

Wood Pasture and Parkland



Description

Lowland Wood Pasture and Parkland are the products of historic land management systems, and represent a landscape rather than a particular plant community. Usually they consist of large, mature trees (often pollards) in grazed grassland, heathland and/or woodland floras.

The sites are frequently of national historic, cultural and landscape importance.

This Action Plan includes ancient landscapes such as Medieval Forests and Wood Pastures as well as more modern Parklands, especially where these contain older, original trees. It also includes individual veteran trees away from a Parkland setting. Wood Pasture is a traditional landscape which is becoming increasingly rare. Many sites have been turned to arable use or been abandoned and developed as secondary woodland.

Around Barnsley there are a number of more modern formal Parkland estates. Older sites are primarily native trees, but more modern landscaped Parkland often contains many introduced species. A particularly important feature of these sites is veteran trees and deadwood. Additionally, these sites may have adjacent areas of old orchard. Parkland habitat is locally important for Badger, Grass Snake and Song Thrush.

National Status

There are no reliable statistics on the current extent of this type of habitat or on historical and current rates of loss or degradation. The current best available estimate is 10,000–20,000ha currently in a working condition nationally. This habitat is most common in southern Britain, but scattered examples occur throughout the country. Duncombe Park is a nationally significant site in North Yorkshire.

Local Status

There is little survey information available for this type, but there are a number of former Parkland estates at Cannon Hall, Banks Hall, Bretton Hall, Noblethorpe, Birthwaite, Falthwaite, Stainborough, Worsbrough, Tankersley, Wortley and Wharnccliffe.

Wharnccliffe Chase and Tankersley Park were created as Deer parks in the 13th and 14th centuries. Wortley Park was established in the 16th century. Stainborough is the only Grade I listed Parkland in the area.

Ancient and Veteran Trees are being recorded and three examples of 'very old trees' are known from Rockley, Wortley and Tankersley.

Legal Status

Designation under the EC Habitats Directive as a SAC will give protection to some sites. Felling licences from the Forestry Authority are normally required but veteran trees may be particularly at risk because a licence is not needed to fell them on Health and Safety grounds. The DEFRA Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) Regulations may apply.

Individual trees and groups are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) at some Parkland sites in Barnsley, whilst other sites are covered by Conservation Area designation. Individual trees may also have some protection if they contain bat roosts or hole nesting birds. There is recognition of the value of the habitat and individual old trees in various development plans, and landscape designations (eg. by English Heritage). Only one site, Stainborough Park, is listed in the Natural Heritage Site (NHS) register.

Links with other Action Plans

SAP1	Hedgehog
SAP2	Bats
SAP7	Kestrel
SAP10	Barn Owl
SAP12	Tree Sparrow
SAP14	Great Crested Newt

Current Factors Causing Loss or Decline

- Lack of younger generations of trees is producing a skewed age structure, leading to breaks in continuity of deadwood habitat and loss of specialised dependent species.
- Neglect, and loss of expertise of traditional tree management techniques (eg. pollarding) leading to trees collapsing or being felled for safety reasons.
- Loss of veteran trees through disease (eg. Dutch Elm disease, Oak die-back), physiological stress, such as drought and storm damage, and competition for resources with surrounding younger trees.
- Removal of veteran trees and deadwood through perceptions of safety and tidiness where sites have high amenity use, forest hygiene, the supply of firewood or through vandalism.
- Damage to trees and roots from soil compaction and erosion caused by trampling by livestock and people car parking.

- Changes to ground-water levels leading to water stress and tree death, resulting from abstraction, drainage, neighbouring development, roads, prolonged drought and climate change.
- Isolation and fragmentation of the remaining Parklands and Wood Pasture sites in the landscape. (Many of the species dependent on old trees are unable to move between these sites due to poor powers of dispersal and the increasing distances they need to travel).

Current Local Action

- Particular survey and management work has been undertaken at Stainborough Castle, including restoration of grazing, protection of veteran trees and measures to encourage natural regeneration etc.
- Veteran Tree Survey at Wortley, Wentworth Castle and Cannon Hall.

Proposed Local Action

- Research historical data to identify any surviving remnants of original Parkland.
- Survey and complete a register of all Ancient and Veteran Trees.
- Use the Wentworth Castle Project as a good example to promote the potential for restoring Parkland for wildlife.
- Encourage participation among farmers in Environmental Stewardship and Countryside Stewardship Schemes.
- Encourage landowners to leave deadwood within woods where appropriate.
- Identify any areas of remnant orchards within the Parklands in Barnsley.
- South Yorkshire Badger Group to continue to survey, record and monitor Badger setts.
- Extract information from the *Barnsley Bird Study Group Breeding Bird Survey* to provide populations and mapping of breeding Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Song Thrush, Hawfinch and Spotted Flycatcher.
- Survey and monitor all known past Grass Snake, Adder and Common Lizard sites and potential new locations and advise appropriate management.

BMBC Planning Policy Actions

- Take opportunities for creating corridors to aid in the connection and de-fragmentation of important sites/individual trees.
- Encourage the creation of new habitat through the requirement made under Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 9, to incorporate biodiversity enhancements into development wherever possible.

- Through planning control and conservation area/historic landscape designations, ensure no further loss of Wood Pasture and Parkland to development or other land use change, and seek opportunities to create new areas through approved developments.
- Ensure that Wood Pasture and Parkland protection, creation and management opportunities are promoted through appropriate regional and local planning policy instruments.
- Seek further Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) under suitable circumstances for ancient trees that are not yet protected.
- Declare Local Nature Reserves (LNR) on relevant areas of Wood Pasture and Parkland or instigate other appropriate measures for their management and protection.
- Include habitat and species protection policies in development plans and/or supplementary guidance.

BMBC Development Control Actions

- Review existing TPOs and consider the desirability of applying further orders to Wood Pasture and Parkland habitats.
- Encourage a review of Permitted Development Rights that currently allow potentially damaging recreational activities for 14 days per year – such as 4-wheel drive trials.

BMBC Land Ownership and Management Actions

- Barnsley MBC to look for opportunities to alter countryside sites such as Cannon Hall, so as to contribute to Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Wood Pasture and Parkland.