



# **CROXLEYHALL WOODS**

## **GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN**

2019 – 2024

Produced by:

On behalf of:



## OVERVIEW

---

### Greenspace Action Plans

Greenspace Actions Plans (GAPs) are map-based management plans which specify activities that should take place on a site over a stated period of time; these activities will help to deliver the agreed aspirations which the site managers and stakeholders have identified for that site.

### Public Engagement

Engagement with stakeholders is at the centre of effective management planning on any site. An initial engagement period was held for four weeks in August and September 2017, to establish core aims and objectives for the site. A draft plan was released for comment in January 2019. Responses have been taken into consideration in the production of this final plan.; these are reflected in Section 3. ~~This draft plan has been produced for a second stage of engagement to enable stakeholders to comment on the proposed management actions for the site.~~

### Version Control

Version	Issue Date	Details	Author	Reviewed	Approved
1	06.04.2018	Issue to TRDC following initial consultation	MW	LT	
2	30.11.2018	Amendments following TRDC comments	GA	AT	
3	27.02.2019	Amendments following public engagement	GA		

# CONTENTS

---

<b>Overview</b> .....	<b>i</b>
Greenspace Action Plans .....	i
Public Engagement .....	i
Version Control.....	i
<b>Contents</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>1.0 Summary</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Site Summary .....	1
1.2 Vision Statement.....	1
<b>2.0 Site Description</b> .....	<b>2</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	2
2.2 Geography and Landscape.....	2
2.3 Conservation Designations .....	6
2.4 History and Archaeology .....	6
2.5 Habitats and Wildlife .....	6
2.5.1 Woodland Structure .....	6
2.5.2 Rides and Glades .....	8
2.5.3 Flora .....	8
2.5.4 Wildlife .....	9
2.6 Access, Facilities and Infrastructure.....	9
2.6.1 Access .....	9
2.6.2 Site Furniture .....	9
2.6.3 Site Leaflet.....	9
2.7 Community and Management .....	9
2.7.1 Management Structure .....	9
2.7.2 Local volunteering interest .....	10
2.7.3 UKWAS .....	10
<b>3.0 Aims &amp; Objectives</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>4.0 Management Prescriptions</b> .....	<b>13</b>
4.1 A Welcoming Place.....	13
4.2 Healthy, Safe and Secure .....	13
4.3 Clean and Well Maintained .....	14
4.4 Sustainability.....	15
4.5 Conservation and Heritage .....	15

4.5.1	Approach to Woodland Management.....	15
4.5.2	Selective Felling.....	16
4.5.3	Ride Creation and Management .....	16
4.5.4	Invasive and Non-Native Species .....	17
4.5.5	Management of the Woodland Understorey.....	17
4.6	Community Involvement.....	18
4.7	Marketing.....	18
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Action Plans and Maps .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Specifications .....</b>	<b>28</b>

## 1.0 SUMMARY

---

### 1.1 Site Summary

Site Name:	Croxleyhall Woods
Site Address:	All Saints Lane, Croxley Green, Hertfordshire, WD3 3AP
Grid Reference:	TA 074 948
Size:	15.6 hectares (39 acres)
Designations:	Green Belt Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites Local Wildlife Site (89/008 and 83/040)
Owner:	Three Rivers District Council

This document sets out the management, maintenance and development framework for the woodland over five years, to work towards the above vision. Three Rivers District Council holds a separate Woodland Management Plan for the site which facilitates their continued certification by the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS); the two plans are complementary and should be read in conjunction.

The structure of the plan has been based on the Green Flag criteria, to explore the range of issues that are important for a successful green space. The plan includes map-based annual management programmes and a timetabled action-plan, both located towards the end of the document. It will be reviewed annually, so that actions can be revised as necessary over the life of the plan.

### 1.2 Vision Statement

*“Croxleyhall Woods should be a diverse and sustainable woodland, resilient against pressures of climate, pests and diseases; a woodland that is a haven for wildlife, well visited and cared for by the local community, and where small volumes of high quality timber are a by-product of effective, sustainable habitat management”.*

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

---

### 2.1 Introduction

Croxleyhall Woods is a 15.6 hectare (39 acre) woodland located in Croxley Green, between Rickmansworth and Watford in the south-western corner of Hertfordshire. It is owned and managed by Three Rivers District Council (TRDC), with support from the Countryside Management Service (CMS). The woodlands benefit from volunteering, notably through the Croxley Green Parish Council (CGPC) rangers. CMS volunteers will also support the implementation of this plan.

It is, in part, an ancient managed oak woodland with understorey of old hazel coppice and abundant bluebells. The woodland is well used by the local community for amenity and recreation purposes. This plan covers three adjacent blocks of woodland – the two halves of Croxleyhall Woods, separated by a railway corridor, and the section of Long Valley Wood owned by TRDC.

### 2.2 Geography and Landscape

The woodland occupies gently sloping ground rising from the floodplain of the River ~~Cole~~ Gade to the south. It is surrounded on the other three sides by housing and school grounds, on the southern extent of the settlement of Croxley Green.

The site falls within the Croxley Moor Landscape Character Area (005), which describes a varied landscape created by a mix of mineral extraction, agriculture, education and transport corridors; a peaceful area on the edge of extensive urbanisation, with scattered pasture and semi-natural habitats surviving throughout the area.

The Landscape Character Area states that the geology in the area comprises river alluvium, overlaid by stoneless clayey, fine silty and fine loamy soils. No watercourses run through the woodland, nor any “flushes” or “issues” mapped by the ordnance survey, but any water would drain downhill (south) towards the Rivers Gade and Chess.

[LOCATION MAP]

[SITE DESCRIPTION MAP]

[CONSTRAINTS MAP]

## 2.3 Conservation Designations

Details of the conservation designations are also annotated on the Constraints Map where appropriate.

Level	Designation	Detail
Statutory	Metropolitan Green Belt	The woodland falls within the London Metropolitan Green Belt, which restricts the growth of development in strategic rural areas on the edge of conurbations.
Non-Statutory	Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW)	Woodland that has had continuous native tree and shrub cover since at least 1600AD and may have been managed by coppicing or felling and allowed to regenerate naturally. Only the westernmost part of the woodland is included in the ASNW layer, however there are ASNW features present in the other areas.
Non-Statutory	Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)	Woodland where the original tree cover has been felled and replaced by planting, often with conifers, and usually over the last century.
Non-Statutory	Local Wildlife Site: 89/008 Croxleyhall Wood 83/040 Long Valley Wood	The entire site is designated as a Local Wildlife Site – considered to be of “critical natural capital.”

## 2.4 History and Archaeology

Much of the site is ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW), meaning that there has been woodland present on the site for over 400 years. Some parts are considered to be plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS), where the ancient woodland composition has been modified, and other parts are secondary woodland, having established in the last 50-100 years following quarrying works.

The structure of the remnant ASNW areas suggest that much of it was once managed as hazel coppice with oak standards, a practice which declined in Hertfordshire nearly a century ago. Parts of the woodland contain old gravel extraction pits from the early 1900s, and there is ample evidence of wood banks with beech boundary stubbs. There are a number of records of Palaeolithic flint implements discovered within the woodland.

## 2.5 Habitats and Wildlife

### 2.5.1 Woodland Structure

For the purposes of the plan, the woodland is divided into five compartments as follows:



*Compartment 1: All Saints Lane (west)*

The block of woodland to the west of All Saints Lane. Canopy consists of oak and sycamore with wild cherry, rowan and beech. A dense hazel understorey including elder and holly. In the south-west corner, numerous veteran oak trees are being crowded out by younger beech. Extensive ivy coverage particularly along the roadside, both in trees and on the ground. Dense bramble under gaps in the canopy, with sycamore regenerating through it. Patches of recently establishing bracken over areas of bluebells, along the footpath. In parts, ground layer is heavily shaded by young beech and holly.

*Compartment 2: All Saints Lane (east)*

Between All Saints Lane and the railway tracks. Similar to cpt 1, with more wild cherry in the canopy and a more varied understorey. Hazel present both as old coppice and new natural regeneration, particularly on footpath edges. Some very shady parts created by dominance of holly or ivy. Tree felling work along the railway boundary has created a lot of light on the woodland edge, along with a number of scallops created on the boundary footpath through felling of sycamore. These scallops contain a notable occurrence of self-seeded oak seedlings. There is a small group of mature larches and one mature spruce towards the southern tip of the compartment.

*Compartment 3: Lavrock Lane Woods (west)*

Although not recorded as ASNW, much of this compartment does appear to be ancient managed oak woodland over hazel coppice. Valley bottom has large veteran oaks and younger secondary oaks occupying the canopy along with frequent wild cherry. Beneath this, an extensive carpet of bluebells under a layer of beech regeneration. The northern tip is

more like an oak/beech woodland, with holly dominating parts of the ground layer. Features an old excavation pit, containing bramble and buddleia.

#### *Compartment 4: Lavrock Lane Woods (east)*

An escarpment divides compartment 3 and 4. Much of cpt 4 is unmanaged secondary woodland, 50-100 years old, naturally regenerated following extensive quarrying works. Canopy includes oak, sycamore, wild cherry, and beech. Significant young ash regeneration in the ground layer, with little representation of other species. There are a small number of mature ash within the canopy. Hawthorn prevalent in the understorey.

#### *Compartment 5: Long Valley Wood*

TRDC's ownership is a largely un-demarcated rectangle, part of the more extensive Long Valley Wood. Largely secondary woodland in an old gravel working; the ground level drops some 20ft from the footpath running along the northern edge of the compartment. Within this, sections of untouched ground rise above the worked level in large mounds. These mounds appear to be ASNW with oak, hazel, field maple and bluebells. The secondary woodland comprises sycamore, oak, ash, wild cherry, and mature hawthorn occupying the canopy. Ivy dominant towards the south-western end. Ash regeneration in the understorey alongside path edges.

### **2.5.2 Rides and Glades**

Work carried out in 2010 to remove elements of sycamore from the woodland resulted in the creation of an open east-west ride in compartment 1, along the main footpath loop. Although subsequent management of regrowth has been limited, the benefits from this in terms of light and floral diversity are very apparent. All of the other main footpath routes are under a mostly closed canopy. Generally there is little open space within the woodland. A large pit in compartment 2, the result of former mineral extraction works, is clear from canopy trees, but densely vegetated with bramble, buddleia, etc.

### **2.5.3 Flora**

The ground flora is fairly diverse and contains a variety of ancient woodland indicator species including abundant English bluebell, dog's mercury, yellow archangel, wood melick, wood sorrel and ramsons. The bluebells are something much cherished by the local community. In many parts, this flora is coming under pressure either from heavy shading by a combination of ivy, holly and beech, or from competition from bramble and bracken in lighter patches.

## **2.5.4 Wildlife**

Daubenton's, pipistrelle and noctule bats have all been recorded in the vicinity of the site, and there are trees within the woodland known to support bat roosts. There is evidence of active badger populations within the woodland. There is evidence of historic bark stripping by deer on younger trees, although no "fresh" stripping has been seen. Muntjac, bank vole, rabbit, grey squirrel are all recorded on site. Lesser spotted woodpecker has also been recorded on the site. A wide range of butterfly and moth species have been recorded in or near to the site. Grass snakes and slow worms have also been recorded close by.

## **2.6 Access, Facilities and Infrastructure**

### **2.6.1 Access**

Croxleyhall Woods is open to the public and is widely promoted for access and recreation. There are no car parks associated with the site, although informal parking is possible at a number of points along All Saints Lane. A public right of way and bridleway (Croxley Green 011) runs through the woodland following All Saints Lane, and a short section of public right of way enters Long Valley Woods from Frankland Road. There is a good network of permissive paths forming a circular route throughout the site.

### **2.6.2 Site Furniture**

The furniture and facilities on site consist of:

- Interpretation panels – two, TRDC/CMS. Another by Long Valley Wood.
- Timber benches, generally in dilapidated condition.
- Old waymarkers along footpaths.
- Flight of timber steps into Long Valley Wood, requiring on-going maintenance.
- Vehicle barriers at footpath entrances.

### **2.6.3 Site Leaflet**

Accompanying the panels, an interpretation leaflet was produced that provides the same information, along with directions for traveling to the woodland by road, train and bus. The leaflet is a good way of promoting the site to a wider audience.

## **2.7 Community and Management**

### **2.7.1 Management Structure**

Three Rivers District Council as landowners are responsible for the implementation of the plan. Their role includes: woodland management works carried out by their in-house team of Arborists and Landscape Officers; administration and budget management; signatory for grant applications and claims; Member involvement and reporting.

The Countryside Management Service advises on management, particularly where it relates to nature conservation and community involvement. It is responsible for: the production of Greenspace Action Plans for the woodland including engagement with partners and subsequent monitoring; production of specifications for management works, procurement and supervision of contracts; and support with events and PRpublicity. CMS volunteer work parties can also be arranged to support the implementation of the plan.

Croxley Green Parish Council manages other woodlands in the vicinity and their rangers carry out voluntary work within the woodland. TRDC will continue to consider working in partnership with CGPC to achieve the management aims for the site.

### **2.7.2 Local volunteering interest**

The initial stakeholder engagement exercise identified that there are a number of local people keen to be involved in volunteering activity on the site; many of whom are already engaged in occasional litter picking and vegetation management. There is no formally established group.

### **2.7.3 UKWAS**

TRDC owns over 240ha of woodland across the district, which it manages for wildlife, public access and recreation. In 2007, TRDC obtained the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) accreditation for all its woodland sites. UKWAS is an independent certification standard for verifying sustainable woodland management in the United Kingdom.

### 3.0 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

---

The aims and objectives of the GAP are as follows:

#### A. A WELCOMING PLACE

Provide a welcoming green space for the enjoyment of the local community.

- A1: Seasonal vegetation management to keep footpaths and entrances clear
- A2: Improve provision of benches using locally produced timber
- A3: Establish self-guided circular trails and update site leaflet accordingly

#### B. HEALTHY, SAFE AND SECURE

Ensure that visitors feel safe and able to enjoy the site at all times.

- B1: ~~Remove-Replace~~ steps in Long Valley Wood.
- B2: ~~Rationalise prohibitive structures at~~Improve appearance of the access point off Harvey Road
- B3: Carry out reactive tree works to address safety issues

#### C. CLEAN AND WELL MAINTAINED

Ensure that the site is kept clean and that all aspects of the site are well maintained.

- C1: Maintain existing interpretation panels in good condition
- C2: Respond ~~proactively-promptly~~ to garden waste dumping
- C3: Maintain cleanliness though regular litter picking and emptying of bins

#### D. SUSTAINABILITY

Ensure all management operations are as sustainable as possible.

- D1: Sale of timber produced through habitat works to improve financial sustainability
- D2: Utilise and encourage development of natural regeneration in the woodland

#### E. CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE

Conserve and enhance the woodland's habitats, wildlife and archaeological features.

- E1: Selective felling to preserve veteran trees and improve structural diversity
- E2: Creation and management of woodland rides to maximise habitat diversity
- E3: Control and monitor invasive non-native species
- E4: Manage woodland understorey to support natural regeneration

## **F. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Provide opportunities for the local community to participate in woodland management activities.

F1: Identify ad-hoc volunteering opportunities and promote to the local community

## **G. MARKETING**

To promote awareness and interest in Croxleyhall Woods.

G1: Run occasional guided walks to showcase the site and raise awareness

G2: Ensure a copy of the plan, and subsequent reviews, are available online

## 4.0 MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

---

### 4.1 A Welcoming Place

The provision of benches within the woodland is important for accessibility and for the enjoyment of the woodland. The timber benches on site are in a poor and dilapidated condition and should all be replaced during this plan period, for both safety and aesthetic reasons. There will be an opportunity to have new bespoke benches created using timber harvested from the woodland itself during the selective felling operations identified in year one (refer to Specification 2). If successful, this is a very environmentally creditable activity in terms of reducing haulage of timber, making full use of a local timber product and engaging local craftspeople. If not enough timber of sufficient quality is produced, oak timber bench kits should be used instead for the remainder.

There is an existing carved log bench within All Saints Wood. This is rotting and should therefore be replaced.

The metal picnic bench will be removed as this is little used and provides a location anti-social behaviour. There will be sufficient provision of woodland benches elsewhere through the woods.

A programme of regular vegetation management should be established to keep the footpaths and site entrances open and well-defined throughout the year.

There is potential to reinstate the self-guided circular trails which were envisaged as part of the previous management plan. The layout of the site would allow for a shorter trail (around Compartments 1 and 2) and a longer trail taking in Compartments 3 and 4 as well. It should be demarcated with timber posts with directional waymarking disks (refer to Specification 3). This presents an opportunity to update the existing site leaflets, to include a map showing the waymarked routes and pointing out features of interest. This can be made available through TRDC, and the local library, with an electronic version online via partner websites.

### 4.2 Healthy, Safe and Secure

In 2010, a flight of timber ladder steps were installed leading from the public footpath down the steep slope into Long Valley Wood, linking to existing footpaths to create a short circular loop through the otherwise inaccessible woodland block. However, their ongoing maintenance is becoming increasingly costly, ~~largely due to the accumulation of leaf litter.~~

The steps will be removed and ~~replaced with crushed stone steps the access route closed off to make safe. The route from these steps through Long Valley Wood is not a Right Of Way; there is however a Public Footpath performing the same function at the north-eastern end of the compartment – linking Frankland Road and Public Footpath 011 with the tow path adjacent to the river.~~

The site access point off Harvey Road onto Lavrock Lane (into Compartment 4) is currently a jumble of prohibitive structures – there is a hinged barrier across the bridleway, and a

second across the footpath leading into Compartment 4, with bollards in between the two. Specification 4 outlines an option to rationalise these – ensuring the site remains safe and secure, controlling unwanted vehicle access whilst improving the visual appearance of the area and improving access for woodland management operations. The parking spaces at this entrance to the woodland are beyond the scope of the plan and as such there are no proposals to change these.

Tree safety surveys are carried out in all TRDC parks, woodlands and open spaces. All deadwood, fallen and standing, is left in situ where safe to do so, for habitat and biodiversity benefits. Trees which must be reduced or removed for safety reasons are stacked into habitat piles or chipped into areas where the work has been carried out. If practicable, the timber resulting from tree surgery can be used to make bespoke benches as per 4.1.

Concern has been raised about the lighting of fires in the woodland; doing so without permission has always been at odds with site's byelaws. These are currently under review across all TRDC sites, with new signage to be installed as part of a phased process; Croxleyhall Woods is to be included at an early stage in this process. The byelaws will also detail acceptable usage around mountain biking in the woodland.

### **4.3 Clean and Well Maintained**

The current interpretation panels were installed in 2010. They are still in a reasonably good condition, and the content is still fit for purpose, however they could do with some cleaning and regular maintenance to ensure they remain that way. This action should be repeated annually.

There is a long-standing problem around garden waste dumping. A small amount occurs where properties back onto the woodland, but of greater concern is a large tip down the steep slope on the edge of Long Valley Wood, opposite the allotments. Efforts should be renewed to tackle this, through community engagement and positive management of the affected areas.

An issue of litter was highlighted through the ~~initial stakeholder engagement process, and it has been observed that the emptying of litter bins is currently proving ineffective; this will be reviewed by TRDC.~~ Bins are located at site entrances where these can be emptied efficiently. Ongoing casual litter picking should be a regular activity of local volunteers; to add to this an annual "spring clean" should be carried out in late winter when ground cover is sparse and litter away from the footpaths is more obvious.

There are dog waste bins positioned at the woodland entrances owned and managed by the parish council. A Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in relation to dog control is in effect across the entirety of the Three Rivers district. Signs indicating this have been erected at the entrances to the woodland.

A number of comments were received about increasing evidence of human faeces in the woods, and about drug dealing activity believed to be taking place. There is an expectation that the increased activity and presence in the woodland through the implementation of the new plan will help reduce this kind of anti-social activity.

## **4.4 Sustainability**

All management operations within Croxleyhall Woods should be as sustainable as possible, both financially and in terms of environmental impact. The management of the woodland itself should be in accordance with the principles of Sustainable Forest Management. The proposed silvicultural systems will generate some timber products; small scale timber sales can be used to offset management costs, although it should be noted that the primary purpose for this management is to benefit the woodland itself, rather than generate income.

Natural regeneration should be utilised for restocking wherever appropriate; it is low cost, adapts to local conditions and reduces the risk of importing pests and diseases into the woodland. Where regeneration of favourable species (particularly oak) is identified and has enough light, it should be protected from browsing using tree tubes, and given appropriate aftercare. Replanting should be considered if regeneration does not achieve required stocking levels, presenting an opportunity for some species diversification, with the aim of improving the resilience of the woodland against pressures from a changing climate and pests and diseases.

The District Council has a strong commitment to the environment and environmental sustainability and recognises the impacts its operations have on the environment. TRDC's dedication to protect the environment is reflected in Council policies, strategies, commitments and partnerships.

## **4.5 Conservation and Heritage**

### **4.5.1 Approach to Woodland Management**

In recent years, the approach to woodland management has largely been by "non-intervention" aside from routine health and safety management. The focus from 2019 will shift to targeted activity to restore areas of particular conservation interest, and promote a mixed age and habitat structure. This targeting is supported by an Ancient Woodland Restoration Project report produced in 2017. Recommendations from that report have been built into the GAP.

Given the small scale of intervention, chainsaw harvesting and extraction using low impact machinery (e.g. an alpine tractor and forestry trailer) would be ideal for the proposed woodland management activities. There are wood banks present in many of the older parts of the site; management operations should avoid any damage to these banks through vehicle movements or the felling of trees. It may be necessary to mark these on the ground prior to woodland management operations to ensure they are clear to contractors.

#### 4.5.2 Selective Felling

Subtle, targeted management of woodland canopy trees can be carried out to achieve multiple objectives; to preserve ancient woodland features, improve structural diversity, support the long-term sustainability of the woodland and improve aesthetic and amenity qualities. In all cases, the intervention should be fairly minimal, avoiding drastic changes in light conditions to limit the establishment of bracken and bramble. These activities are to be targeted on areas within approx. 20m of the main footpath routes, leaving core areas of the woods untouched as havens for wildlife – and bringing the maximum public benefit for minimal intervention. Proactive canopy management along these corridors will also reduce the need for reactive tree safety works. All works will be carried out outside of bird nesting season with inspections for bat roosts prior to commencement.

- In compartments 1 and 2, small numbers of beech trees (and other species as appropriate) should be selectively removed where they are crowding significant veteran oaks; lack of space will cause stress in the oaks, and relieving this pressure will help preserve them in good health.
- In compartments 2 and 3 there is frequent wild cherry, much of which is in poor health and as time goes on will be at increased risk of falling. To pre-empt this, small groups of cherry can be felled, to create glades into which natural regeneration can be encouraged. This approach fosters a diverse age structure within the woodland.
- Compartment 4 is predominantly secondary woodland of mixed species, largely unmanaged to this point. The objective for managing this compartment should be to facilitate development of good woodland structure, securing it in the long-term. Within the corridor identified, a selective thinning operation should be carried out to favour better oak stems, targeting poor quality sycamore and cherry, along with coppicing some of the leaning, ivy-laden hawthorn trees in the understorey.
- In the secondary woodland areas of compartment 5, elements of hawthorn have grown up alongside the other tree species and now occupy the canopy, causing heavy shade and a dense canopy. There is potential to coppice some of this hawthorn, so that it regrows as an understorey element. This activity should be targeted along the footpath to achieve parallel objectives of ride management. Timber extraction from this compartment is extremely problematic; as such, the hawthorn should be processed into logs and brash and left on site in order to increase the deadwood component in the woodland.

#### 4.5.3 Ride Creation and Management

Woodland “rides” are an effective way of managing open space within a woodland, bringing increased structural and floral diversity, providing favourable conditions for birds and invertebrates, as well as creating a welcoming open aspect for visitors. The increased light reaching the woodland floor will combat the dominance of ivy that occurs in some areas. A classic woodland ride provides a graded edge from mature trees through scrub and tall herbs, to short grassland. To achieve this, a three-zone ride management regime is recommended. The central zone should be cut twice annually, the middle zone every three years, and the outer zone on a long rotation in the form of scallops. This should be implemented on new and existing rides.

- Sycamore removal in 2010 resulted in the creation of a short section of ride along the footpath in compartment 1, but it is still fairly narrow. There is potential to improve this by further selective felling of sycamore, and by cutting a number of “scallops” along its edges – the scallops should then be allowed to regrow to provide a successional habitat ultimately back to woodland.
- The main footpath route in compartment 4 is ideal for further ride widening. It is also a known location for anti-social activity, and so creating a more open aspect here may help to reduce this. Trees should be selectively felled either side of the footpath (between 3-5m) including a number of scallops (extending out to 10m from the path). The ivy-laden sycamore trees leaning heavily over the path should be targeted primarily.
- In compartment 5, the hawthorn coppicing targeted along the footpaths will support ride widening objectives to an extent.

#### 4.5.4 Invasive and Non-Native Species

Laurel is considered an invasive species in the woodland; if unchecked it can dominate the shrub layer to the detriment of ground flora and tree seedlings. This should be cut to ground level, the stumps grubbed out, and the arisings stacked in small piles with roots off the ground and exposed to air. Larger specimens may require an application of herbicide over the cut stumps. All cleared areas should be monitored, and the regrowth cleared as necessary. Smaller specimens can be hand-pulled by volunteers. Known areas where it occurs are marked on the map, but it may be present elsewhere in the woods as well.

Ivy dominates the woodland floor and is prevalent on some trees, particularly in compartments 3 and 4. The proposed felling and ride creation will increase light levels to the woodland floor, allowing other ground flora to compete with this ivy. Severance or removal of ivy up trees is not encouraged, unless recommended by ongoing tree hazard surveys, as this provides a valuable habitat.

The only non-native conifers in the woodland are a small group of mature larch and a single mature spruce tree, in the southern tip of compartment 2. Whilst not a natural component of the woodland, they do possess good amenity value. A policy of non-replacement should be adopted, and the surrounding area monitored for conifer regeneration and actioned accordingly should it become detrimental to native species.

#### 4.5.5 Management of the Woodland Understorey

The purpose of this is to help secure good levels of natural regeneration within the woodland, and to help ensure it has the best chances of developing on to maturity, supporting the long term sustainability of the woodland. Much of the proposed activity is suitable for implementation by volunteers:

- Parts of compartments 1, 2 and 3 have a dense understorey of holly. This is a native species and a perfectly valid component of the woodland, however it becomes an issue where it begins outcompeting everything else. It should be coppiced, targeting

areas where regeneration of tree species is present and at risk, and where adjacent to footpaths to improve sightlines through the wood.

- In compartment 1 are some newly establishing patches of bracken over areas of bluebells, only a year or two old. To preserve the bluebells, the bracken should be crushed – around July, when the fronds are fully unfurled, stems should be flattened, without breaking from the roots. Given the small size of the patches, this is suitable to be done manually.
- There is some activity required around securing favourable regeneration in the recently cut areas adjacent to the railway tracks in compartment 2; currently there is significant coppice regrowth of sycamore stumps, but also some naturally regenerating oak seedlings taking advantage of the light. The oak should be encouraged by weeding and protecting it with tree tubes, whilst the sycamore can be limited by regular re-cutting of the coppice regrowth.
- Compartments 4 and 5 have dense patches of young self-set ash seedlings. Whilst Chalara ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) has been identified on some young seedlings in the site, it is still worthwhile promoting good conditions for the species to flourish. To help ensure this regeneration is able to grow to maturity, some of this should be “respaced” - the better quality specimens should be identified and retained, and all others cut by hand to leave a grid at approximately 1m spacing. This should be targeted to where the selective felling of canopy trees has improved local light conditions.
- Following the hawthorn coppicing in compartment 5, the cut stumps should be protected by temporary fencing or similar to allow successful establishment of coppice regrowth.

## **4.6 Community Involvement**

A guided walk or event following the launch of the new management plan would be an ideal way to engage with interested members of the community; inviting the local community to come and find out what is being done in the woodland, and identify people interested in volunteering.

The local community will be able to directly engage in the site through ad-hoc volunteer sessions organised by the CMS Midweek Volunteer programme. A number of items in the action tables have been identified as being suitable for delivery by “Volunteers”. Additionally, the Croxley Green Residents’ Association takes an active interest in the management of the woodland and are well placed to bring management issues to the attention of the District Council.

## **4.7 Marketing**

Raising awareness of the site and encouraging more people to visit would help support the long term management of the woodland, by ensuring that it continues to be valued by the local community. Any promotion should be sensitive to the nature conservation value of the site, and should not diminish its feeling of naturalness and seclusion. Marketing appropriate to the nature of the site will be carried out through a number of channels including:

- The existing site leaflet, and newly made walking leaflet.
- TRDC and CMS websites.
- Social media channels of TRDC and the partner organisations.
- Three Rivers Times, an in house publication reaching 38,000 households.
- District Council notice boards.
- Through the ParksHerts website.

Press releases are produced on a regular basis covering a wide range of topics such as large events, and contain photographs and quotes from those who have attended. Three Rivers District has a range of free local magazines resulting in local sites gaining good exposure.

## 5.0 ACTION PLANS AND MAPS

### 5.1 Annual and Regular Actions

Action	Obj. Ref	Cpt.	When	Lead By	Delivery By	Status
Annual 'spring clean' of site	C3	All	April	TRDC	TRDC	
Clean and maintain existing signage and interpretation	C1	All	April	TRDC	TRDC	
Ride management – mow/ strim ridge edges	E2	1,3	May	TRDC	TRDC	
Vegetation clearance - entrance points & picnic area	A1	All	June	TRDC	TRDC	
Ride management – mow/strim ride edges	E2	1,3	July	TRDC	TRDC	
Bracken crushing in recently established patches	E4	1	July	TRDC	TRDC	
Coppice sycamore in woodland edge clearings, protect young oaks with tree tubes	E4	2	Nov-Feb	CMS	Volunteers	
Coppice holly where impacting on other species	E4	1,2,3	Nov-Feb	CMS	Volunteers	
Annual review of GAP action plans, publicise online	G2	-	March	CMS	TRDC/CMS	
Tree safety audit & remedial work	B3	All	Ongoing	TRDC	TRDC	
Empty dog bins	C3	All	Ongoing	TRDC	TRDC	
Empty litter bins	C3	All	Ongoing	TRDC	TRDC	
Respond proactively to garden waste dumping	C2	All	Ongoing	TRDC	TRDC	

Annual Actions Map

## 5.2 Year 1 Actions (2019-2020)

Action	Obj. Ref	Cpt.	When	Lead By	Delivery By	Status
<del>Remove</del> <u>Replace</u> ladder steps in Long Valley Wood	B1	5	Summer	CMS	Contractor	
<del>Rationalise prohibitive</del> <u>Improve appearance of</u> structures at access off Harvey Road	B2	4	Summer	CMS	Contractor	
Eradicate laurel from the woodland	E3	All	Summer	TRDC	TRDC	
Selective felling to free up crowded veteran oaks	E1	1,2	Winter	CMS	Contractor	
Scalping on existing ride	E2	1	Winter	CMS	Contractor	
Selective felling of cherry to create glades for regeneration	E1	2	Winter	CMS	Contractor	

Year 1 Map

### 5.3 Year 2 Actions (2020-2021)

Action	Obj. Ref	Cpt.	When	Lead By	Delivery By	Status
Replace all benches on site, utilising timber produced during year 1 tree works	A2	All	Summer	CMS	Contractor/ Volunteers	
Install waymarking for self-guided trails	A3	All	Summer	CMS	Volunteers	
Update site leaflet to accompany trails	A3	-	Summer	CMS	CMS	
Follow up inspection/treatment of Laurel	E3	All	Summer	TRDC	TRDC	
Ride creation along section of footpath, including scallops	E2	4	Winter	CMS	Contractor	
Selective felling of cherry to create glades for regeneration	E1	3	Winter	CMS	Contractor	
Selective felling around oaks, targeting sycamore & cherry	E1	4	Winter	CMS	Contractor	
Respace ash regeneration under gaps in canopy	E4	4	Spring	CMS	Volunteers	

Year 2 Map

#### 5.4 Year 3 Actions (2021-2022)

Action	Obj. Ref	Cpt.	When	Lead By	Delivery By	Status
Coppice hawthorn where in canopy along main footpath	E1	5	Winter	CMS	Contractor	
Protect coppiced hawthorn to secure regrowth	E4	5	Spring	CMS	Volunteers	
Respace ash regeneration under newly coppiced areas	E3	5	Spring	CMS	Volunteers	

**N.B. Year 4 Actions (2022-2023) and Year 5 Actions (2023-2024) as per 'Annual and Regular Actions'**

Year 3 Map

## 6.0 SPECIFICATIONS

1 General prescriptions relevant to all operations	
<i>Habitat Retention</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Honeysuckle</b> to be retained wherever practical, in particular shaded groups. This may require a tree or patch of trees to be retained if a particularly good area of honeysuckle is found.</li> <li>▪ Retain all standing and fallen <b>dead wood</b> where this does not compromise ground flora and it is safe so to do.</li> <li>▪ Care should be taken to protect <b>ancient woodbanks</b> from damage during woodland management works through the felling of trees or movement of vehicles; it may be necessary to mark these on the ground prior to works to ensure their protection.</li> </ul>
<i>Visitor Safety</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Members of the public to be kept a safe distance from active tree works with signs and or banks men. Access routes may require temporary closure.</li> </ul>
<i>Timing</i>	Unless otherwise stated, all habitat management work will be undertaken between 1 <sup>st</sup> November and 28 <sup>th</sup> February.

2 Installing benches and site furniture	
<i>Method</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In the first instance, arrangements should be made to new bespoke bench kits should be milled from hardwood timber harvested from the woodland during the selective felling operations in year 1.</li> <li>▪ The woodland bench type should be in keeping with the existing style of furniture currently used in other TRDC woodlands.</li> <li>▪ Type 1 Woodland bench in green oak with a back rest, in the more well used areas of the site. See SNH Countryside Access Design Guide – Information Sheet 74.</li> <li>▪ Type 2 is a more rustic, simple timber bench, for use in quieter, less accessible parts of the site.</li> <li>▪ Should bespoke benches not be an option, pre-made oak timber bench kits of a similar specification should be used for the replacements.</li> <li>▪ Rotting log bench in All Saints Wood to be replaced. Metal picnic bench to be removed.</li> </ul> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Type 1</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Type 2</p> </div> </div>
<i>Who</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identification and engagement of suitable craftsperson to</li> </ul>

	<p>construct bench kits, alongside co-ordination of tree felling works : CMS Officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Installation of the new benches: CMS Volunteers</li> </ul>
<i>Future management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring the condition of site furniture.</li> </ul>

3. Self-guided Circular Trails	
<i>Purpose</i>	New directional signage will orientate visitors, encourage exploration and enjoyment of the woods, and promote physical activity. Used in conjunction with the leaflet, it becomes an educational resource as well.
<i>Method</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Two circular trails – a shorter route around cpts 1 &amp; 2, and a longer route taking in cpts 3 &amp; 4 as well.</li> <li>▪ Timber posts with directional waymarking disks</li> <li>▪ Disks to be branded</li> <li>▪ Remove old redundant posts along the identified routes.</li> <li>▪ Position at the path's edge, at junctions to ensure the intended direction is clear, to remain. Cut back surrounding vegetation at post locations</li> <li>▪ Existing site leaflet to be updated – to include a map showing the waymarked routes, identifying features of interest, and connecting countryside walks. Text revised as necessary.</li> <li>▪ To be distributed via CMS and TRDC channels – in print and online.</li> </ul>
<i>Who</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CMS Officer to procure: local manufacturer for waymark disks, local timber merchant for posts, design &amp; printing for leaflet.</li> <li>▪ Installation/removal of posts by CMS volunteers.</li> </ul>
<i>Style/ design</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Leaflet to follow established TRDC design/layout/colour schemes.</li> </ul>
<i>Future management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Monitoring the condition of the waymark posts and keeping encroaching vegetation cut back during the summer.</li> </ul>

4. Harvey Road/ <u>Lavrock Lane</u> Site Access	
<i>Purpose</i>	Improving the visual appearance of the site entrance and allowing better access for woodland management vehicles.
<i>Method</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduction to single vehicle entrance gate <u>in a similar position to the present gate, with an adjoining pedestrian gate of matching style, located closer to Harvey Road. Ideally constructed in timber to reflect the woodland character. Incorporate speed limit sign onto the gate to allow removal of existing sign.</u></li> <li>▪ Install adjacent pedestrian access gate adjacent to vehicle gate, of matching style.</li> <li>▪ Remove existing bollards</li> <li>▪ Reposition entrance sign as necessary to make this prominent.</li> <li>▪ Reposition bins to behind gate to ensure this is not a major visual</li> </ul>

	feature.
<i>Who</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Design, Specification and Procurement: led by CMS Officer.</li> <li>▪ Installation by appointed contractor.</li> </ul>

### 5. Processing Material from Tree Safety Works

<i>Purpose</i>	Ensuring material from tree safety works is used within the woodland to enhance people's enjoyment of the site and to enhance habitats
<i>Method</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Material of large size (e.g. 40cm diameter) to be set aside at site entrance in lengths of approximately 2m for collection and processing to create bench</li> <li>▪ All smaller material is to be habitat piled</li> </ul>
<i>Who</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ TRDC</li> <li>▪ Engaging craftsman to process benches – CMS Officer</li> </ul>