



TREND IN THE PEAK DISTRICT:

Stable in parkland. In the wider countryside recruitment of veteran trees may balance losses, but probable decline in sites with a continuity of veteran trees.

ESTIMATED EXTENT IN THE PEAK DISTRICT:

110 ha parkland, veteran trees unknown.

NATIONAL BAP HABITATS:

Lowland Wood-pasture and Parkland (priority habitat).

ASSOCIATED NATIONAL BAP PRIORITY SPECIES:

Pipistrelle, nightjar, song thrush, spotted flycatcher, orange-fruited elm-lichen (extinct?), a lichen (*Bacidia incompta*) (extinct) and possibly also bullfinch and tree sparrow.

ASSOCIATED PEAK DISTRICT AUDITS:

Parkland and Veteran Trees.

INTRODUCTION

Parkland can be defined as lowland wood-pasture. It is the product of an historic land management system rather than being a specific plant community. Typically the habitat consists of large, open-grown or high forest trees at various densities within a matrix of grazed vegetation which may have affinities with various types of grassland, heathland and/or woodland floras. The 'matrix' habitats may be biodiversity priorities in their own right. The key interest of the habitat largely derives from the presence of old growth trees and their associated flora and fauna.

Parkland sites are often of great historic, cultural and landscape importance with continuity of management sometimes stretching back for hundreds of years. The richer sites may have direct linkages back to the pre-neolithic natural 'wildwood'.

The extent of the habitat is uncertain but the best available estimate is that there is around 10000 – 20000 ha in the UK. The most important parklands for nature conservation are those with large numbers of veteran trees. These are more abundant in the U.K. than elsewhere in Europe. Their associated distinctive old growth fauna and fungi, with a rich epiphytic 'flora', are of great importance. Parklands may also be of interest for bats and birds and important as a reservoir of indigenous tree genotypes. However, the critical component of these sites is the assemblage of veteran trees. The conservation and protection of these individuals are the principal keys to maintaining the biodiversity interest of parklands.

Biologically interesting veteran trees may be either indigenous or introduced species. It is difficult to precisely define the term 'veteran' tree. However they can be broadly defined as trees, 'which because of their age, size or condition are of exceptional value culturally, in the landscape and for wildlife'.

The age at which an individual can be termed 'veteran' varies widely depending on the species. Species such as birch, rowan, alder and willow, for example, can become veteran trees with associated biological interest at 40 - 80 years old. Size is not necessarily a good guide either, most trees over 1.0 m diameter (at breast height) are potentially interesting, the majority of trees over 1.5 m diameter are valuable and all those over 2 m diameter are truly ancient. A range of other properties are associated with veteran trees: quantities of dead and rotting wood, crown die-back, and the presence of gnarled, fissured, twisted and 'old-looking' features. Non-native tree species, if long-established, may support a flora or fauna which is somewhat different from native tree species, but which may nevertheless be of equal or occasionally even greater ecological interest. Beech, horse chestnut, common lime and sycamore may all be of particular importance locally, and trees such as these are complementary to the interest of native veteran trees.

In the Peak District, only two relatively small parkland sites are well known, Chatsworth Old Park and Lyme Park. Parkland may also be present at other locations but it is currently unclassified. However, such sites may not necessarily be in ecologically poor condition at present and sympathetic management could be initiated to enhance their value following survey.

The two known key sites are remnants of formerly extensive areas of forest with veteran trees, and there is still an association with areas of semi-natural woodland, some of which is ancient. Both of these parklands have a long history of continuous grazing by deer (red and fallow at Chatsworth, red at Lyme) with associated management. Chatsworth Old Park is around 60 ha in extent and has the greatest interest because of its history of sensitive management. It is the only site considered to be of outstanding interest. It includes 4 Red Data Book species, 13 nationally scarce species and a number of regionally significant species. The Park is currently considered to be under very good management. Lyme Park is 526 ha in size but there are only 50 ha of the habitat being considered by this Action Plan. Due to the small number of veteran trees, the park is not currently of quality. The proportion of the national resource present in the Peak District is therefore around 0.55 - 1.1%.

Veteran trees are present in the wider countryside as concentrations of trees or as isolated individuals in hedgerows, woodland edges and churchyards as well as in parklands *per se*. These are also of significant ecological value.

Upland oak/birch and ash woodlands with a long history of grazing also need to be assessed for their veteran tree interest and will be examined within the other relevant woodland action plans. Many such sites have groupings of veteran trees and associated flora and fauna and grazing will be essential to maintain their interest. These include 'woods' in Alport Dale, Dove Dale and Hinkley Wood.

ADVERSE IMPACTS	Historic	Current
Tree Management		
Neglect and loss of expertise of traditional tree management techniques leading to trees collapsing or being felled for safety reasons.	✓	✓
Removal of veteran trees and deadwood for forest hygiene or supply of firewood.	✓	✓
Excessive planting of young trees near veterans.	✓	✓
A skewed age structure because of a lack of younger generations. This has led to breaks in the continuity of dead wood habitat and of replacement veteran trees.	✓	✓✓
Damage to roots from soil compaction and erosion caused by trampling by livestock, people and car parking.	✓	✓
Changes to groundwater levels leading to water stress and tree death.	✓	✓
Land Management		
Inappropriate grazing levels: under-grazing leading to loss of habitat structure with bracken and scrub invasion; over-grazing leading to bark browsing, prevention of regeneration, soil compaction and loss of nectar plants.	✓	✓✓
Pasture loss due to conversion to arable.	✓	
Pasture improvement through re-seeding, deep ploughing, fertiliser and other chemical treatments leading to tree root damage, loss of nectar-bearing plants, damage to soil and epiphytes.	✓	✓✓
Wall rebuilding.		✓
Clearance of timber in watercourses.	✓	✓
Natural Processes		
Loss of veteran trees through old age, disease, physiological stress and competition for resources from younger nearby trees.	✓	✓
Others		
Pollution from industry and traffic.		✓
Problems of perceptions of safety, public liability and tidiness associated with deadwood/veteran trees where sites have high amenity use.	✓	✓✓
Development adjacent to/affecting veteran trees.		✓
Vandalism.		✓
Isolation and fragmentation of remnant parklands, combined with the poor dispersal ability of many species and increasing distances they need to travel.	✓	✓✓

An impact ✓ *Significant impact* ✓✓

CURRENT ACTION

Designated Sites

- Chatsworth Old Park SSSI continues to be sensitively and appropriately managed by the Chatsworth Estate. A recent survey by EN observed that the Old Park was currently under an ideal management regime for old growth invertebrates and fungi associated with veteran oaks. Much new planting of individual trees has also taken place in surrounding parkland areas.
- A number of veteran trees are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) or within Conservation Areas.

Land Management

- Lyme Park is owned by the NT where the current management regime is becoming more favourable to its parkland areas.

- National forestry policy includes a presumption against clearance of broad-leaved woodland for conversion to other land uses, and in particular seeks to maintain the special interest of ancient semi-natural woodland. Felling licences from the FC are normally required if the woods are not managed under plans approved by them.
- Felling licences are normally required for felling trees over 5 m³.

ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

National Targets

- Protect and maintain the current extent (10000 - 20000 ha) and distribution of lowland wood-pasture and parkland in a favourable ecological condition.
- Initiate, in areas where examples of derelict wood-pasture and parkland occur, a programme to restore 2500 ha to favourable ecological condition by 2010.
- By 2002, initiate the expansion of 500 ha of wood-pasture or parkland in appropriate areas, to help reverse fragmentation and reduce the generation gap between veteran trees.

A Vision for the Peak District

This habitat, once probably one of the commonest in Britain, is now very scarce throughout Europe. Britain currently holds a high proportion of these sites that are in many ways relics of the once extensive 'wildwood' that clothed much of Europe some 7000 years ago.

The conservation and enhancement of this valuable habitat contributes not only to our cultural heritage but also to a very special resource of gnarled and weather-beaten trees, shaped through time by man's management and the actions of the many species that are dependant upon them. Preservation of these species is dependant on our management of the host tree (their life-line) within a hospitable landscape. This broad habitat requires protection, enhancement and expansion to ensure that there are future generations of trees to sustain this grand and atmospheric habitat.

The targets for conservation and restoration of parkland are in line with the proportions expected from national targets. Isolated veteran trees are not covered by national targets, but are likely to hold interest locally and may be a much loved and well recognised feature of local communities. Therefore, relatively high targets have been set to reflect their importance and the opportunities that may exist for community involvement in the recording and monitoring of such trees.

OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

PARKLAND

Objective 1

Protect and maintain the current extent and distribution of ecologically important parkland in the Peak District.

Target

Ensure continuing management to maintain favourable condition on 60 ha of parkland at Chatsworth.

Objective 2

Restore the value of poor quality parkland through the establishment of favourable management regimes.

Target

Initiate steps by 2010 to restore more favourable management regimes to 100% of parkland of existing low interest.

Objective 3

Create new areas of parkland in situations which will help reverse fragmentation, or where it will help reduce the generation gap between veteran trees.

Target

Initiate the expansion of 20 ha of parkland in appropriate areas by 2010.

VETERAN TREES IN THE WIDER COUNTRYSIDE

Objective 4

Protect and maintain the current extent and distribution of veteran trees in the wider countryside.

Targets

Initiate measures by 2005 to achieve favourable condition of 20 % of known veteran trees. Review and set a new target for 2005 - 2010.

Initiate the establishment of sensitive management of approximately 20 % of veteran trees by 2010.

Objective 5

Plan to expand the veteran tree resource and connect groups of veteran trees by the establishment of habitat corridors.

Targets

Agree an annual target for securing a commitment to retain individual trees or groups of trees as veterans in the long term.

Initiate the establishment of corridors connecting 20 % of groups of veteran trees by 2010.

Main Factors Likely to Affect the Achievement of Targets

Land Management

Implementation of the Rural Development Regulation and the reform of Common Agricultural Policy.

Availability of suitable land for extension and de-fragmentation of the habitat.

The inclusion of veteran tree conservation measures in the whole-holding approach to negotiation of agri-environment and conservation scheme agreements.

Effectiveness of agri-environment and conservation scheme cross-compliance.

Intensive farming practices and other developments which continue to kill trees before they attain veteran status.

Resources and Financial Incentives

Availability of funds - there are opportunities within parklands but not for individual trees in the wider countryside.

Planning and Regulation

Planning policy.

Felling licence regulations - currently there is no requirement for landowners to possess felling licenses for the felling of old hedgerow or isolated trees.

Conflicts with Other Priorities

Potential conflicts with other ecological, archaeological and landscape priorities.

Practical Difficulties and Gaps in Knowledge

Lack of knowledge on the location of veteran trees within the wider countryside.

Others

Perceptions of owners and visitors towards 'tidiness' and hygiene – and other desirable management.

Public liability of potentially dangerous trees and the differing costs involved in 'making safe' through felling/surgery or retaining dangerous limbs and ensuring no public risk remains, e.g. fencing.

ACTIONS

Crucial to the future of these habitats is a greater understanding of their distribution and ensuring continuity of old trees and dead wood habitat in the vicinity of existing sites. Awareness-raising and public involvement will form an important part of the process (Actions PK16 – 21).

Key actions within the plan include:

- A continuation of the management regime at Chatsworth Old Park to maintain the excellent condition of this outstanding site (PK24);
- The recognition of the importance of individual trees within relevant grant schemes (PK23);
- The identification and safeguarding of individual veteran trees within woodlands and along field boundaries (PK1, PK4, PK6, PK25 - 27 and PK33 - 35), and
- Extending the veteran tree resource in woodlands and along field boundaries (PK25 - 27).

ACTIONS	TIMESCALE	LEAD AGENCY & Partners	
DATA COLLATION AND SURVEY			
Data Collation			
PK1	Collate existing information and identify gaps in the knowledge of parkland and veteran trees outside of SSSIs (Objectives 1, 2 and 4).	2001	PDNPA/WTs LAs/LRCs Voluntary Sector
PK2	Compile a register of sites of importance for veteran trees in parklands, woodlands and the wider countryside to include level of importance (including Wildlife Site status), condition, species and conservation status, and initiate a programme for regular updating. Include relevant data from English Heritage's Parkland Inventory. (Objectives 1, 2 and 4)	2003	PDNPA/EN/FC LAs/WTs/NT
Survey			
PK3	Carry out a survey of parklands, where existing information is inadequate, to include all species groups - lichens, fungi, flora and fauna (including mammals). (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001 - 2005	PDNPA/EN WTs/NT
PK4	Carry out habitat survey of semi-natural woodlands, in collaboration with other woodland action plans, with regard to wood-pasture/veteran tree interest. (Objective 2 and 4)	2001 onwards	PDNPA/EN/WTs NT
PK5	Consider the opportunities for public involvement in the identification and survey of veteran trees in the wider countryside. (Objective 4)	2001 onwards	PDNPA/EN WTs/NT
PK6	Implement a programme of veteran tree surveys ensuring public involvement, if considered appropriate/feasible. (Objective 4)	2004	PDNPA/WTs/NT
EVALUATING THE IMPORTANCE AND CONDITION OF SITES			
Evaluating the Importance and Identifying Key Sites			
PK7	Identify and produce a list of biological indicators of old growth trees which suggest conservation value and which can be used to prioritise other trees. (Objectives 2 and 4)	2002	WBAPG
PK8	Agree methodology for the evaluation of parklands and veteran trees including definition of key site/tree and the identification of 'Wildlife Sites'. (Objectives 1, 2 and 4)	2002	WBAPG
Defining Favourable Condition			
PK9	Agree definitions of favourable condition for the complete range of sites and individual trees in the Peak District, including the requirements of important species. (All Objectives)	2001	WBAPG
PK10	Agree guidelines for the range of appropriate management needed to achieve favourable condition including: *The identification of priority sites/areas for conservation, restoration and re-creation		

	*Methodologies for restoration and re-creation including species mixes, planting strategies, options for natural re-generation (All Objectives)	2001	WBAPG
RESEARCH			
PK11	Evaluate the need for specific action plans for individual species of importance. (Objectives 1 and 4)	2004	WBAPG
PK12	Ensure that the results of research into the effects of Ivermectin on invertebrate communities associated with animal dung are addressed at a local level. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001 onwards	WEG
INVASIVE SPECIES			
PK13	Develop a strategy for the control of rhododendron and implement where necessary and appropriate. (Objective 1)	2001 onwards	WBAPG
PK14	Continue to update and implement the local Code of Practice for Bracken Control and encourage bracken control in appropriate locations. (Objective 1)	2001 onwards	RLMEG
MONITORING			
PK15	Agree methodology for, and implement effective monitoring of, parklands and veteran trees. Ensure that the results of the process are collated and used to update the relevant register. (All objectives)	2001	WBAPG
AWARENESS RAISING			
PK16	Share information on the wildlife importance and management needs of key conservation, restoration and re-creation sites/individual trees with the landowners/managers, including feedback from surveys. (All Objectives)	2001 onwards	PDNPA/EN/WTs FWAG/FC
PK17	Make guidance available to landowners/managers and conservation organisation staff highlighting the importance of parkland, wood-pasture and veteran trees. (All Objectives)	2001	WBAPG
PK18	Make guidance available to landowners/managers and conservation organisation staff on methodologies for assessing when woodland should be treated as wood pasture. (Objective 1)	2001	WBAPG
PK19	Make guidance available to landowners/managers on: The creation of new pollards and management which promotes longevity especially around groupings of veteran trees *The establishment and management of hedgerows in relation to veteran trees *Management which optimises the dead wood habitat without compromising the longevity of the individual trees or the ability of trees to generate fresh habitat in parks and the wider countryside *The management of veteran trees in or adjacent to walls, particularly relating to wall rebuilding *Management of associated habitats of importance to the veteran tree fauna, e.g. nectar sources (All Objectives)	2001	WBAPG

PK20	Increase awareness, through appropriate means, of the value and importance of remnant parklands, wood-pasture and veteran and ageing trees, amongst both landowners/managers and the public, e.g. 'adopt a tree', or 'oldest tree in the parish' schemes. (Objective 1)	2001 onwards	WBAPG/EH
PK21	Increase awareness, through appropriate means, of the value of dead wood in streams and rivers amongst riparian landowners and managers and agencies. (Objective 1 and 4)	2001 onwards	WBAPG/EA

CONSERVATION ACTION AND INCENTIVES

Designations

PK22	Consider veteran tree key sites in any programme of acquisition/lease/management of nature reserves including NNRs and LNRs. (Objective 4)	2001 onwards	EN/LAs (joint leads)/ PDNPA WTs/ RSPB/NT
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Grant Schemes

PK23	Consider recommending reviews of woodland, agri-environment and conservation schemes to ensure that: *Targeting gives adequate priority to wood-pasture, and to individual trees within the wider countryside, at the local, regional and national levels *Management prescriptions for adjacent habitats are reviewed, and for wood-pasture management prescriptions are introduced/reviewed *Payments for the conservation of individual trees are introduced, and for buffers are increased to reflect particular management issues (Objectives 1, 2 and 4)	2001 onwards	FC/MAFF/EN PDNPA/WEG WBAPG
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Negotiation and Review of Agreements

PK24	Review management of all parkland and veteran tree sites within SSSIs. Where necessary agree revised management regimes with owners/managers, to ensure maintenance or restoration of favourable condition. (Objective 1 and 4)	2005	EN
PK25	Negotiate appropriate agreements with landowners and managers of sites outside of SSSIs, targeting: *Enhanced management of important parkland sites, individual trees, hedgerows with veteran trees and adjacent habitat *Priority sites for restoration of parkland *Opportunities for creating corridors to aid in the connection and de-fragmentation of important sites and individual trees (Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4)	2001 2003 onwards	MAFF/NT/WTs PDNPA/FWAG/FC
PK26	Review management of parkland in existing conservation agreements, outside of SSSIs. Where necessary agree revised management regimes with owners/managers to ensure that favourable condition is being maintained or restored. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2003 onwards	MAFF/NT/WTs PDNPA/FWAG/FC
PK27	Review whole holding agreements which include unprotected areas of parkland or veteran trees. Consider the opportunities for amending the agreement to incorporate their safeguard and enhancement. (Objective 1, 2, 4 and 5)	2002 - 2005	MAFF/NT/WTs PDNPA/FWAG FC

Land Acquisition

PK28	Consider negotiating purchase/lease of priority sites (including land with important individual trees) where this would be the most effective way of achieving conservation objectives and when a negotiated conservation solution has not succeeded. (Objectives 1, 2 and 4) Direct Action	2004	PDNPA/WTs NT/WdT
PK29	Ensure that management of land owned by public and conservation bodies: *Maintains, and where possible, enhances the value of parkland and veteran trees *Considers the restoration of sites/individual trees *Takes opportunities for new native parkland creation *Takes opportunities for involvement of local communities in site management where possible (Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4)	2001 onwards	PDNPA/LAs/FC WTs/WdT/NT EN

REGULATION

Planning

PK30	Ensure all planning applications and General Development Orders are adequately assessed in relation to their impact on parkland and veteran trees, that loss or damage is avoided and that opportunities for the enhancement or creation of parkland is considered in relevant planning decisions. (Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4)	2001 onwards	LAs/EN/PDNPA WTs
PK31	Encourage a review of Permitted Development Rights that currently allow potentially damaging recreational activities for 14 days per year – such as 4-wheel drive trials. (Objectives 1 and 4)	2001 onwards	WBAPG

Pollution Control and Waste Management

PK32	Ensure good practice is followed in disposing of sheep dip, avoiding the vicinity of priority parklands and veteran trees and minimising possible run-off. Implement by extending consultation procedures for disposal applications to the whole of the Peak District and by a continuing programme of licence processing and, where necessary, enforcement action. (Objectives 1, 2 and 4)	2001	EA/PDNPA/LAs
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Other Regulatory Mechanisms

PK33	Review existing Tree Preservation Orders and consider the desirability of applying further Orders to veteran trees of wildlife importance. (Objectives 1, 2 and 4)	By 2002	LAs/PDNPA
PK34	Consider recommending review of felling license procedures in relation to single old trees. (Objective 4)	2001 onwards	WBAPG
PK35	Ensure that veteran trees of significant wildlife value are retained when granting felling licences. (Objective 4)	2001 onwards	FC/LAs (joint leads)
PK36	Consider the need for review of abstraction consents and licences where these may be adversely affecting ground water levels of important sites. (Objectives 1, 2 and 4)	2001 onwards	EA

RESOURCES

It is envisaged that the majority of actions proposed will be carried out by the relevant organisations using current resources. These include:

- continuing investment by landowners and managers managing their land sympathetically for wildlife;
- the FC's Woodland Grant Scheme;
- EN's review of parkland and woodland management in SSSIs, and its grant and management agreement schemes;
- MAFF's Countryside Stewardship Scheme;
- MAFF's Farm Woodland Premium Scheme;
- the PDNPA's advisory and grants service for landowners/managers;
- continuing management of woodlands in the ownership of conservation organisations and public bodies (LAs, PDNPA, FC, EN, NT, WTs, WdT) and WCs.

Additional resources are likely to be required:

- for survey and negotiation of management of veteran trees in the wider countryside (2001 onwards);
- to provide adequate financial incentives for the conservation, enhancement, restoration and re-creation of parklands and veteran trees (2001 onwards);
- to aid in the production of the proposed registers (2001 onwards);
- to implement effective monitoring (2001 onwards).

Resources for survey could be in the form of public involvement in the identification of veteran trees of interest and specialist volunteer time in the identification of important but less well known species groups.