

To: The Planning Department, Stroud District Council (SDC)  
For the attention of Mark Hemming, Tree Officer (SDC TO)  
copies to: Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Plantlife, Stroud Valleys Project

Date: 17<sup>th</sup> March 2018 Review date: March 2023

Management Plan relating to Tree Preservation Order (TPO)

Site: Sladebank Woods, between Summer Street and Langtoft Road, Stroud  
Owners: Kesty and Martin Jakes,  
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### Background

This is the fourth management plan submitted by us since we bought the woods in July 2000. Although the previous Plan wasn't due to be reviewed in October 2019, we have decided to submit an updated Plan which will run for minimum of five years following a recent conversation with the SDC TO.

### Context

The essential elements of this Plan are little different to the previous Plan. The context, however, is somewhat different, in that we have identified the Chalara Ash Dieback disease in the woodland which will have a significant impact in the medium term. More information on the spread of this disease can be found at: <http://chalaramap.fera.defra.gov.uk/>

### Overview and progress to date

Working with our monthly Woodfuel group over the last six or so years has helped us make significant progress in implementing our Plan. We have completed much of the Sycamore removal in Compartments 3 & 4, mixed woodland, and have begun to restock the area with a mix of native trees. We have also made good progress in the selective thinning in Compartment 1, mature woodland.

We have created an orchard where we hope to have bees shortly, and have been successfully working to recover the grassland area near our eastern boundary, 'meadow' in Compartment 2. The aim is to restore the adjacent hazel area to coppice and connect the two areas.

One of the other items of note is the huge reduction in the amount of rubbish being dropped in the woods. As the woods looked more cared for and managed, we feel that neighbours and casual users are much less inclined to drop rubbish.

As part of our move to making the woods suitable for Forest School, we are planning to map, tag and survey trees in the zones we will be working in, as suggested by the SDC TO. We have also been liaising with The Stroud Town and District Councils about the condition of trees on the northern boundary, some of which have significant basal cavities, some of which have already been 'monolithed'.

### Partnerships

Following an informal survey carried out by the **Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT)** and **Plantlife** in 2014, we have been designated a GWT Key Wildlife Site and they want to link our site management to neighbouring sites. They were very positive about our management of the woodland and grassland. We have also linked up with the **Stroud Valleys Project**. We received and planted an initial 200 trees via the Big Tree plant Fund in Feb/March 2014 and planted a further 300 trees during 2014/15. During 2016 we developed links with **Active Impact** and through this we were approved as a provider for the *Of Course We Can* programme; this means we will be running our first mixed ability Forest School sessions July 2017.

### Amenities

Towards enhancing the options for educational and community events we plan to make a framework to house a portable/removable compost toileting system, and an open sided and open roof pole structure

### Felling Licence not needed

We will not exceed the maximum quarterly unlicensed felling limits set by the Forestry Commission <https://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-6dfkus>

## **Sladebank Woods Management Plan May 2017**

The map of the woods is as previously submitted with four compartments.

### **Aim**

We aim to manage this piece of urban fringe woodland, which comprises a mixture of ancient semi natural and secondary woodland and some grassland, to find a good balance of uses with an emphasis on education and conservation, within the terms of the TPO. This will encompass managing the site in a sustainable way for the future, generating a small income and hopefully some grant aid. This will help fund management operations, increasing biodiversity, accessibility and amenities.

### **Objectives**

- To create a manageable survey system for the site as a whole. We will be using tags to number the trees and the list of species from the GWT as the basis for the survey. We will be actively monitoring the spread of Ash Dieback and taking specialist advice on management options
- To grow from seeds or cuttings indigenous species of wildflowers, plants, shrubs and trees on site to increase stocks of particular species to maximise the diversity for the benefit of wildlife.
- To maintain levels and diversity of invertebrates and fungi by retention and creation of dead standing timber and creating a number of habitat piles.
- To broadly maintain the existing proportions of woodland and grassland on the site as a whole.
- To work towards clearing the site of accumulated rubbish through clearance, and by engaging with the local community to discourage further rubbish
- To continue to build good relationships with our woodland neighbours.
- To provide educational opportunities through Forest School activities and woodland open days
- To offer a range of woodland events to engage local community involvement and improve access by levelling small areas.

### **Compartment 1 – Mature Woodland**

Continue selective thinnings as advised by SDC TO for firewood to encourage timber trees and open up canopy. Restocking of suppressed/wolf trees with native hardwoods, primarily through links with Stroud Valleys Project. Lower growing/lighter leaves trees to be planted such as hazel, rowan, birch on upper slopes.

On the lower slope we are establishing a fire circle for Forest School events. We will coppice the mature hazel trees on the grassland fringe and protect by brash hedging.

### **Compartment 2 – Meadow Management Area**

The primary focus in this area will be to manage the grassland area by removing most of the encroaching scrub and cutting the grass, ideally twice a year. We will experiment with scything. We will remove some of the larger trees to let more light in and connect Compartments 1 & 2 at the hazel coppice strip.

### **Compartment 3 – Woodland Restoration Area**

This area has developed into a mix of ash and sycamore, much of which has been damaged by squirrels. In the light of Chalara, we will reduce the amount of sycamore felled as we anticipate substantial ash felling being required in future. We will re-stock with native hardwoods. Some will come from seeds and saplings from the woods, and others from nurseries supplying good native provenance, initially via the Stroud Valleys Project.

### **Compartment 4 – Mixed woodland and orchard**

At the south eastern end of this area we are establishing an orchard, where we also hope to have bees. It is a rocky sloping area about 30m by 10m and we have roughly levelled it to facilitate future management and harvesting. We have made a narrow zig zag track up the slope avoiding any existing trees not identified for felling; the route is outlined on the site map.

We have established a significant number of hazel trees in this area, in addition to planting and transplanting other broadleaf, fruit and nut trees, and a programme of selective pollarding. Three new ponds have been established and we aim to create a number of hibernaculums over the coming years. The grassland area has been slightly increased and continues to show a good variety of species, including one Common Spotted Orchid, so we will continue to cut it twice yearly.