Cockshoot Woods Management Plan; 2024-2029 Hughenden Parish Council

Contents Page

Page

1. Introduction
1.1 Plan Summary 3
1.2 Our Vision 3

2. Site Description
2.1 Site Details 3
2.1.1 Site History 4
2.1.2 Status 7
2.1.3 Site Infrastructure 8

2.2 Environmental information 9
2.2.1 Physical characteristics & landscape character..... 9
2.2.2 Flora and main habitats 10
2.2.3 Important species 11

2.3 Cultural information 12

3. Key Site Features 14

4. Key Management Objectives
4.1. Maintain wood pasture and pond 14
4.1 1 Woodland Structure 15
4.1 2 Age Structure 15
4.1.3 Vertical Structure 17
4.1.4 Mixed Mosaic 18
4.1.5 Composition of species 18

4.2. Maintain access and engage local stakeholders 23

5. Rationale
5.1 Maintain semi-natural ancient woodland 28
5.2 Maintain access and engage local stakeholders 29
5.3 General Points 30

6. Monitoring and Review 31

7. Action Plan
6.1 Maintain semi-natural ancient woodland 32
6.2 Objective 3 Maintain access & engage stakeholders 35
6.3 General Points 37

1. Introduction

1.1 Plan Summary

This 5-year management plan provides guidance and a practical framework for future management of Cockshoot Wood. Site owners, Hughenden Parish Council, commissioned Mike Deegan Consulting to develop the plan. It follows the format widely used by conservation organisations such as Natural England and the Wildlife Trusts. It is the third of a number of management plans scheduled as part of the Parish Council's 2023 Open Spaces Strategy.

The plan provides an analysis of the woodland habitats, reviews management issues (and factors), establishes management objectives and provides an action plan for maintaining the site in a favourable condition. The action plan and supporting information provide a practical tool to help the Parish Council implement effective future site management for biodiversity & visitors.

1.2 Our vision for Cockshoot Wood

To maintain and enhance the biodiversity value of Cockshoot Wood; safeguarding this valuable semi-natural ancient woodland for people to learn from and enjoy.

Above; Trees/ride planted by John Moorby. Mike Deegan, 2023

2. Site Description

2.1 Site Details

This small deciduous woodland is approximately 2.5 ha (6.2 acres) in size. It is located in the southeast corner of the parish; just east of Four Ashes and south of Widmer End. Although rural in aspect, the site is situated in very close proximity to the expanding urban areas of High Wycombe (to the south) and Hazlemere (to the east).

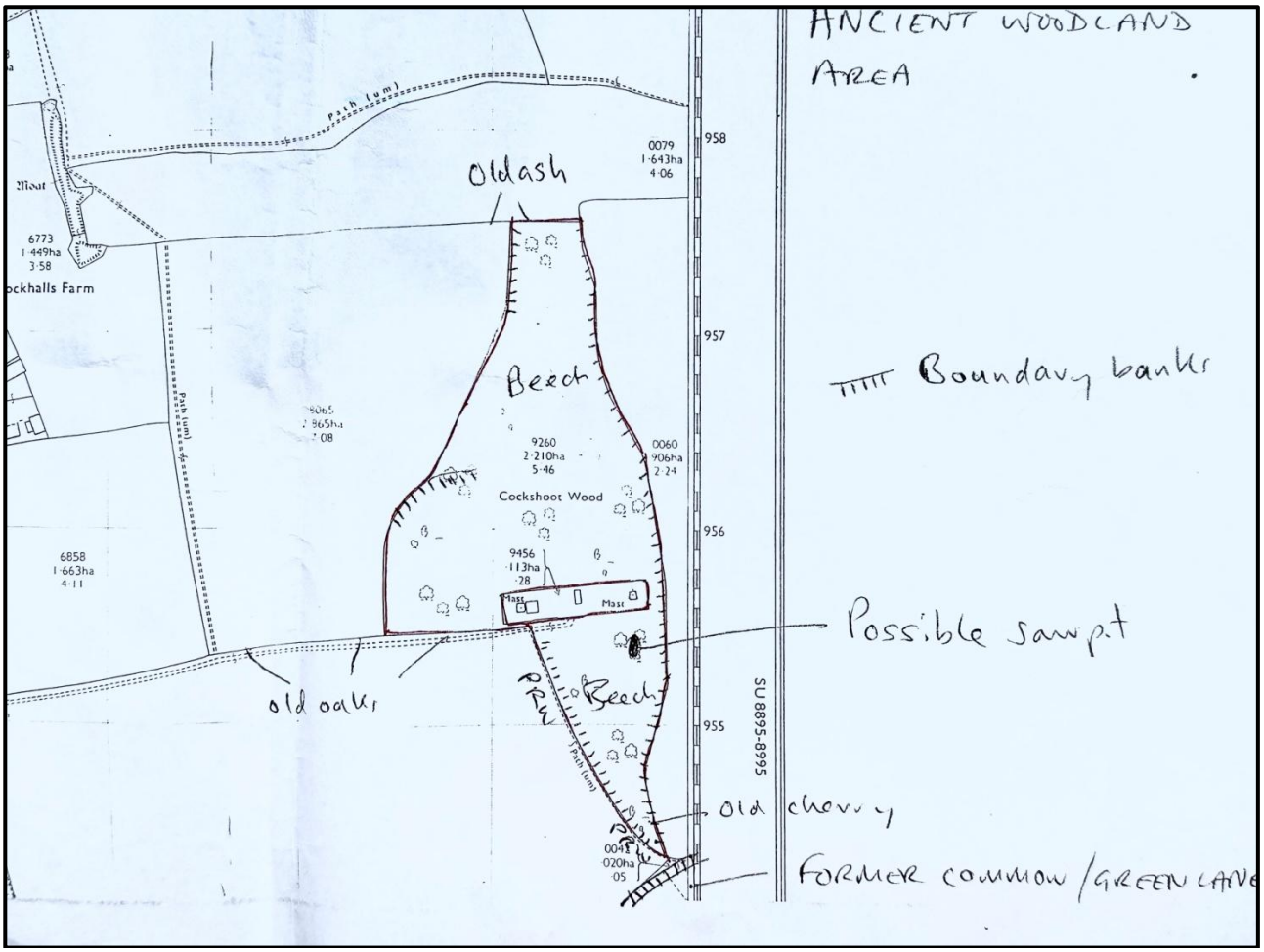
The site occupies part of the plateau on the eastern ridge above the Hughenden Valley that extends north to Cryers Hill. Cockshoot Woods sits at the peak elevation of 187m (above sea level); hence the location of the former RAF aerial beacon. This elevated area forms the divide between the main chalk valleys.

The woodland includes a small linear Thames Valley Police compound (0.113ha) located at the end of the surfaced path from Kingshill Road. Within the fenced area is a prominent aerial mast that was '*erected in the late 1960s, replacing the smaller MOD/RAF wartime beacon*'. (Hugh McCarthy – former Hughenden Parish Councillor).

The site is one of a suite of open-spaces that are owned and managed by Hughenden Parish Council. It forms part of the Parish Council's larger landholding; that includes the adjacent playing fields to the west which are leased to Widmer End football Club.

Above; Police (aerial) compound. Mike Deegan 2023

Above. Google Maps from 2023 showing crude site boundaries and main features.



Above; Part of old OS Plan SU 8695-8795, showing former boundary - annotated by John Moorby

2.1.1 Site history

According to the Parish Council website; *'This is primarily a mature beech wood, planted for the Wycombe chair industry'.* A further historical account has been provided by Hugh McCarthy;
'*The wood was planted by the Glenisters, the old furniture makers. I believe it was managed by them until the mid 1930's and purchased by the Parish Council when Rockalls farm was sold off.*

Old Ordnance survey maps from 1880 show a very similar woodland boundary as outlined today. This indicates how well connected the site was with hedgerows to the west and north to Rockhalls Farms and the grounds of Brands House. It is likely that the Glenisters primarily replanted the woodland with beech trees for their furniture business. There was also an area of conifers planted around this time; '*The West side was planted with soft woods - originally as a shelter when Cockshoot Woods was replanted in the nineteenth cen*tury' - John Moorby, 2023.

The aerial mast was erected during WWII to help prevent RAF aircraft crashing into this high point. The narrow concreted track from Kingshill Road was surfaced at this time to allow rapid access for motorcycle despatch riders (Hugh McCarthy). The mast and compound have been modified over recent decades by the Police force; with generators and mobile phone cabinets/ antennae added.

The Parish Council acquired the site (including sports field to the west) in June 1980 for £21,000. John Moorby secured a felling license from the Forestry Commission to cut the area of planted conifers on the western boundary during the winter of 1986/87 and replant with a mix of native broadleaved species. Given the woodlands exposed position on the plateau ridge, the site then suffered significant damage during the subsequent October 1987 and January 1990 storms, as evidenced by former Parish Council Warden, John Moorby's photographs. These were extracted by local contractor Mr W.G. Binder of Great Kingshill. A second extensive replanting took place (during the winter of 1988/89) following these storm events.

Windfelled beech trees cut and awaiting extraction. John Moorby, 1987/88

The name of Cockshoot Woods is likely to have been attached in the eighteenth or nineteenth as a reference to its sporting use for shooting. However, there might also be a local nineteenth century association with one of the large houses located just to the north of Four Ashes; '*In this part of Hughenden is also Uplands, the property and residence of Mr. T. Somers Cocks'.* (A History of the County of Buckingham: Volume 3 1925).

There are still remnants of a wood-bank on the southern edge of the wood. These structures are typical features of ancient woodland and helped define boundaries. They are often hidden and overgrown; or were originally planted with a hedge to prevent livestock or deer entering.

Another characteristic of ancient woodland was the presence of a possible saw-pit in the area known as the Dell. If not a sawpit, it may have been an old former flint or clay pit. Unfortunately this historic feature was filled in with unknown material by the Parish Council in 1986, with mature beech trees left in situ.

Right; J.Moorby on woodbank. M.Deegan 2023

2.1.2 Status

Most of the site is classified as ancient woodland by Natural England in its online 2019 national Ancient Woodland Inventory. Ancient woodland is defined as woodland that has been in continuous existence since at least 1600. It is difficult to determine how continuously wooded this site was before this, but it is clear the site has been heavily modified and repeatedly felled and replanted in the past two centuries.

'A wood may have been cut, felled or coppiced since 1600, but as long as the area has re-grown or been replanted shortly afterwards then it remains ancient. Ancient woodland therefore does not necessarily contain old trees. Ancient woodland is divided into ancient semi-natural woodland and plantations on ancient woodland sites'. Ancient Woodland Inventory for the Chilterns. 2012

It would be most accurate to describe Cockshoot Woods as ***Ancient Replanted Woodland;*** as the original native tree cover has been lost/felled and replaced by planted stock. Whereas **Ancient semi-natural Woodland** is characterised as being predominantly composed of trees and shrubs native to the site that may have been managed, but do not generally originate from planting. For simplification and the purposes of this management plan, however, the site will be generally referred to as semi-natural ancient woodland.

The woodland is located approximately midway within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and sits just to the east of the Four Ashes Conservation Area

Like most semi-natural habitats, the UK's ancient woodlands have suffered a drastic decline over the past 70 years; in England and Wales alone almost 50% has been planted with conifers or cleared for agriculture. The Chilterns is one of the most wooded areas of England, however, and 14% of the AONB area is covered by ancient woodland, compared to the national average of just 3% (The Cultural Heritage of Chiltern Woods; John Morris).

A small and adjacent unused-area of the sports field (to the northwest of the woodland) was planted up with a mixture of native trees through grant aid in the early 1990's. This **Secondary Woodland** area extended the size of the woods.

2.1.3 Site Infrastructure

There is a gated main access point (from the surfaced access track on the south side of the main part of woodland) with a gap between wooden posts left for public access. A well-used permissive path runs north from this point, before turning west at the northern end of the woodland and exiting onto the playing fields. There is a faded sign at the main entrance indicating the site is owned by Hughenden Parish Council, but no name of the woodland or any other information.

A public footpath follows the surfaced access track eastwards from the Kingshill Road and turns south at the entrance to the aerial compound. This then skirts the western boundary of this smaller lower section as it runs south.

The boundary of the woodland is mainly unfenced, though there is a hedgerow along some sections.

Above; The access gate and main pedestrian entrance point

2.2 Environmental information

2.2.1 Physical characteristics and landscape character

The site forms part of the Kingshill Settled Plateau (number; 16.3) within Buckinghamshire Council's *Landscape Character Assessment* (LCA) for this area. This indicates the key characteristic is of chalk overlain by clay with flints, which gives rise to loamy/clayey soils with impeded drainage. This assessment states;

'*Small pockets of woodland are occasionally spread linearly along the plateau edge. Many of which are ancient woodland. Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodlands are typical, with beech and yew commonly found along the western edge. Many of the woods are ancient semi natural woodland areas'*.

Growing on both acidic and calcareous soils, these woodlands span a range of vegetation types, but have been historically managed as coppice and wood-pasture. Trees include beech, ash, sycamore, yew, whitebeam and, less commonly, oak. In the Chilterns, these woods often cling to side of chalk slopes, where beech was managed, felled and replanted for use in the furniture industry. The Chilterns Conservation Board

Above; Cockshoot Woods from Grange Farm with new planting area in middle distance. Hugh Carthy

The LCA accurately describes Cockshoot Wood and its place in the local environment. The woodland has been heavily modified, but it was likely that this mixed woodland largely included beech and yew – the later species is still present and unlikely to have been planted.

The key feature of the site is the remaining number of mature trees (primarily beech) that have survived storms and subsequent felling. Elsewhere the woodland generally has more of an

appearance of a secondary woodland or plantation; with different phases of planting indicated by rigid straight lines or age-structure. The woodland lacks a diverse structure and there is a limited understory (apart from clumps of holly) or ground-flora (other than bramble). Part of the boundary, however, has a beneficial graded woodland-edge with dense bramble and scrub.

Above; Lines of planted beech. Mike Deegan 2023

2.2.2 Flora and main habitats

The primary habitat is deciduous ancient woodland with a number of mature late nineteenth century aged trees; including beech, oak, cherry, birch, ash, yew, hazel and holly. As indicated by the Kingshill Settled Plateau LCA, it is likely the woodland was originally a mixed and yew woodland, which is also a UK *Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat*.

There does not appear to have been a vegetation survey of the woodland, and no species list was available with the Parish Council estate files. An information search with Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre (BMERC) indicated recordings of bluebell, wood sorrel, spear-leaved willowherb and Devils bit scabius (on the north eastern boundary). According to John Moorby, the woodland had a profusion of spring flowers in the 1990's; including bluebells and primrose; both ancient woodland indicator species.

Unfortunately there is currently evidence of extensive deer browsing and damage to trees; it is not known what impact this has had on the flora, but it will probably be restricting natural regeneration.

Rhododendron was controlled in the past and there is evidence of regeneration from old stumps. There are also a number of other non-native tree and shrub species growing in the woodland and adjoining hedgerows; including Horse Chestnut, Scots Pine, Cherry Laurel and Buddleia. The Scots Pine is not a problem, but the other species will require control to prevent their establishment.

2.2.3 Important species (flora and fauna)

There do not appear to be any notable woodland flora species present; the assemblage of typical woodland trees appears to provide the key biodiversity interest. Given the site's Ancient Woodland status, a botanical survey might prove otherwise.

Potentially the greatest biodiversity value of the site is provided by its mature trees – particularly standing deadwood and older trees with deadwood or damage. These provide excellent habitat for a range of woodland wildlife, including invertebrates (*Saproxylic* species) fungi and as roosts/nests for mammals and birds. Some of the oldest trees are located in the hedgerows around the sports field and ideally should be incorporated into this management plan.

Above: Deadwood in situ on the ground. Mike Deegan 2023

2.3 Cultural information

This woodland has a prominent position on the highpoint of the ridge and has probably been an imtegral part of the local landscape for some time. Historically the woodland would have been associated with Rockhalls Farm (and possibly the old manor house) and known within the rural landscape to the residents of nearby Four Ashes and Widmer End.

However, the late nineteenth and twentieth century brought considerable local changes. First came the purchase of the woodland by the Glenister family, who will have intensified the management focus on timber production for their commercial furniture business in nearby High Wycombe. Next came the installation of the aerial beacon and compound within the woodland and track surfacing during WWII.

The decline of the local furniture making industry has subsequently had a huge impact on the management of local woodlands- reducing the local demand for timber from trees such as beech.

However, the biggest cultural change has probably been the massive urban growth of High Wycombe and the local villages in Hughenden Parish and particularly in neighbouring Hazelmere. This population growth has lead to greater recreational pressures – such as dog walking in the woodland and sporting use of the adjacent fields. Meanwhile antisocial behaviour can also be a local issue, particularly from fly-tipping.

Improved communication with local stakeholders is important – particularly as there is further housing planned to be built nearby in Hazelmere on Grange Farm. Increased visitor numbers can present additional problems, but it also provides many opportunities to help raise awareness of the biodiversity value of ancient woodland and their positive management.

Above; Mechanical extraction of timber. John Moorby 1987

Under the parish council's stewardship, Cockshoot Woods no longer has to serve a commercial purpose. Therefore management can focus on enhancing biodiversity and providing a woodland that is a potential resource for recreation and environmental education.

3. Key Site Features

The key feature of Cockshoot Wood is the ancient woodland itself. This particularly includes the surviving mature trees; which incorporates the species associated with the trees and as a consequence of the longevity of continuous woodland cover since at least 1600. Put simply, biodiversity within woodlands increases both with the age of the individual trees it contains and historical age of the wood.

Mature Trees

In lieu of any ecological surveys, the assemblage of mature beech, oak and cherry trees (including those in surrounding boundaries and edges) stand out as the most notable features that are of high biodiversity value.

These larger, older trees provide a wealth of microhabitats for woodland biodiversity. As the trees age and grow they become more gnarled; with fissured bark, rot-holes and caverns in the trunk. These are all colonised by a range of fungi, bryophytes, invertebrates, birds and mammals. Where they include dead or rotting wood they can often offer habitats for rare *saproxylic* invertebrates (those insect species that use dead or decaying wood for egg laying).

Continuous Woodland habitat

Despite the many changes to the management (and at times misuse) of the woodland, the site has been continuously wooded for at least 400 years and probably much longer (planting of woodland was uncommon before this time, so a wood present in 1600 is likely to have developed naturally). This means that the woodland soils and many complex communities of native plants, fungi, insects and other microorganisms have naturally developed over a long period.

Unfortunately, this process has not been undisturbed by human development or interference. Repeated felling and replanting will have had a huge impact on the age structure of trees, their species composition and the associated biodiversity. Furthermore, intrusions such as the building of the aerial compound and infilling of the Dell pit have all had a detrimental impact on the integrity of this site as ancient woodland. However, the woodland still survives as mixed deciduous woodland, with largely the same boundaries and now in a less isolated position than possibly for centuries or possibly millennia.

It is likely the woodland was once managed as coppice for fuel before being replanted and managed for timber. '*Beech fuel was cut in coppices, formerly known as hillwork, where wood was cut for fuel by people from parishes that extended up the scarp from the val*e'. (The Cultural Heritage of Chiltern Woods; John Morris).

4. Key Management Objectives

The Primary objective is to;

1. **Maintain the biodiversity interest of the semi-natural ancient woodland site in a favourable condition.**

There is one secondary objective

2. **Maintain access and engage with local stakeholders to ensure an enjoyable, educational and safe visitor experience.**

4.1 Maintain the biodiversity interest of the semi-natural ancient woodland site in a favourable condition.

All ancient woodlands are unique and face varying challenges: from their history of land management to the pressures of current and emerging threats. This ancient woodland has had a particularly varied recent management history with a number of factors having a detrimental impact on its biodiversity value and condition. This includes large-scale felling, replanting with non-native species (or of unknown provenance), extraction of flint (or creation of a sawpit) infill with unknown material and incursion of a fenced compound for a communications aerial and buildings.

Restoring this habitat to a favourable condition will require long-term management to re-establish its ecological integrity and resilience of the woodland habitat and species. Even a heavily modified site such as Cockshoot Wood, however, will retain valuable remnant ecological features from its past. These are an essential source to help kick-start restoration and will include woodland specialist species, relic deadwood and pre-plantation or relic native trees. The cultural features associated with these ancient woods, such as woodbanks, should also be valued as these are good indicators of old age and can provide important archaeological vestiges of past land-use.

'Ancient woodland has evolved into a complex array of ecological communities of interdependent plants, animals and fungi, including invertebrates and soil micro-organisms rarely found in younger woods. Each wood is unique, having developed according to its local environment, soils, and management over many centuries'. (Ancient woodland restoration – Woodland Trust. 2020)

Woodland can appear to be a robust habitat, as even the worst managed sites will remain wooded unless totally cleared for another land-use. However, this does not mean such woodlands retain their ecological value or potential for biodiversity. Cockshoot Woods does have biodiversity value as deciduous woodland, but unfortunately its structure largely resembles a plantation more than semi-natural ancient woodland; with rigid plantings made at different periods after phases of felling (or storms).

4.1 1 Woodland Structure

Increasing and restoring the biodiversity interest of Cockshoot Woods will ideally involve creating a healthier woodland structure; the greater the variety of structure, the more diverse the range of biodiversity that can be supported. Doing this will involve focussing on elements such as;

- A varied age structure (of trees/shrubs).
- A diverse vertical or spatial structure (canopy, understory, field and ground layer) – creating variations in size, shape and light.
- A mixed woodland mosaic – different habitats and stages of growth.

Above; John Moorby with Mature Ash. 2023.

Above; Mature oak. Mike Deegan, 2023

4.1 2 Age Structure

Achieving a diverse age structure is crucial as this is an important characteristic of a biodiverse woodland. This will involve widening the range of ages and tree-stages that are present to include a good number and continuous age-profile of all tree species present. This importantly provides habitat opportunities for associated species across the tree's life-cycle, but it also ensures regeneration of young trees to ensure future generations of mature trees.

At the other end of the age spectrum, an essential component for biodiversity is the encouragement of missing features, such as old growth characteristics, veteran trees and deadwood. Dead and decaying wood provides some of the most important habitat niches in woodlands; including standing dead trees, rotting/decaying wood, stumps, fallen trunks/branches and exposed root plates. It is essential that wherever possible, trees are allowed to grow naturally; so fallen and standing deadwood should be left in situ. It is noticeable that some Ash

trees (*Fraxinus sp*.) are suffering from Ash Dieback. This is an unfortunate situation, but where it is safe to do so, like all deadwood these should be retained as standing or fallen dead trees.

Cockshoot Woods contains a relatively varied age-structure, but this is not particularly well-balanced. There are a number of more mature or veteran standard trees within the woodland that survived the storms of 1987 and 1990. These are the most valuable features of the woodland and should be mapped and prioritised for retention/conservation. Each veteran tree can be treated as an individual habitat feature. The only trees/limbs felled or cut should be those identified as a high risk to public safety. These should be made safe and cut wood left in situ or standing trunks left as high as possible.

There is then a large 'age-gap' with much of the rest of the canopy made up of a younger generation of trees planted (or naturally regenerated) in the 1980's/90's. At some stage in the next twenty years it will be desirable to thin some of these younger trees. This will allow the remaining trees to further develop and provide additional light to the lower storeys/levels. When trees are felled, the optimal prescription for biodiversity will be to leave the main trunks in situ on the woodland floor. If they have to be cut-up, then logs of approximately 6-8 feet long should be tightly stacked in wood piles to provide further deadwood habitat. Alternatively, lengths of timber can be utilised to delineate the permissive path. Another option will be to select and ring-bark some 1980's/90's trees (safely away from paths) to provide beneficial standing deadwood.

It will be necessary to consider how the issue of regeneration will be managed as there is limited evidence of natural regeneration over the past 30 years. Ideally, this process should always be the first option in ancient woodland, but there is extensive evidence of deer damage to many of the trees – most likely from roe and muntjac, but possibly also fallow deer. Whilst this can create valuable deadwood habitat, there is a balance to be struck between the density of browsing deer and a healthy woodland habitat. This is particularly important when it comes to younger trees and the impact on natural regeneration.

Deer browse on the young shoots and leaves of trees, often damaging young saplings and creating a 'browse line' on mature trees. Grey squirrels can have a similar effect, stripping the bark of young trees, particularly beech and sycamore. They can also eat an entire crop of hazelnuts before they ripen. Woodlands under threat - Chilterns AONB

This pressure is likely to increase following the installation of a deer fence to protect the new tree planting on Grange Farm (adjacent to the site's eastern boundary), which will possibly redirect deer around the considerable structure and through Cockshoot Woods. Without natural predation, the high numbers of deer using the woodland will likely require some form of control.

The other alternative is to replant with trees sourced from a local provenance. However, any planted trees would also require protection from deer and grey squirrel.

Deer may also be having a detrimental effect on the spring ground flora – muntjac in particular have been linked to extensive loss of wildflowers such as bluebells.

Above; Deer damage on beech trees. Mike Deegan 2023

4.1.3 Vertical Structure

A diverse woodland should include a range of distinct levels; including a 'multi-layered' canopy, a well developed understory (or shrub layer) and field/ground layer.

Although there is much overlap and intergrading between the layers, they are relatively easy to identify and categorise. The canopy is provided by the high branches and leaves of the most mature and largest trees that often intercept much of the light. The understory below usually consists of shrubs, young trees or coppiced stools. The field and ground layer usually includes the ground flora and bryophytes; where light is allowed to permeate through the two overhead layers. In deciduous ancient woodland there is often a spring flush of wildflower species (before the canopy closes overhead) while by September most ground vegetation has largely died back.

The canopy at Cockshoot Woods has been extensively impacted by the devastating storms in 1987 and 1990 and earlier periods of large-scale felling. This provided a very open canopy for many years, which has been gradually filled by younger growth from tree-planting and where possible, natural regeneration. It will take many years for these 1980's/90's trees to reach tall veteran or mature status.

There appear to be limited understory layer within the wood. Other than holly (including a linear strip of growth growing in the northern section), growth of shrubs or young trees appears to be restricted. Beech trees do cast a lot of shade and are likely to quickly limit understory or ground level growth after spring. Meanwhile the field layer appears to be dominated by Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus).*

Beech woodland on neutral-slightly acidic soils is found on heavier soils (pH 7 to 4) and often where the drainage is poor or impeded. Again stands tend to be dominated by beech, but English Oak Quercus robur and sometimes Sessile Oak Q. petrea is a common associate. Bramble forms a

characteristic ground layer. Often a shrub layer is lacking, although holly can form a second tier of trees, occasionally with yew. It is common in (but not confined to) the Weald, Chilterns plateau, New Forest, Cotswolds and Wye Valley. (UK Biodiversity Action Plan; Lowland Beech and Yew Woodland. 2008).

It would be beneficial to coppice some of the tree species such as hazel. This can help prolong the life of this shrubby tree, but also provides some understory while the stool is regrowing. However, this will be dependent on re-growth being protected or the current deer population controlled.

4.1.4 Mixed Mosaic of Woodland

Many of our heavily managed woodlands have an unnaturally uniform structure, species composition and age distribution. Healthy ancient woodland, however, will typically include a variety of different habitats; each valuable for specific types of woodland biodiversity. This can be more difficult to achieve within such a small site as Cockshoot Woods, but there are still management opportunities to enhance biodiversity. This could include identifying and selecting locations for open features such as;

I. glades or coppice cycle sections
II. selected dense-stands of trees (especially old growth specimens)
III. retained fallen or stacked deadwood
IV. ponds
V. different stages of woodland edge

The site does already contain many of these habitat characteristics, but there is great potential to formally identify/map and enhance these. There is potential to create a glade or pond by infilling the bulge from the sports field into the western edge of the wood. This would require the co-operation with the Football club. This would also help replace the pond previously lost to infilling on the sports field.

There is also potential to introduce a limited cycle of coppicing; mainly to the younger trees growing from the re-planting of the 1980's-90's. This would provide a more varied structure within the woodland – with a denser understory and opportunities for the ground flora to thrive. However, this would require protection of the coppice regrowth from deer with fencing or dead-hedging.

The woodland edge is well developed in places (eastern boundary and southwest fringe with sports field), but this will require management to maintain its structure.

4.1.5 Composition of species

Extensive replanting was carried out by John Moorby in the 1980's/90's which appears to have a typical assemblage of tree species for this type of Beech-Yew ancient woodland. However, there is little information available on woodland species present or the biodiversity value of the site. It would be greatly beneficial to undertake ecological surveys to establish a baseline of important species present in the woodland – particularly ancient woodland indicators. These surveys should include; - flora, invertebrate, mammals, birds, bryophytes and fungus. This information will help inform and guide all future management of the woodland.

It is suggested the Parish Council engages with the local specialist species groups or engage the services of ecological consultants to commission these surveys and future monitoring.

It has also been suggested that holly has become invasive and might be problematic. Without base-line evidence this is difficult to confirm. It would be useful to monitor its distribution, changes in growth and impact (positive or negative).

* The Parish Council's tree surveyor (Andrew McEwan), has carried out a tree survey on the site. Unfortunately this information is kept on the OTTIS GIS system, for which the Parish Councils subscription has not been renewed.

- Connectivity

With regards to the relationship between habitats and biodiversity, size very much matters. One of the greatest threats to woodland biodiversity is connectivity – with the ability of species to move freely between different sites and habitats in response to changes. This situation is even more acute for such a small and relatively isolated site as Cockshoot Wood. This pressure is even greater now with the advent of climate change and biodiversity crisis being experienced.

Fortunately the woodland has been relatively well connected with 'green corridors' via a series of mature hedgerows to the west; particularly around the playing fields and towards Kingshill Road. Significant areas of scrub and woodland are also developing either end of the woodland; to the north in the field sitting horizontally across the top of the wood; and to the south, linking the southern tip of the woodland with the scrubby field on Terriers Farm. This is part of the *Ladys Mile* buffer zone; located north of the new *Terriers Farm and House* area for residential development.

The greatest connectivity benefit, however, is likely to be provided east of the wood at Grange Farm with the forthcoming planting by Buckinghamshire Council of the 24 acre field adjacent to the woodland. This is coming as part of the housing permitted on the other side of the farm in Hazlemere Parish. Although this woodland will take many years to develop and provide tangible biodiversity benefits, for Cockshoot Woods it will provide an extremely positive and complimentary habitat on its boundary. And from a map or aerial image it is immediately clear that the woodland will no longer be a small isolated habitat, but part of a much larger wooded area on this Chiltern ridge. Just as importantly, as an ancient woodland site, it can provide an ecological source or springboard for species to slowly colonise the newly wooded land around it.

It will be greatly beneficial to liaise with neighbouring landowners and where possible co-ordinate future management. In particular Buckinghamshire Council could prove a valuable partner in woodland management; helping create a meaningful green infrastructure and future community initiatives. The Parish Council should liaise with Buckinghamshire Council regarding these collaborative opportunities – particularly as part of the consultation for the planned 2025 county Local Plan.

- Hedgerows

The surrounding hedgerows and boundary trees have considerable biodiversity value and provide adjoining semi-natural habitat. The hedges include a significant number of mature hazel stools – the hazel hedge along the access track was laid by John Moorby in the late 1980's.

Most of the hedgerow trees and shrubs have been allowed to mature; with fruit & blossom providing biodiversity benefits. This boundary never-the-less requires management to control growth and ideally this should be carried out traditionally by being re-laid, with separate lengths managed on a regular cycle (to ensure an ongoing source of fruits and nectar). On some sections this might involve liaison with the football club or neighbouring landowners. Some of the northern boundary includes mature hazel coppice stools. It is not clear if these are within the Parish Council's boundary, but they would benefit from being re-coppiced (with the stumps protected to prevent deer browsing the regrowth). As with all woodland and hedgerow maintenance, this work should only be carried out during the winter months.

The hedgerow along the access track from Kingshill Road and around the sports field also contain some valuable veteran trees – including oak pollards (one species of considerable age on the track) and pollarded Wild Cherry north of the field. These trees should be mapped and measures taken to ensure their strict conservation as a high priority.

Above; Hazel hedge on access track west of the woodland. Mike Deegan 2023

- Woodland Edge

As referred to within the mixed mosaic component of woodland habitat, the woodland edge is the transitional zone from the woodland to open fields. This includes the cross-section profile that grades from high forest, to scrubby edge, tall herbs and short turf. In such a small woodland as Cockshoot Woods (without rides or glades), the woodland edge provided around the boundaries are extremely important habitats. This interface provides a valuable habitat and structural

element for a wide range of wildlife; that benefit from increased light and more open areas reminiscent of communities in grassland and scrub habitats.

'Most native woodland occurs as relatively small woods surrounded by open land; 50% of all broadleaved woodland occurs as blocks of less than 20 ha. These small woods have relatively more edge and so the influence of the woodland edge structure on bird populations can have a major impact'. RSPB Woodland edges: why their structure is important for birds 2018

The main strips of woodland edge are located along the eastern boundary with Grange Farm and western side of the wood with the football pitches. It is greatly beneficial that Buckinghamshire Council has left a wide strip (possibly for vehicular access) between their fenced area for tree-planting on Grange Farm and the edge habitat along Cockshoot Wood's eastern boundary. This provides ample space for the woodland edge to thrive and also access for easy management.

The edge habitat along the eastern boundary could also be extended (if agreement with the Football Club can be reached) and the 'bulge' area incorporated into the woodland. This bulge section could be managed as a glade or left to develop as rough woodland edge habitat.

These woodland edges should be managed to create a graded profile with mixed habitats; with a scrub strip cut on a 5-8 year cycle to develop shrubby growth, a herbaceous sward cut on 2-3 year rotation to promote flowering plants, a strip of grassland (ideally 2m wide) cut annually in autumn. This approach also has the benefit of filtering the wind and slowing it down as it passes into the wood and reducing the chances of wind-fall events.

Above; Woodland edge on the eastern boundary with Grange Farm. Mike Deegan 2023

- Impact of Climate Change

The effects of Climate Change on wildlife habitats are already being felt throughout the UK. This includes factors such as rainfall, temperatures, storms and changing seasons – all of which will be having an impact on the biodiversity of Cockshoot Woods.

The environment in which our woodlands and trees grow is changing rapidly and *climate change is putting pressure on our woodlands. This is happening at such a rate that it is difficult for trees to adapt to changing climatic conditions in rainfall and temperature. This may result in unsuitable growing conditions for some species on certain soil types, and specific climate conditions found across different parts of the country. Climate change also increases the chance of severe weather events such as storms, droughts and wildfire, which can put extra pressure on our woodlands.* Forestry Commission. 2023

Maximising efforts to enhance the site's wildlife and habitats will help build greater resilience against the likely impacts of climate change. The woodland being part of a much larger block of woodland (and semi-natural habitats) will also help safeguard many species during this period.

- Invasive non-native species

Alien species can prove problematic in all semi-natural habitats and Cockshoot Woods includes a number of non-native species. Most of the conifers have now been removed – there are a small number in the southern section, but they should not prove a problem.

Rhododendron was controlled in the past, though there has been regeneration from the roots of some plants which requires digging out. Some shrubs also persist in the boundary along the access track. Another non-native species includes Horse Chestnut; saplings in the north of the wood that appear to be from a tree setting seed and these should all be removed. Elsewhere Buddleia, which can prove invasive, has become established in the woodland edge habitat between the woodland and the south-eastern corner of the sports pitch. Cherry laurel also forms part of the hedgerow on the track access west of the woodland.

Hugh McCarthy has reported grey squirrels were previously controlled by the Parish Council and are causing damage to trees. This should be monitored and if problematic the animals controlled.

- Infrastructure

There are no grazing livestock around the woodland and the boundary appears to be relatively well delineated. However there are some stretches where new or replacement wooden rail fencing would be beneficial; as both demarcation and to deter vehicular access. The fencing at the southern boundary and either side of the main access gate also requires replacement.

The Parish Council might also consider whether it wishes to fence part of the western boundary with the sports field (only the open northern section, as the southern stretch has a well developed woodland edge). This might be particularly necessary if the central gap or bulge is filled in as part of new habitat creation. Simple wooden post and rail fencing would help delineate the woodland boundary and deter vehicular access. Following liaison with the Football Club and appropriate electricity company, it is also recommended that the flood lights on wooden poles be removed from the edge of the woodlands eastern boundary with the sports field. These are intrusive, can potentially be a significant contributor to light pollution and appear to be no longer in use.

Above; Dilapidated fencing on southern boundary. Mike Deegan 2023

4.2 Maintain access and engage with local stakeholders to ensure an enjoyable, educational and safe visitor experience.

Cockshoot Woods provides an attractive woodland destination that has great potential to be further enhanced for community enjoyment and biodiversity education. Our woodlands can provide a vital resource for public enjoyment and health, especially for walking and education. Sites such as Cockshoot Wood also possess significant cultural, historical and landscape value.

Public Access

The main public access is via the public footpath (west from the track and from the south) and a path from the north end of the Sports field. The permissive path into the main woodland provides a circuitous route; in a south-north direction through the wood and around the Sports Field in circuitous route back to the main public footpath.

The ride laid out (by John Moorby) in the north-western plantation area has grown well and now provides an attractive feature; there is potential to cut back some of the overhanging branches and make this part of the permissive path route; – either rerouting the access through here onto the football pitches or providing a choice of two access/exit points onto the field.

The main access from the public footpath (near the compound) is inconspicuous and there is no indication of the woodlands name. A large kissing gate at this point might be suitable (to help deter motorcycles) and some attractive interpretation about the site would be greatly beneficial (or at the very least a sign indicating the woodland's name). Waymarking the permissive path with coloured posts will help keep visitors (dog-walkers in particular) to the delineated route. This will need some regular maintenance to ensure it is clear and passable, while any felled trees can be used to help demark the path edges. If the eastern boundary is fenced, then another kissing gate might be required at the northern end.

Above; Public footpath signs on the western edge of the woodland. Mike Deegan 2023

There are relatively few safety risks regarding public access worth noting. A large standing dead tree is situated very close to the permissive path (shortly after walking north for the public footpath access). This is an extremely valuable habitat for wildlife, so the first option should be to re-route the path safely around the area of risk. If this is not possible, then the tree should be made safe by reducing its height to a more acceptable level.

John Moorby has also pointed out there is potential risk from the rotting stumps of trees that were buried by the landfill operation in the Dell in 1987. As they rot they leave a deep cavity that might be dangerous for visitors walking through the woodland; particularly as the rotten stumps are so difficult to spot among the bramble and vegetation. These should be mapped and made-safe as soon as possible.

Above; Standing deadwood. M. Deegan 2023

Above; J. Moorby views cavity. M. Deegan 2023

Visitor Use

Despite its very rural aspect, the site is situated just north of High Wycombe and west of the villages of Hazelmere and Widmer End. These urban areas are rapidly expanding and it is likely that visitor pressure from these and other local areas will only grow in the future; particularly with the planting and opening-up of Grange Farm to a new Community Woodland.

Most visitors at present appear to be local dog walkers. They primarily access the site via public footpaths that join the main route from the west and south. This main footpath runs east along the access track (from the Four Ashes direction). It then skirts the southern edge of the main part of the wood and turns south at the compound towards Hazlemere (along the western edge of the southern spur of woodland). Many visitors currently use the permissive path through the wood from the main entrance gate (that runs north, then west and exits onto the playing fields). In the future, however, it is likely there will also be increased access from the new housing being built to the east on Grange Farm.

The growing number of visitors provides potential opportunities and threats. Woodlands can absorb more people than an open landscape without seeming visually crowded. They might also be used very heavily, particularly when few alternative accessible areas are locally available. It will be critical for management of Cockshoot Woods to reach a sustainable balance between positive provision of a public openspace (for amenity use) and managing the ancient woodland for its biodiversity value.

Opportunities

Education and Interpretation

Given Cockshoot Wood's proximity to large local villages and the town of High Wycombe, the site provides significant educational opportunities to help raise awareness of its woodland habitats and heritage value. To help ensure an enjoyable and instructive visitor experience, there is much the Parish Council can do to enhance access and facilities. Onsite interpretation is required to highlight the woodland's wildlife importance and outline the historical and cultural role such ancient woods once played in the Chilterns. High quality and user-friendly panels can be commissioned and developed to provide such biodiversity and heritage information. This information also helps to raise understanding of woodland management that might not be obvious; such as why deadwood is a vital element in the woodland ecosystem and how 'tidying up' such habitats can seriously reduce biodiversity.

At the very least, all access points should have signage indicating the name of the site and the Parish Council's contact details. Meanwhile, a site leaflet, web-based information and a self-guided trail are all other positive and inexpensive options available.

Other informal learning activities and events could be developed in partnership with local community groups and other wildlife organisations. These might include walks, fungal forays, bird-watching and learning woodland skills.

There is also considerable potential to develop Cockshoot Woods as a location for more formal learning with curriculum activities for school groups or as a site for *Forest Schools*. Local school and youth groups could also be recruited to collect and grow on tree seeds from the woodland for any planned replanting in the future.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is key to helping enhance positive local interaction and foster responsible use of the site. One of the Parish Council's most important stakeholders is the Widmer End Football Club which leases the field to the west of the woodland. Their sports and amenity use of the field can have an impact on the woodland, but conversely there is also potential to raise awareness of the site's biodiversity and historic importance with club members and followers. The Parish Council should liaise with the club about removal of the obtrusive floodlight posts (these appear to be inside the woodland boundary and no longer in use) and positive management of the boundaries of the field. The boundary management would include careful management of the mature hedgerows (formally laid by John Moorby) and trees, the woodland edge and possibly relinquishing the grassland area that now bulges into the western boundary of the woodland.

There also a number of relevant local community groups in the surrounding villages that the Parish Council can liaise with to work alongside and keep updated with progress on management and events. Enhanced community involvement could help gather any more local information about the site's history, management and any anecdotal stories of people's use of the woodland to build a cultural narrative around the site and surrounding area. In addition, if culling of deer populations in the wood is deemed necessary, it will be beneficial to liaise with local community groups before temporarily restricting public access.

Another key stakeholder is the Thames Valley Police force. Liaison would help to co-ordinate any management in and around the compound; – particularly if they wish to manage or cut the crowns of mature trees around their fenceline.

Funding

There are a number of small grants and funding sources that the Parish Council can tap into to support its work at Cockshoot Woods. This includes woodland grants within the Countryside Stewardship scheme. Combined community and biodiversity initiatives would also make possible eligibility for the *Community Fund's* Awards For All scheme or local Landfill Community Trust grants.

Threats

The popularity of woods for amenity use, particularly in urban-fringe areas, can lead to some associated problems. Typical issues such as vandalism and fly-tipping (including garden waste) can be a major issue. Fly-tipping is normally on a small-scale, but can be particularly significant in small woods. Fires can also cause severe localised damage – particularly to deadwood habitat or during drought periods. There are also reports of past removal of timber and deadwood, especially for nearby bonfire events, but this does not seem to be a problem anymore.

Increased public access from dogwalkers is likely to lead to more erosion/poaching of footpaths, trampling of woodland vegetation and disturbance to wildlife from flushing by dogs or species avoidance. Dog faeces and urine can also be a real problem, not just for other walkers and visitors. Too much phosphorus or nitrogen (common components of fertilisers) added to woodland soils can lead to a major loss of plant biodiversity and habitat degradation. "*We were surprised by how high the nutrient inputs from dogs could be*. *Dogs bring substantial amounts of nutrients to nature reserves and woodlands that should not be neglected*," Prof Pieter De Frenne of Ghent University.

Unfortunately a pet dog's urine is impossible to take away, but onsite information and community engagement should address issues of dog control and removal of their faeces from site.

Current access is largely by pedestrian means. The main vehicular track to the woods (and sports field) from the Kingshill Road has been impeded by an unsightly gate and height barrier installed by the neighbouring landowner (to the south) in 1996/7 following trespass, by travellers on the landowners field. Hugh McCarthy, believes the adjacent landowner claims ownership of the access track, which he says needs to be verified. The Parish Council, Police Force and Football Club have keys to this barrier. However, there is currently no general public access by vehicle or car parking to the woodland. This could be rectified with a car-parking area by the football fields, but the Parish Council faces the dilemma that installation of such parking will likely attract large numbers of dog-walkers instead of provision for environmental education. As an alternative, if the Football Club is agreeable; a formal parking area could installed and used only for sporting use and organised activities and events in the woodland.

The floodlights installed within the woodland western boundary appear to be no longer in use. However, light pollution may still be an issue from the new floodlights installed over the football pitches. This can be problematic for many species of woodland invertebrates, birds and mammals and liaison with the Football Club could help to rectify and alleviate this issue by modifying this lighting.

The encroaching development of so many houses at Grange farm in the coming years (and possibly further south on Terriers Farm) will bring many more houses closer to the woodland. Like all residential developments, this will likely result in an increased use of the site by resident's pet cats. This will of course lead to greater predation of ground dwelling birds and mammals. Unfortunately there is little to prevent this happening.

5. Rationale

5.1. 1. Maintain the biodiversity interest of the semi-natural ancient woodland site in a favourable condition.

Woodland

This is the primary objective because the UK's ancient woodlands are such an important and irreplaceable biodiversity resource. A series of management options are available to help enhance and restore the biodiversity value of the woodland. Unlike many other wildlife habitats, however, there is no single optimal management prescription in helping restore the woodlands biodiversity, but a series of options. Adopting traditional forms of woodland management for this ancient site, however, should enhance the biodiversity value and ensure the woods reach a favourable condition. The important factor will be that the Parish Council has the capacity to implement the key and appropriate management required. This capacity for suitable woodland management has not been evident over the past 20 years, which is something that will need to change.

Restoration management should be seen as a gradual process that will take time to enhance the ***complex age structure***, ***spatial structure***, ***woodland mosaic*** and ***assemblage of species*** (which are slow to colonise new areas). *Our ancient woodlands are the jewels in the crown of our remaining networks for nature. They are teeming with wildlife – rich irreplaceable communities of often rare species which have developed over centuries and found their last refuge here. But our ancient woodlands are fragmented, increasingly small and disconnected from each other.* Forestry Commission, 2022

As indicated in section 2.3, for simplification reasons, this plan refers to Cockshoot Woods as semi-natural ancient woodland, even though it's true classification is ***Ancient Replanted Woodland***. This simplification is partly because the site has been largely replanted with tree species typical of this woodland type and an attempt made to restore the possible natural assemblage. Unfortunately it is impossible to determine what the original or natural mix of species should be, while the provenance of planted trees since the nineteenth century is unknown.

Although such replanted sites are not of such a high ecological value as semi-natural ancient woodland, Cockshoot Woods retains remnants of semi-natural woodland species that will have accumulated over hundreds of years. The site is therefore still extremely valuable in biodiversity and cultural terms. Furthermore, through a return to restoration management (as started under John Moorby's tenure as warden) it should be possible to return this site to the same condition of other semi natural ancient woodlands.

To maintain the biodiversity interest in a favourable condition it will be necessary to address some of the current threats; such as over-grazing from deer. If deer control is necessary, particular attention will need to be given to how best to constructively inform and engage regular visitors over this issue, which can be a controversial and emotive matter for many people. Elsewhere, measures to enhance interpretation and community engagement should help address some of the issues around disturbance from dog walkers and their pet's faeces left onsite.

Management of invasive non-native species should be easier to accomplish; particularly in controlling alien tree and shrub species. The impact of grey squirrels, however, should be assessed before any action is taken; as this can be costly and require a careful approach with the public (as with culling deer).

Hedgerows and Woodland Edge

The surrounding hedgerows and boundary trees are included as these habitat features are of considerable biodiversity value and they act as important wildlife corridors connecting the woodland to other habitats. Traditional hedgelaying, carried out on a sustainable rotation, should be a high priority for future management. Some sections of the northern boundary also contain mature hazel coppices which should be re-coppiced where possible.

The woodland edge around the woodland is also another important complimentary habitat that provides considerable benefits to a range of wildlife. This habitat should be enhanced and managed to maximise its biodiversity benefits.

Threats

Climate Change has been included because this factor will undoubtedly begin to have a greater effect on the woodland's biodiversity and management. The Parish Council is limited in what it can do, but should be mindful of likely changes and prepared to adapt its management as appropriate.

Timing

As with all good woodland and hedgerows management, any tree felling or cutting should only be carried out during winter months (November-February), unless in case of emergency and risks to public safety.

5.2 Maintain access and engage with local stakeholders to ensure an enjoyable, educational and safe visitor experience.

Access and Education

Enhancing access and interpretation of this site can significantly help towards achieving the Parish Council's biodiversity objectives.

Although heavily degraded, this semi-natural ancient woodland still has significant potential to be utilised as a valuable resource for environmental education and learning. The value of interaction with natural greenspaces, for helping gain a greater understanding of nature and biodiversity is extremely important. It also helps to foster great appreciation and care for the site.

The lack of any on-site interpretation is a missed opportunity to enhance the profile of the Parish Council and provide valuable information to visitors as to why this site is so important. High quality onsite interpretation material and information helps ensure a greater appreciation of the woodlands biodiversity and historical value. This should be supported with online information and updates on as wide a digital communication platform as possible – including social media.

Upgrading and maintaining the permissive path will help keep visitors to the main route and also provide a more pleasurable visitor experience. The Parish Council also has an ongoing responsibility to maintain safe and enjoyable public site access; so ensuring the path avoids passing under large standing deadwood is important and also making safe the rotten tree cavities.

Encouraging formal and informal learning activities and events will be another way of helping to promote local awareness and appreciation of this ancient woodland asset and resource. This effort can be supported by greater community and stakeholder engagement from the Parish Council regarding Cockshoot Woods.

Such access, information and community efforts by the Parish Council will be crucial; not just in helping safeguard the woodland's biodiversity, but also in addressing potential future threats from a rapidly growing local population and increasing numbers of visitors.

5.3 General Points

It is likely Hughenden Parish Council will require additional funding to implement some of the actions prescribed in this management plan. External funding frees up money otherwise needed for other Council duties. Grants can also help to keep management focussed on achieving key objectives.

It is important the Parish Council works with reputable partners on woodland management (such as Chiltern Rangers) and seeks advice and guidance where necessary from organisations such as The Wildlife Trust, the Bucks & MK Natural Environment Partnership or Chiterns AONB Conservation Board.

Many actions have not yet been costed-up in the Action Plan, but it is likely that once good habitat management and community engagement is established, the most effective ongoing work required will cost very little.

6. Monitoring and Review

A management plan is only as effective as subsequent management carried out; in most circumstances this requires ongoing monitoring and evaluation. To achieve this it is necessary to identify the data and information required; for evaluating progress towards achieving the key objectives. This requires a set of performance indicators that can be easily recognised, measured or monitored; to provide an indication management is appropriate and working well.

Biodiversity

A comprehensive survey, particularly of invertebrates and the flora is required for 2024. This is required to establish a reliable baseline of wildlife habitat data to review against during the duration of the plan. A regular schedule of such ecological surveys and monitoring will be necessary to measure the ongoing effect of the Parish Council's management. These will require the identification of key indicators species; particularly *saproxylic* invertebrates for mature trees.

After a comprehensive survey in the first year, it will be pragmatic to schedule a survey of each main study group every three years; so a subsequent invertebrate or invertebrate survey might be 2027. This will require careful planning to commission specialist support and/or enlist local volunteer expertise.

7. Action Plan

This is the prescriptive section that provides a management programme or work plan to help deliver the key objectives. This Action Plan should form an integral part of forward planning; for both the *Environment and Services Committee* and main *Council*. The lead role for implementation (the 'Who' column) has not been included as this will be the responsibility of Hughenden Parish Council to delegate.

Action Plan Objective 1	**Maintain the biodiversity interest of the semi-natural ancient woodland site in a favourable condition.**				
Element	**Task/Action**	**Timing, frequency and duration**	**Year**	**Estimated Costs**	**Progress /Update**
Mature and Veteran Trees	Map and categorise (age/species/condition) each mature or vertan tree (including hedgerows).	Once	2024		
	Ensure these trees are conserved.	Ongoing	Each year 2024-29	0	
Deadwood	**Do not remove** any dead or decaying wood from site.	Ongoing	Each year 2024-29	0	
	Encourage dead or decaying wood where possible.			TBD	
	Re-route footpath where necessary or possible	As required			
	If path re-route not possible, make safe, fell or cut trees/limbs identified as high risk to public safety.			TBD	
	Any cut wood left in situ or trunks retained standing as high as possible.				
Natural Regeneration *	Investigate possibility of deer control.	Ongoing	2024-25	TBD	
	Engage with local communities.		2024-25	TBD	
	Commission licensed hunters.			TBD	
	Close access during culls.		2024-25	TBD	
	Monitor grey squirrel impact .	Ongoing	2024-25		
	Control if necessary (same prep as deer control).		2024-25	TBD	
	* If necessary, collect seed of local provenance				

	to grow on saplings of indicative species.				
	If necessary, plant (and **protect**) saplings in areas with little regeneration.				
Enhance Woodland Structure	If deer numbers are controlled, coppice small areas of hazel & beech on traditional rotation.	Ongoing	Each year 2024-29	0	
	Protect regrowth from grazing deer.	Ongoing	As required	TBD	
	Utilise cut wood/poles; for path waymakers, footpath delineation and dead-woodpiles.	By Spring	Each year	0	
Woodland Edge	Ensure a woodland-edge profile around site boundary wherever possible.	Plan early summer.	2024	0	
	Cut scrub strip (nearest woodland) on a 5-8 year cycle.	September - October	2024	TBD	
	Cut central herbaceous sward on 2-3 year rotation.				
	Cut outer strip of grassland (ideally 2m wide) annually.	in autumn	Each year 2024-29	TBD	
	Negotiate with Football Club to restrict mowing and introduce an edge profile along the whole woodland boundary.	November to February	2024-26	TBD	
	Negotiate with Football Club to incorporate ‘bulge’ section into woodland boundary and create a glade or pond habitat.			TBD	
	Liaise with Football Club to remove obsolete floodlight posts inside woodland boundary.	Anytime	2024	TBD	
Hedgerows	Liaise with Football Club and lay sections of surrounding hedgerows on a regular cycle	November to February	Each year 2024-29	TBD	
	Check ownership of northern boundary and If deer numbers are controlled; re-coppice mature hazel stools.	November to February	TBD	TBD	
Invasive non-native	Remove by cutting (and digging out all roots) of	November to February	2024-29		

species	rhododendron cherry laurel, horse chestnut and buddleia.				
Survey and Monitor	Liaise with *local/county specialist groups* or consultants *to commission series of* surveys of key species groups; including flora, invertebrate, mammal, birds and fungi.	Winter - Summer	2024-25	TBD	
	Liaise with *local/county specialist groups* or consultants to help establish a system of surveys and ongoing monitoring for key species groups.	Spring - Summer	Ongoing	TBD	
Site Infrastructure - fencing	Replace former timber post & rail fencing on southern boundary (with new kissing gate or gap for pedestrians).	Anytime	2024-25		
	Consider replacement of post & rail fencing (with new kissing gate/s) either side of main entrance to woodland from access track.	Anytime			
	Consider installation of post & rail fencing on northwest section of woodland (with new kissing gate/s).	Anytime	2024-25		

Action Plan Objective 2	**Maintain access and engage with local stakeholders to ensure an enjoyable, educational and safe visitor experience.**				
Element	**Task/Action**	**Timing, frequency and duration**	**Year**	**Estimated Costs**	**Progress /Update**
Maintain safe access	Ensure the permissive path through the woodland is kept open and maintained.	Ongoing at all times	Each year	TBD	
	Ensure path is re-routed to avoid standing dead trees identified as high risk to public safety.	As required	Ongoing		
	If path re-route not possible, ensure trees made safe with minimal impact; fell or cut trees/limbs, with any timber left in situ or trunks retained standing as high as possible.	As required	Ongoing		
	Map/make-safe cavities from rotting stumps.	ASAP	2024/5		
Enhance permissive path	Install waymarker posts to mark route of permissive path through woodland.	Anytime	2024/5		
	Utilise any felled trunks to help demark path.	Anytime	Ongoing		
	Consider routing footpath to sports field through the attractive ride; providing choice of two access points.	Anytime	2024/5		
	Consider whether a kissing gate is required if western boundary is fenced (two might be needed if two access points are provided).	Anytime	2024/5		
Site Access	Confirm Parish Council's legal right of access along track.	ASAP	2024/5		
	Consider liaising with Football Club to develop formal parking area inside field for sporting use and organised woodland activities/events.	Anytime	2024		
Provide onsite signage	Develop and install signage for woodland access points indicating Cockshoot Wood name and Parish Council's name/details.	Summer	2024	TBD	
	Develop and install temporary notice signage as	As required	As	TBD	

	necessary; including when there is; • Deer culling • Tree felling or scrub clearance • Events or volunteer activities		required		
Provide on-site interpretation	Consider commissioning, developing and installing interpretation panels for both entrance points.	Plan early to develop both panels	2024-25	Appr £2.5k per panel	
Provide off-site interpretation	Produce a site leaflet and/or self-guided trail.		2024/25		
Engage with the local community	Consult and inform residents and local stakeholders over the management plan	Spring	2024/25	0	
	Make request for relevant site history or anecdotal information.				
Engage local groups & partner organisations	Establish regular liaison re-site management; with *Widmer End Football Club, Thames Valley Police, Buckinghamshire Council, Widmer End, Four Ashes & Hazlemere Community Group, Hughenden Valley Climate Group* and *Bucks & MK Natural Environment Partnership*.	From Winter, then ongoing at all times	Ongoing 2024-29	0	
Provide regular updates to local groups/organisations	Reports for local publications and media on site management and habitat/species updates; incl. to Widmer End, Four Ashes & Hazlemere Community Group and Hughenden Valley Climate Group.				
Provide updates via Parish Council's communication platforms	Regular reports on management, habitat & species on council website & local noticeboards.	Ongoing at all times	Ongoing 2024-29	0	
	Consider developing a Parish Council social media presence and newsletter; utilised for updates on this site and other open-spaces.	Spring/Summer	2024	TBD	
Consider utilising the site's environmental	Liaise with local organisations and wildlife groups to develop a programme of informal	Summer 2024 Then ongoing	2024 -28	_	

education potential	learning activities and events; including walks, fungal forays, bird-watching and woodland skills.				
	Liaise with local schools/colleges and youth groups to utilise site for more formal learning activities such as a *Forest School*.	Summer/autumn Then ongoing	2024 -28	-	

Action Plan	**General Actions relevant to both Objectives**				
Element	**Task/Action**	**Timing, frequency and duration**	**Year**	**Estimated Costs**	**Progress**
Source external funding	Develop a shortlist of potential funders; such as *Landfill Community Funds*, *Lottery* sources, the *Countryside Stewardship Scheme* and *Bucks/MK Nat Env Partnership.*	Spring	2024	0	
	Liaise with funding organisations and make applications.	Spring - autumn			