	
1e	Thin coppice and under-plant	Winter	19-2020	
1b	Thin/coppice and under-plant	Winter	21-2022	
1g	Coppice and plant shrub/hedge species to thicken up along boundary fence line and under-plant through out. Carry out footpath improvements to surface and build steps as necessary.	Autumn/Winter	17-2018 or 18-2019	

8. Appendices (Separately Attached)

Appendix A: Plan showing Burkes Wood Location and extent of Tree Preservation Order 25
Appendix B: Plan showing location of Wildwood Tree Survey 2013 Significant tree locations.
Appendix C: Plan Showing Sub-Compartment areas for work operations.
Appendix D: Suggested work program for Year 1. April 2016 to March 2017