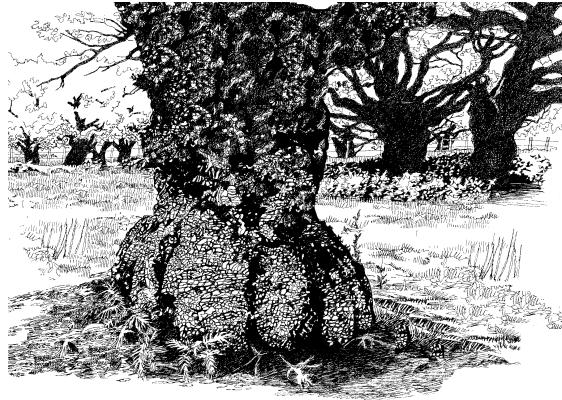


SUFFOLK LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN



Wood-pasture and parkland

1 Definition of habitat

Lowland wood-pastures and parkland are the products of historic land management systems, and represent a vegetation structure rather than being a particular plant community. Typically this structure consists of large, open-grown or high forest trees (often pollards) at various densities, in a matrix of grazed grassland, heathland and/or woodland floras.

In Suffolk there are both the remnants and the active practice of a tradition of using the same land to grow trees and graze animals. Today this land is defined as wood-pasture (*Silva pastillis*).

In many cases today's parklands have evolved through a complex series of changes starting with the medieval deer park. Consequently much of the parkland we see today is quite different to its medieval origins. New species of trees and shrubs have been introduced into this country and there have been fashions for designed landscapes. This rich variety of historic landscapes has provided a wealth of habitats and niches for wildlife.

Lowland woodland-pasture and parkland habitats have been classified in the National Vegetation Classification (NVC) system. In Suffolk, the following stand types are likely to occur.

- *Quercus robur* – *Pteridium aquilinum* – *Rubus fruticosus* woodland (W10)
- *Quercus robur*- *Betula spp.* – *Deschampsia flexuosa* woodland (W16)
- *Fraxinus excelsior* – *Acer campestre* *Mercurialis* woodland (W8)

This habitat does include urban parks with veteran trees including exotics where grazing/browsing is present.

For the purposes of target setting the following definition is made between restoration and creation. Creation is on sites for which no record of previous wood-pasture and parkland use exists and restoration is where remnants are still present.

This ecosystem is likely to be of interest for invertebrates (especially the saproxylics), epiphytes, bryophytes, fungi, bats and woodland birds and links to other BAP plans are recognised (see below).

2 Current status

National

There are no reliable statistics either nationally, nor has the current rates of degradation or loss of this type of habitat been surveyed accurately.

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan reporting round of 2005, estimated 22,000 ha of wood-pasture and parkland existed in England. The new SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound targets for the UK BAP are based on the number of sites not area; for England this has been estimated at 6,000 sites.

This habitat is better represented in lowland Great Britain than elsewhere in Europe, although scattered examples are to be found throughout Europe. Parklands may be a seed pool for distinctive local phenotypes. These areas are of outstanding European importance.

Local

Suffolk has a rich heritage of wood-pasture and parkland. Early maps and documents describe the county as having vast numbers of free standing trees in pastures and parks.

This habitat type has been poorly recorded in Suffolk with parkland often being tagged onto woodland or grazing land surveys; as a result parkland estimates for Suffolk are highly varied. The historical atlas of Suffolk also holds information on these habitats in a mapped form <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/Environment/Archaeology/Publications/HistoricalAtlas.htm>. The number of sites of wood-pasture and parkland for Suffolk will be mapped during 2007, Suffolk Biological Records Centre and Woodlands officer Suffolk County Council using data from the veteran tree survey, existing mapped data from Natural England and liaison with Suffolk Landscape Officers Group (SLOG). It is important that this work is also cross-referenced with the Historic Landscape Character mapping work, which is under implementation. It is likely that from the above process a list of sites will need field validation to establish whether they still qualify as wood-pasture and parkland or could be restored.

Certain species such as the barbastelle bat (through survey work in Suffolk and the UK) appears to be indicating that this bat species is associated with veteran trees and therefore is strongly associated with the wood-pasture and parkland. Further research will be undertaken by Suffolk Bat Group and others to establish the bat populations of wood-pasture and parkland and mixed deciduous woodland sites. Other surveys are needed to establish the

status of oak polypore, saproxylic *Coleoptera* (deadwood beetles) and golden hover flies. Wood-pasture is known to be of primary importance to eight national priority species that occur in Suffolk and for a number of saproxylic *Coleoptera* (deadwood beetles) and *Diptera* (Flies). The significance of this habitat for saproxylic coleoptera is identified on the following website <http://thasos.users.btopenworld.com/sqi.htm>

Three of the sites are not protected/designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

All of these are UK Priority BAP species action plans or grouped species plans. Opportunities to undertake these should be explored with organisations such as Suffolk Naturalists Society.

All current Suffolk BAP plans can be viewed at www.suffolk.gov.uk/Environment/Biodiversity and National Plans at www.ukbap-reporting.org.uk/plans/national

Natural Areas

The majority of medieval parks are usually on clay, with the post-medieval deer parks being on the junctions of clay and sand. Soil types may have been a consideration, but the siting of parks was more complex than just juxtaposition of soils. Access to large houses and significant views may have been a deciding factor too. They occur in all of the Natural Areas in Suffolk.

3 Current factors affecting the species or habitats

Wood-pasture and parkland in the county is affected by numerous direct or indirect factors. These include:

Site management issues:

- Lack of maintenance for newly planted trees.
- A lack of new pollarding to maiden trees within a location of veteran pollards (Pollards are not a feature in post-medieval parks).
- A lack of structural and age diversity
- Unsympathetic tree surgery (often due to Health & Safety implications).
- Inappropriate management and not using local phenotype for restocking where appropriate.
- The removal of too much deadwood.
- Intensive grazing has led to a decline in the floristic value of woodland pasture.
- The use of drugs to treat parasites in cattle has led to a decline in invertebrate species associated with dung.
- Damage to trees by grazing animals; bark stripping, root damage, soil compaction and poaching under tree canopies.
- Modern agricultural practices, including ploughing too close to trees.

- Cutting away lower branches which are the first on the tree to produce a deadwood habitat.
- Bracken and other invasive species
- Fire.
- Destruction & improvement of the grassland/heathland components - drainage, fertilisers, re-seeding, fungicides etc

Other factors affecting wood pasture and parkland habitat:

- Wilful damage to fragile habitats; hollow trees and standing deadwood.
- Public safety concerns – removing dead wood.
- New inappropriate access that for example may lead to unwanted fires and compaction around trees.
- Fragmentation of habitats, lack of understanding about the value of the ecology of these sites.
- Direct loss of the habitat through change to other land uses e.g. arable farming, golf courses road building, expansion of villages, commercial encroachment, and the colonisation of secondary woodland.
- Lower water tables & pollution.
- Oak and Dutch elm disease dieback and *phytophthora* infection.
- Increased use of fertilisers, herbicides and insecticides.
- Reduction in plant nectar shrubs providing less food for emergent adult insects e.g. hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)
- Climate change - more extreme weather may impact negatively upon veteran trees and the semi-natural habitat on the ground. Change of ownership and the severance of house from the parkland.

4 **Current action**

In Suffolk, some areas of Wood-Pasture and Parkland have been given statutory conservation status by English Heritage and further details are available in the Register.

Two sites have been designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) Sotterley Park (123.6 ha) and Staverton Park (84.28 ha). Staverton Park has also been designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which recognises the sites international importance. Some other sites are protected by Tree Preservation Orders, or are within Special Landscape Areas and/or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Suffolk Wildlife Trust has identified County Wildlife Sites (CWS) that have some protection through the local planning authorities development plans (Supplement on Planning Guidance, Suffolk Coastal District Council). Tree Preservation Orders and Conservation Area Status may also be responsible for the protection of some wood-pasture and parkland.

The Suffolk Biological Records Centre (SBRC) is also producing a list so that further survey can be undertaken to assess the CWS potential.

Ancient trees that have been mapped nationally can be viewed on the Ancient Tree Forum's website (www.woodland-trust.org.uk/ancient-tree-hunt/index.htm.) There are a number of examples in Suffolk.

Species such as bats and some birds which utilise ancient trees are fully protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 and the Countryside and Rights of Way act 2000 (CROW). This also gives some protection to their place of shelter. Planning Policy Statement 9 (2005) and the new Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), that are replacing local plans, make it essential that Local Authorities must protect and enhance Biodiversity Action Plan habitats and species in their LDFs. This should mean that planning officers and Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) make informed decisions regarding planning applications and aim to enhance biodiversity where possible. The Steering Group of the Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership is guiding various BAP planning initiatives in Suffolk to support district councils (DCs), further information can be obtained from the Suffolk BAP officer (email mary.norden@sbrc.globalnet.co.uk). The ecological network approach is also being incorporated into LDFs, which has implications for the location of new development sites. Positive management can be achieved through forestry grant schemes and agri-environment schemes (some wood – pasture is already in HLS in Suffolk).

5 Targets

- During 2007, map the current extent of these habitats and then by 2010 map the historic extent.
- Maintain the extent of wood-pasture and parkland based on current baseline data (2007)
- Ensure favourable condition or recovering condition of the two known SSSIs by 2010.
- Areas of derelict wood-pasture and parkland, three sites by 2010.
- Identify potential CWS sites, assess condition and designate by 2008.
- Expand the area of wood-pasture and parkland, in appropriate areas to help reverse fragmentation and reduce the generation gap between veteran trees identify and create three new sites in Suffolk by 2010.

6 Actions

Action (apply SMART Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound) approach and include locations where relevant).	Achieve by date	Delivery partners (identify lead and support partners)
Policy & Legislation		
Develop LDF policy wood-pasture and parkland that can be used for LDFs in Suffolk.	2007	Mid-Suffolk DC., SLOG,
Respond to consultations on HLS targeting statements and documents include wood-pasture and parkland where appropriate.	2007 and ongoing	NE, SCC, DCs, FC, NT.
Site safeguard and management		
Identify and create new areas of wood-pasture and parkland, adjacent to or near existing sites using local provenance trees from the existing site (to maintain gene pool) or allowing natural regeneration where suitable.	2007 and ongoing.	FC , SCC , NE, NT, DCs, SWT, RSPB, landowners and managers.
Work with Rights Of Way managers to ensure new footpaths do not encourage casual access to vulnerable sites such as Staverton Park.	2007	SCC, DCs,
Ensure that both SSSIs are in an unfavourable recovering or in favourable condition by 2010.	2010	NE, landowners/managers, DCs.
Renew management plans for wood-pasture and parkland sites as required.	2007 on-going	NE, FWAG, DCs,, FC, landowners/managers.
Investigate coverage of parkland and woodpasture SSSI sites.	2007 on-going	SBRC, NE, , SWT.
Notify new ones that meet the selection criteria as soon as possible.	2007 on-going	NE, FWAG, DCs,, FC, landowners/managers.
Advocate and provide advise to landowners and managers the use of long-term historic landscape plans to restore sites.	2007 and ongoing	NT ,NE, FWAG, SCC, DCs, English Heritage, FC, landowners and managers, County archaeologists.
Ensure protection of BAP species and protected species associated with wood-pasture and parkland.	2007 and ongoing	NE, SCC, DCs, FC, NT, SWT.
Implement relevant priority species and protected species action plans through the integration of species management requirements in habitat management.	2007	NT, NE, FWAG, DCs, landowners and managers.
Safeguard veteran trees using Tree Protection Orders where possible.	2007 and ongoing	Mid Suffolk DC, DCs.

Research and monitoring		
Identify the list of potential sites currently undesignated.	2007	SBRC, SCC, SWT.
Map existing resource and then validate this with further field survey.	2007	SBRC, NE, SCC, NT, SWT
Identify those sites that need re-surveying.	2007	SBRC, SCC, SWT.
Identify a programme of survey needs and identify and apply for funding if needed.	2007 ongoing	SWT, NT, SBRC, FC.
Engage specialists such as Suffolk Naturalists and Suffolk bat group to partake in a survey programme.	2008	SBRC,, SWT, FC, Suffolk Naturalists and Suffolk Bat Group.
Designate suitable sites as CWS if they meet the criteria.	2008	SWT, SCC, SBRC.
Notify NE if any of these sites are potential SSSI sites.	2008	SBRC, SCC, SWT, NE.
Advisory		
Highlight good (bad) practice in terms of planning for BAP via Biodiversity Partnership and Steering Group.	2007	SCC, NE, SWT, DCs.
Provide advice to owners and managers of wood-pasture and parkland concerning appropriate management	2007 -on-going	NT, FWAG, DCs, NE, SCC, landowners and managers.
Publicise and encourage Environmental Stewardship ELS/HLS . to partners and landowners..	2007	NE, FWAG, SWT, LAs, landowners/managers.
Promote and disseminate guidance notes to landowners and mangers on the desired management of lowland wood-pasture and parkland.	2008	NT, NE, DCs, AWP, SCC, landowners and managers.
Communications and publicity		
Hold 3 Woodland Working Group meetings each year with wood-pasture and parkland on each agenda.	2007	SCC, NE, FWAG, DCs, NT,
Encourage awareness raising with general public events, at locations such at suitable locations at least two events per year.	2007	SCC, NT
Host annual wood-pasture and parkland management days to include ancient tree management for managers include funding discussion such as HLS.	2007 & on-going	NT, AWP, DCs, FWAG, NE, landowners and managers.

NB Lead partners who lead the particular action are in bold.

Monitoring of progress:

Reported annually on the UK BAP reporting system BARS Biodiversity Action Reporting system.

Objectives currently not achievable by the plan partners:

None identified.

List of organisations that have been or will be consulted regarding this plan and have agreed to aim to deliver their organisations commitments

Anglia Woodfuel Project Gary Battell
Mid Suffolk District Council David Mitchell
Suffolk County Council Andrew Murray-Wood
Forestry Commission Simon Leatherdale, Rachel Riley and Trevor Wright
Natural England Patrick Robinson
Deer Initiative David Hooton
Suffolk Biological Records Centre Martin Sanford
National Trust Stuart Warrington
Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership Officer Mary Norden

Other Consultees:

FWAG Tim Schofield
Suffolk Wildlife Trust Dorothy Casey
DCs (all except Mid Suffolk)
Suffolk Landscape Officers Group via Peter Holborn
Suffolk County Council Landscape Officer Phil Watson
County Archaeologists Edward Martin and Keith Wade
Suffolk bat group Alison Collins

An Historical Atlas of Suffolk Edited by David Dymond & Edward Martin
Suffolk County Council 1999 (3rd edition)

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