

VETERAN TREES AND PARKLANDS

LOCAL HABITAT ACTION PLAN FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH

Last Updated: December 2008

1 CURRENT STATUS

1.1 Context

This plan covers a number of habitat types, listed below, where they have derived from medieval forests and emparkments with their origins in the 10th century or later where they contain much older trees derived from an earlier landscape. These may have been converted to other land uses such as arable fields, forestry and amenity land, but where surviving ancient and veteran trees are of biodiversity interest. From here on in the three site types below will be described solely as '**parkland**'.

- Lowland Wood Pastures
- Parklands
- Wooded commons

Other sites of ancient trees

- Pollarded trees, often willows along water courses, or, other species as markers in the wider landscape
- Ancient boundaries and track ways are another important resource of groups and individual ancient and veteran trees

All of the above features can have been subsequently incorporated into 'designed landscapes' popular in the 16th to 19th centuries, or later 20th century general developments

Ancient Trees can be defined as;

- Trees, which, by virtue of their great age and physical condition are of exceptional value biologically, aesthetically or culturally in the landscape or for wildlife. Physical attributes include extensive hollowing of the trunk, other cavities and associated decay fungi, large dead wood in the crown, general very knarled appearance.

The below can also be included but are not as important as the above characteristics

- Trees in the mature/third or final stage of its life
- Trees that are old relative to others of the same species

Veteran Trees can be defined as;

- In the second or mature/third stage of its life and has important wildlife and habitat features including; hollowing or holes and large dead branches.
- It will generally include old trees but also younger, middle aged trees where premature aging characteristics are present.

1.2 Biological Status

Parklands represent sites of international importance due to their scarcity. They also provide a specialist habitat for a variety of wildlife and are home to some of the few well-wooded sites and permanent pasture in the County. The sites are frequently of national historic, cultural and landscape importance. Parkland and ancient/veteran tree habitats have declined significantly both country and countywide. There are no reliable figures on the extent of the overall resource. The current best estimate is 10-20,000 ha of parkland within the U.K. (UK Biodiversity Steering Group).

A 1984 County Council survey of parklands in Cambridgeshire revealed 60 sites. Those created before the eighteenth century were generally situated on poor agricultural soil whereas those created after the eighteenth century were often used as an outward display of wealth and status and better agricultural soils were sacrificed. The Cambridgeshire Wildlife Trust has surveyed 12 of the oldest of these 60 parklands and another 90 veteran tree locations and 60 pollard willow sites (including many veteran trees). The Biological Records Centre carried out a black poplar survey during 2003, information on the survey report is available on: <http://www.cpbrc.org.uk/publications.htm> The Woodland Trust is at present running the 'Ancient Tree Hunt' that aims by 2012 to map the veteran and ancient tree resource of Britain <http://www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk>

1.3 Species

Parklands and historic boundaries are the products of historic land management systems and represent vegetation structure rather than being a particular plant community. Typically this structure consists of large, open grown or high forest native species trees (often pollards) at various densities, in a matrix of grazed grassland, heathland and/or woodland floras. They are of interest for bats and birds, indigenous tree genotypes and saproxylic (wood eating) fauna and epiphytic mosses and lichens on veteran trees. In addition they provide an important habitat for a number of species of national priority such as the BAP high priority species *Callicera spinolae* saproxylic hoverfly and *Elater ferrugineus* a very rare saproxylic click beetle. A list of BAP species can be found in 6 "Links to Other plans".

2 CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING PARKLAND HISTORIC BOUNDARIES AND THEIR ASSOCIATED ANCIENT AND VETERAN TREES IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

The following list highlights the major factors affecting veteran and ancient trees in Cambridgeshire:

- Lack of identified veteran trees producing an apparent skewed age structure.
- Inappropriate management e.g pollarding, excessive dead wooding leading to trees dying, collapsing and subsequently being felled for safety reasons. However, in certain circumstances pollarding and crown reduction may help towards stabilising a tree but such action should taken with extreme caution. The success of such work is dependant on the age, condition and type of tree. Ancient and vetarn species of willow will often recover very well from such work, while oak and beech will often die after a couple of years of apparently flourishing
- Tree loss due to disease, physiological stress and competition by younger trees e.g. when subsequently incorporated into a commercial woodland plantation
- Removal of trees through perceptions of safety, tidiness, vandalism or to supply firewood.

- Damage to trees and roots through soil compaction by livestock, development and vehicles.
- Changes to ground water levels due to abstraction, drainage, development, drought and climate change.
- Isolation and fragmentation leading to poor dispersal of dependent species.
- Pasture loss through conversion to arable etc.
- Pasture improvement through re-seeding, deep ploughing, agro chemical use etc.
- Inappropriate grazing levels, both too high and too low leading to bark grazing, compaction of soil underneath the canopy and loss of nectar plants,
- Pollution from remote industry or traffic, or locally from agrochemical application and nitrogen enrichment.
- Loss of traditional rural practices ie pollarding, coppice and hedgelaying

Action rather than inaction appears to cause most problems. Attention should therefore be directed to creating management plans to ensure the survival of these 'uneconomic' habitats.

3 CURRENT ACTION

The Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Steering Group suggests the following for improving the biodiversity of Cambridgeshire's parkland within its historic boundaries .

- Encouraging the conservation of ancient and veteran trees by promoting the minimum intervention policy regarding ancient and veteran pollards if they are not already under regular pollard management e.g within the past 50yrs . As previously mentioned even if a ancient/vetarn tree is considered close to collapse repollarding has been shown to be as damaging as any potential collapse. However, willow can recover from more drastic pollarded and crown reductions at much longer intervals
- Encourage the conservation management of old parklands
- Encourage the creation of fallen and standing deadwood habitats in the close vicinity of ancient and veteran trees
- Encourage measures to reduce developement and inappropriate farming practice pressures such as paving, ploughing intensive grazing in the vicinity and crucially under the canopy

3.1 Legal Status

Felling Licences and Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) may protect anything from woodlands to individual trees; however ancient and veteran trees may be particularly at risk because tree removal for safety reasons is exempt. Many parks are also found within Conservation Areas. Conservation Area status may offer some protection with limitation similar to TPOs. Hedgerow Regulations 1997 identify the important habitats within hedgerows. However, they fall short of recognising the importance of veteran or ancient trees that may be growing in them. Landscape designations, used to preserve areas of habitat may provide some protection for ancient and veteran trees. Veteran and ancient trees that may be bat roost sites are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (Schedule 5). They are also included in Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994, and The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2001 making it illegal to damage, destroy or obstruct access to bat roosts. Nesting birds in veteran and ancient trees are protected by Wildlife and

Countryside Act 1981 as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW). Protection is limited to construction and use of the nest.

Trees are a material consideration in planning therefore the Planning Policy Statement 9 Biological and Geological Conservation applies namely paragraph 10 'Ancient woodland is a valuable biodiversity resource both for its diversity of species and for its longevity as woodland. Once lost it cannot be recreated. Local planning authorities should identify any areas of ancient woodland in their areas that do not have statutory protection (e.g. as a SSSI). They should not grant planning permission for any development that would result in its loss or deterioration unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location outweigh the loss of the woodland habitat. Aged or 'veteran' trees found outside ancient woodland are also particularly valuable for biodiversity and their loss should be avoided. Planning authorities should encourage the conservation of such trees as part of development proposals.'

Furthermore, English Heritage has a Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, which includes 37 designated sites in Cambridgeshire. Whilst historic parks and gardens are not statutorily protected, local planning authorities should protect registered parks and gardens in preparing development plans and in determining planning applications. The effect of proposed development on a registered park or garden or its setting is a material consideration in the determination of a planning application.

In addition, SSSI legislation or County Wildlife Site designation cover some parkland. National forestry policy includes a presumption against the clearance of broadleaved woodland.

3.2 Financial assistance

Grant aid is available from DEFRA under the Environmental Stewardship Scheme and the Forestry Commission English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) is available for woodland management.

3.3 Management guidance and research

The Woodland Trust sponsored project Ancient Tree Hunt web site <http://www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk> and the web site of Natural England <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk> have several guides to the management of ancient and veteran trees. Management guidance on the risk from falling trees was published by the Health and Safety Executive. (SIM 01/2007/05).

Ongoing research (due to finish in 2012) is being carried out by the Woodland Trust sponsored ancient tree hunt to identify ancient and veteran trees – the data base is live and up to date information can be viewed via the ancient tree hunt web site. The information gathered when coupled with existing limited surveys by the Wildlife Trust into local historic parklands, boundaries and groups of ancient trees should provide as complete a picture presently possible of the resource of ancient and veteran trees

4 OBJECTIVES AND LONG TERM TARGETS

4.1 Objectives (revised November 2007)

- Protect and maintain the current extent and distribution of parkland and historic boundaries
- Ensure that existing parklands and historic boundaries are managed to provide favourable ecological conditions
- Link and buffer existing parkland and historic boundaries to other semi-natural habitats
- Halt the premature loss of veteran trees and ancient trees

4.2 5 year targets to 2013

- Identification of all parkland and historic boundaries containing ancient and veteran trees
- No loss of species rich parkland or historic boundaries
- Identify parklands and historic boundaries in need of appropriate management and implement such on 50% of sites
- Identification of isolated ancient and veteran trees
- Increase the protection and implement more appropriate management of isolated ancient and veteran trees through increased awareness and the TPO system

4.3 10 year target to 2018

- Appropriate management of 80% of the historic parkland and boundaries identified above
- No loss of species rich historic parkland or boundaries
- Where possible linking and buffering to other semi-natural habitats
- The appropriate management of 75% of identified ancient and veteran trees

5 ACTIONS

HABITAT ACTION PLAN FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE: VETERAN TREES AND PARKLANDS LAST UPDATED: December 2008

Target	Progress to 2007	Action	Responsible	Priority/date	Resources
1. No loss of species rich parkland or historic boundaries	Given the present recognition (albeit still far too low) of the importance of Parkland and the absence of grants for 'improvement' it is unlikely that any significant areas of historic parkland has been destroyed in the past 10 years but information is incomplete. The information on historic boundaries is even less complete and given the historical lower recognition of their importance may indicate a greater potential for loss	1.1.Ensure that all veteran trees & parklands managed by public bodies and conservation organisations are being managed appropriately by 2012	LAs, CCC, NE, WiT, WoT, NT, CPS, CWS group	High/End 2012	The landowners/managing organisations responsible should already have, or be working towards, having management plans for such sites that would include appropriate management of ancient and veteran trees
	There have been surveys by the WiT on selected Parkland sites and sites of willow pollards on selected river bank locations.	1.2 Compile a comprehensive list of ancient trees, parkland and other ancient tree sites	WoT, WiT, CPBRC	High-end 2013	The existing WiT surveys along with the work by the WoT Ancient Tree Hunt will largely meet this action

	<p>Very little done on individual or small groups of ancient trees</p> <p>Not much of a co-ordinated nature drawing on national good practice</p> <p>Individual organisations have fought the corner on individual sites or trees but again nothing co-ordinated drawing on national experiences</p>	<p>1.3 Increase awareness of the value of veteran & ancient trees amongst local authority planners, landowners & NGOs</p> <p>1.4 Lobby against or use relevant legislation to prevent the removal or inappropriate management on ancient and veteran trees.</p>	<p>LAs, NE, WiT, WoT, NT, CPS. WT</p> <p>WoT. FC. LAs. WiT. FWAG</p>	<p>High/Ongoing</p> <p>High/ongoing</p>	<p>Ongoing lobbying by WoT, NE, WiT . WoT has published and web based material specific to ancient & veteran tree management</p> <p>If informed the WoT will lobby/use relevant legislation against the management of groups or individual ancient trees through <u>www.woodsunderthreat.info</u> WiT, WoT, FWAG to use their local knowlege to monitor known ancient & veteran trees and report innappropriate management to FC, LAs WoT</p>
<p>2. Ensure 50% identified pre-1700 parklands and historic boundaries with an important ancient & veteran tree resource are in favourable management by 2013 to prevent prematruure loss of</p>	<p>All WoT, WiT sites have appropriate management plans in place. Almost all ancient tree sites designated as a SSSI will be, or are moving towards, favourable</p>	<p>2.1 In partnership with site owners prepare management plans for 50% all identified pre-1700 century parkland and historic boundary sites that include biodiversity requirements as well as</p>	<p>WiT, FWAG. WoT. FC. NE</p>	<p>High/End 2013</p>	<p>As part of the current agricultural subsidy schemes land owners are increasingly required to draw up management plans as part of being eligible for grant aid. The same would apply for</p>

ancient & veteran trees. This would include linking and buffering sites where possible	condition as defined by Natural England. A number of sites under other ownership will potentially be under appropriate management via such schemes as HLS – but again the total resource is unknown	cultural aspects,			grants administered by the FC. If part of an NGO estate then it can be reasonable to expect that these sites will have, or soon will have, appropriate management plans
3. Identify the second tier parkland sites (less than 300yrs old)	No work known of to date	3.1 Prepare management plans for 4 second tier parkland sites to allow them the opportunity to develop as veteran tree parklands of the future	WiT, FWAG. WoT. FC	Low/End 2013	These may well become apparent as part of the processes outlined in item 2
4. Protect the veteran trees in the wider countryside by increasing the number of TPOs on veteran and ancient trees already known and as further ones are identified. This would include appropriate best management practice such as buffering against potentially unfavourable practices e.g ploughing, paving, etc under canopy	No co-ordinated and widespread TPO based campaign up to date Ancient trees may have been TPO'd in response to individual campaigns but as there is a lack of a central register of ancient & veteran trees the extent of this cannot be verified. Up to the present there has been no co-	4.1 Increase awareness of the value of veteran & ancient trees and appropriate management practices amongst land owners 4.2 Tree officers to agree to look more favourably towards the preservation of ancient & veteran trees using resources such as the WoT Ancient Tree Hunt data base for identifying and increasing the number of veteran trees protected by TPOs	LAs, CCC WiT, FC, WoT LAs.	Medium/Ongoing High/End 2013	LAs and ongoing supply of information/lobbying by WoT, NE, WiT . WoT has published and web based material specific to ancient & veteran tree management LAs WoT Ancient Tree Hunt data base

	<p>ordinated and widespread campaign directed at using the TPO system to protect ancient trees</p> <p>Limited number of more site specific surveys by the WiT. WoT presently undertaking ancient tree survey that will provide the best record yet of individual trees in the wider landscape</p>	4.3 Undertake survey to identify Veteran Trees in the wider countryside	WoT	High/ End 2013	The existing WiT surveys along with the work by the WoT will largely meet this action
5. Future research and monitoring	Limited number of surveys carried out as a result of specific requests – records held by the local biological records centre	5.1 Organise specific surveys of invertebrates, lichens & fungi as part of site management plans	WiT, NE, WoT	Low/Ongoing	Any organisations who comission such reports as a result of a need for specific information for site or species management

Abbreviations

CCC	Cambridgeshire County Council
CPBRC	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre
CWS	County Wildlife Site
FC	Forestry Commission
LA	Local Authority
NE	Natural England
NGO	Non Governmental Organisations
NT	National Trust
PC	Parish Council
WiT	Wildlife Trust
WoT	Woodland Trust

6 LINKS TO OTHER PLANS

Urban forest HAP, Managed greenspaces HAP, Hedgerow HAP.
BAP species associated with Veteran Trees and Parkland:

- *Callicera spinolae* – Hoverfly
- *Parus montanus* – Willow Tit
- *Passer montanus* - Tree Sparrow
- *Barbastella Barbastellus* – Barbastelle
- *Nyctalus noctula* – Noctule Bat
- *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* – Soprano Pispistrelle
- *Plecotus auritus* – Brown Long-eared Bat
- *Rhinolophus hipposideros* – Lesser Horseshoe Bat

There will be more BAP species associated with veteran trees and parklands. For a full list of UKBAP species occurring in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, contact the Biodiversity Partnership Coordinator.

7 REVIEW OF ACTION PLAN

Arrange monitoring and review of these actions bi-annually.

8 REFERENCES

An **Appendix of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough site specific actions** on veteran trees and parkland SSSIs and CWSs is available from the Biodiversity Partnership Coordinator. This complements this Veteran Trees and Parkland Habitat Action Plan.

Ancient Tree Hunt: www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk

Buglife: *Managing priority habitats for Invertebrates*, 2nd edition. For Lowland Woodpastures and Parkland see: www.buglife.org.uk/conservation/adviceonmanagingbaphabitats/lowlandwoodpasturesandparkla.htm

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough UKBAP species – spreadsheet prepared by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre (from October 2008) available from the Biodiversity Partnership Coordinator

Cambridgeshire County Council Rural strategy - *Cambridgeshire Parklands 1990*

Cambridgeshire Wildlife Trust - *Survey of pollard willows, parkland and veteran trees*

Cambridgeshire's Biodiversity - *A framework for action now and into the next century 1997*

CPBRC (2003): *Black Poplars in Cambridgeshire Survey report*, available on www.cpbrc.org.uk/publications.htm

English Nature Research Report - *Parklands -the way forward 1998*

Health and Safety Executive (2007): *Management of the risk from falling trees*, SIM 01/2007/05, available on www.hse.gov.uk/foi/internalops/sectors/ag_food/1_07_05.pdf

Kent Biodiversity Action Plan, available on www.kentbap.org.uk/

Planning Policy Statement 9 Biological and Geological Conservation, available on www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps9

Rackham, O.: *Trees and Woodland in the British Landscape*

UK Biodiversity Group Tranche 2 Action Plans - *terrestrial and freshwater habitats*

9 LIST OF INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

Anlian Water Services Ltd
Arboricultural Association
Beetle specialists
Bird specialists
Biodiversity Partnership Co-ordinator
Buglife
Butterfly Conservation Society
Cambridge City Council
Cambridge Preservation Society
Cambridgeshire Bat Group
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre
Cambridgeshire County Council
Countryside Restoration Trust
Conservators of the River Cam
East Cambridgeshire District Council
Environment Agency
Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group
Fenland District Council
Flies specialists
Flowering Plant specialists
Forestry Commission
Froglife
Fungi specialists
Grafham Conservation Group
Huntingdonshire District Council
Huntingdonshire Fauna and Flora Society
Langdyke Trust
Moss specialists
Moth specialists
Natural England
Nene Park Trust
Opportunity Peterborough
Peterborough City Council
RSPB - East Anglia
South Cambridgeshire District Council
The National Trust
The Wildlife Trust
The Woodland Trust