

Parkland, Wood Pasture and Veteran Trees (PWV)

Habitat Action Plan

Doncaster Local Biodiversity Action Plan
January 2007



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Doncaster
Biodiversity
Action Partnership

1. Description

1.1 Parklands are the product of historic land management systems and represent a vegetation structure, rather than being a particular plant community. Typically they consist of large, open-grown or high forest trees at various densities, in a matrix of grazed grassland, heathland and/or woodland floras. Parklands are historically the expanse of grounds associated with a hall or manor house, beyond the immediate formal gardens. The livestock belonging to the estate, very often a semi wild population of deer, but also more domesticated animals in more recent times would have the reign of the parklands and it is the continual low density grazing without any grassland improvement that has shaped the parkland landscape. The parklands would have been 'semi-designed' with some purposeful placement of trees, such as avenues, small copses or individual trees in prominent locations. Individual specimen trees such as certain species of fruit trees, particularly cherry, or ornamental non-natives brought back from a voyage are often dotted amongst the expanse of surviving oak, with species such as beech, ash, hornbeam and willow also being typical veterans. Remnants of a parkland landscape can still be found when the associated hall or house has long since gone. For the purposes of this Action Plan, parklands are defined as old trees in a landscaped setting with permanent grassland.

1.2 Wood pasture is now not significantly distinctive from parkland in appearance, but typically originates from woodland that has been altered by grazing rather than the more formal nature of parkland. Records indicating the presence of wood pasture go back over 1200 years and the Domesday Book separates wood pasture from underwood¹. Wood pasture would have been grazed by animals, and will have either been in the private ownership of an estate, or be woodland on common land on which animals were allowed to graze. The latter is the origins of many commons, which became devoid of trees as grazing intensified. The grazing of woodland results in alterations to the woodland ground flora communities, and reduces the shrub layer of the woodland, creating a more open structure and benefiting species not normally successful in a more close woodland setting. For example, the increase in light penetrating into the woodland is advantageous for epiphytic lichens, certain species of fungi and some of the more sun loving invertebrates. Dead wood is vital for saprophytic invertebrates.

1.3 Bat species in Doncaster that are typically found in parkland or veteran trees, making use of the crevices and hollow rot holes for roosting, include **noctule** (*Nyctalus noctula*), **daubenton's bat** (*Myotis mystacinus*) and **natterer's bat** (*Myotis nattererii*), but a number of other species may be found foraging, including **pipistrelle** (*Pipistrellus spp*). Parkland and wood pasture bird species are **hawfinch** (*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*) feeding on the seeds of parkland hornbeams and cherry, **lesser-spotted woodpecker** (*Dendrocopus minor*) and **spotted flycatcher** (*Muscicapa striata*). The latter is a common visitor at Brodsworth Hall.

1.4 The term 'Veteran Tree' does not have any precise definition. It is often used instead of the term 'Ancient Tree' because a tree may be of considerable value for a number of reasons but not yet be in its ancient stage of life. Natural England (formerly English Nature), in its publication 'Veteran Trees - A Guide to their Good Management' defines veteran trees as "trees of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of its age, size or condition."

¹ Rackham, O. 1995. The History of the Countryside. Weidenfield and Nicolson, London.

1.5 Veteran Trees are the main component parts of a parkland or wood pasture, but can also be found in the wider landscape as individual trees in a range of locations. They often represent the last remnants of an ancient woodland or hedgerow, yet the landowner has chosen to retain them for their value to wildlife, their positive contribution to their landscape or as link to times past.

1.6 The importance of orchards for biodiversity is now being realised, and this is entrenched by the recent production of a UK habitat action plan for orchards. Veteran fruit trees were once a notable feature of the Doncaster district and their demise, mainly due to infill development in old gardens, is disturbingly rapid. Due to the tendency for orchards to have low visual amenity to the wider locality, the use of Tree Preservation Orders to protect orchards is problematic. The tragedy of their loss is that veteran fruit trees are far less likely to be replaced by future veterans in today's society, whereas the preservation of broadleaved species such as oak and ash into their old age is much more likely.

2. National status

2.1 The parkland and wood pasture habitat is most common in southern Britain, but scattered examples occur throughout the country. These sites are frequently of national historic, cultural and landscape importance. Some of the individual habitat components are biodiversity action plan priority habitats in their own right. In Doncaster there are areas of old parklands ranging from fairly well conserved examples to a few remnant trees and small patches of grass.

3. Local status

3.1 Relict wood pastures, parklands and arboretums tend to survive in the old estates of the Magnesian limestone ridge and many have Sites of Scientific Interest (SSIs)² within their grounds or in the vicinity. Some, such as Bramwith Hall (SSI 9.15), Campsmount Park (SSI 7.7), and Frickley Park (including Whin Covert) (SSI 6.3) are still part of productive farming estates. Some remain as private homes, such as Cantley Hall Park (SSI 4.39a) with its pinetum, Wilsic Hall (SSI 4.12) and Hatfield Manor (SSI 9.33). Others, such as the former Wheatley Park and Old Don Oxbows (SSI 2.30 & 2.31), Crookhill Park and Plantation (SSI 4.2), Campsall Country Park (SSI 7.8) with its famous wellingtonia tree, and Owston Park (SSI 7.11), have been used for recreation or leisure activities. Further estates have become the grounds of institutes and organisations such as Rossington Hall Grounds (SSI 2.59), which also boasts a large wellingtonia, Bawtry Hall Park and Lake (SSI 4.26a), Hesley Park (SSI 4.23), Hickleton Park (SSI 6.34), Wyndthorpe Hall (SSI 9.35) and St Catherine's. The grounds of Cusworth Hall (SSI 3.10), Brodsworth Park (SSI 6.24) and the surroundings of Conisbrough Castle (SSI 5.9) are of horticultural or historic landscape interest. Cusworth Hall has a specimen strawberry tree in its grounds, to the southeast of the hall.

3.2 These habitats often contain large numbers of very old trees, which are vital for rare invertebrates, lichens and fungi. **Oak bush cricket** (*Meconema thalassinum*) is a notable invertebrate found in only scattered locations in the Borough and is associated with veteran trees and sulphur polypore (*Laetiporus sulphureus*) is a very distinctive locally found fungus, again associated with veteran trees especially yew (*Taxus baccata*).

² DMBC, Re-survey of Sites of Scientific Interest in the Doncaster Metropolitan Borough 1996/97, Volumes 1-9

3.3 Veteran pollarded willows are a distinctive feature of the Doncaster Borough, being characteristic of old hedgerows by ditches in the Sykehouse and Fishlake area in particular. A handsome veteran willow is also located on Otter Island (SSI 6.63) in the Don Gorge. Historic associations with the once extensive Sherwood Forest can be found at Brockholes Farm, where a dead oak tree thought to be once within the Doncaster part of Sherwood Forest, is still standing.

3.4 Local sites of particular interest include St Catherine's Plantation (SSI 2.20a+b), which was originally planted to provide a shelter-belt for St. Catherine's Hall and Hatfield Manor (SSI 9.33), which has the structural characteristics of wood pasture, with neutral grassland below the occasional sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and elder (*Sambucus nigra*). Wyndthorpe Hall (SSI 9.35) is ornamental parkland with small pockets of woodland. A yew bower is an uncommon feature that can be found in Melton Wood (SSI 6.47). Both Hesley and Bramwith Hall still retain some areas of wood pasture and Dumpling Castle on Stripe Road is a further area where this declining habitat type can still be found. Skelbrooke Hall, which is still in private ownership, is an interesting site with outstanding mature trees, including several veteran hawthorns (*Crataegus monogyna*) and has much folklore attached.

4. Legal status

4.1 There are a number of legal obligations associated with ancient trees. Parklands or individual trees may be subject to a Tree Preservation Order, and certain ancient woodland, veteran tree or parkland sites may also even be designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. There is legal protection for bats and their roosts, with parkland and veteran trees being highly likely to hold roosting bats. Ancient woodland and veteran trees are now specifically mentioned in the new Planning Policy Statement 9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, which requires the protection of these important resources in the planning process. There are also a number of national priority biodiversity action plan species associated with veteran trees, and PPS9 also requires the conservation and enhancement of such species through the planning process.

4.2 The British Standard ‘Trees in Relation to Construction – Recommendations’ BS5837:2005 was revised and a third edition published in 2005. In this revised edition, there is now specific mention of veteran trees and wood pasture as trees of high quality and value, i.e. Category A trees under section A3 ‘Trees, groups or woodlands of significant conservation, historic or commemorative value.’

5. Links to associated habitats & species

5.1 The Parkland, Wood Pasture and Veteran Trees Habitat Action Plan is linked to the following Habitat Action Plans:

- Lowland Heathy Oak Woodland (LHW)
- Limestone Woodland (LW)
- Neutral and Wet Grassland (NWG)
- Lowland Heathland / Acid Grassland Mosaic (HAG)
- Limestone Grassland (LG)
- Ancient and Species Rich Hedgerows (ASH)
- Urban Greenspace (UG)

5.2 **'A Species Audit of Doncaster Borough'** has been produced as part of the Doncaster Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Species highlighted in bold within the Habitat Action Plans are identified within Doncaster's Species Audit and are conservation priorities. The Audit identifies **58** species associated with Parkland, Wood Pasture and Veteran Trees.

6. Current factors causing loss or decline

6.1 Neglect and loss of expertise of traditional tree management techniques may result in the death of trees, and lack of grassland management may reduce the interest of the grassland component. Additionally it may result in a lack of younger generations of trees producing a skewed age structure.

6.2 Agricultural improvement can cause the loss of pasture through conversion to arable use, and the removal of trees. Veteran trees in an arable landscape can suffer from chemical improvement of the land, close ploughing and the removal of lower limbs to allow machinery to manoeuvre.

6.3 The improvement of grassland around veteran trees can also place stress on an ancient tree and can reduce its biodiversity value, for example by killing off sensitive fungi species.

6.4 Built development can cause the loss of sites, or can stress and damage a veteran tree to the extent that it soon dies after the development is completed, even if it has been retained within the new development. Due to the expertise required to properly manage veteran trees BS5837 recommends that retained veteran trees be designed in to public open space, rather than placing the onus upon an individual property owner.

6.5 Pressure to build within old parkland, which is particularly seen at Sprotbrough Parks.

6.6 Public access to sites can raise health and safety issues resulting in the removal of veteran trees and dead wood considered 'unsafe', and for tidiness. Vandalism such as fire in hollow bases of veteran trees is a problem, as is soil compaction and erosion caused by trampling or car parking around veteran trees.

6.7 Alterations to site hydrology can also be fatal to veteran trees, with the effects only being seen some time after the event.

6.8 'Renovation' or 'Restoration' of sites may lead to the loss of mature trees, and the introduction of exotic plantings and trees of non-local provenance.

6.9 Loss of parts of a site will result in fragmentation and isolation of remnants. Many of the species that live on old trees are unable to move between these sites due to their poor powers of dispersal and the increasing distances they need to travel.

7. Current local action

Research & Monitoring

7.1 Natural England is responsible for the Veteran Trees Initiative.

7.2 Funding from the Big Lottery's Transforming Your Space initiative has enabled the further development of the Biological Records Centre at Doncaster Museum. The biological data collected as part of the project, particularly botanical information for local sites, species and habitats has enhanced the modern dataset. Historical biological information has also been transferred to the database.

7.3 The Doncaster Naturalists' Society holds regular field meetings and has carried out churchyard surveys that include any veteran trees found. The Society has also undertaken general surveys for all taxa at a number of old parkland sites; Wheatley Hall, Cantley Hall, Skelbrooke Hall, Hickleton Hall, Brodsworth Hall and Cusworth Hall. A number of parkland sites have been surveyed for bats and other priority species, mainly due to the efforts of the Keeper of Environmental Records at Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery.

7.4 A former Trees and Hedgerows Officer at Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council researched and produced a guide to the notable trees of the Doncaster Borough, which is to be updated in the near future.

7.5 Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council's tree and hedgerow officers are taking on board the best practice now advocated nationally regarding the assessment of trees with fungal growth present. The automatic association of fungus presence with a tree in a poor health is out of date and it is now best practice to appreciate the biodiversity value of the tree and fungus relationship, and assess the health and condition of a tree by the extent of healthy heartwood present.

Safeguarding & Management

7.6 DMBC has recently commissioned a TPO review, to update and inform the protection of trees and woodland of local importance.

7.7 Funding from the Big Lottery's Transforming Your Space initiative has enabled the development of a range of biodiversity initiatives, including the resurvey of the Borough's SSI's, research projects, production of site management plans and the provision of resources (equipment, educational, activity and promotional materials) to help raise awareness and encourage participation in the management and enhancement of local biodiversity.

7.8 Management plans are in place for a number of parkland sites within the Borough. A borough wide survey of parkland sites is urgently needed.

7.9 Nationally there are many initiatives to protect and enhance parklands, wood pasture and veteran trees. The best examples are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), and traditional deer grazing is maintained. Veteran tree recording is undertaken nationally by the Woodland Trust in partnership with the range of wildlife organisations including Natural England and the Wildlife Trusts. Training days for the sensitive management of veteran trees are regularly run by the various organisations.

7.10 The majority of local sites are designated as Sites of Scientific Interest (SSIs). Other than management works being undertaken at Owston Park to restore the site and its arboretum, enhancement initiatives are currently limited to the provision of extra bat and bird boxes on sites, and sensitive management of dead wood. Further co-ordinated effort is needed on the managed decline of important trees.

Communications & Publicity

7.11 Many of the important parkland sites within the Borough are open to the public and offer interpretation material on the individual sites.

Advisory

7.12 DMBC has introduced a programme of continuous professional development based on planning related issues, including 'Protected species' and 'Trees and Hedgerows'. The Environmental Planning Team has produced a suite of Supplementary Planning Documents, providing guidance on: Planning for Trees and Hedgerows, Nature, Sustainable Construction and Landscape Planning on Development Sites in Doncaster.

8. Objectives, targets & proposed actions

Please refer also to the Generic Actions in the LBAP Introduction & Overview document

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Cost	Category
1) To ensure the protection and maintenance of existing parklands and wood pasture.	Continuous.	1.1	<p>Prevent depletion of Parkland, Wood pasture and veteran trees due to development and/ or the delivery of statutory functions by:</p> <p>1) Having regard to the protection and enhancement of habitats when considering the allocation of sites, in line with the approach set out in PPS9 and the priorities set out in the LBAP.</p> <p>2) Having regard to the assessment, retention and enhancement of habitat types when formulating and making Development Control Policies and decisions, in line with the approach set out in PPS9 and the priorities set out in the LBAP.</p>	DMBC, Natural England (NE)	Staff costs	Advisory/ Safeguarding & Management

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Cost	Category
			<p>3) Providing advice to Development Control and Developers on appropriate types of survey i.e. ecological and/or hydrological, the interpretation of survey results and methods of incorporating habitat retention and enhancement into development proposals (for both designated sites and non-designated features of biodiversity value, as identified in the LBAP.</p> <p>4) Having regard to the priorities set out in the BAP in the interpretation of UDP/LDF policies (and any supporting SPGs/SPDs)</p> <p>5) Providing technical advice on the severity, implications and nature of suspected breaches in planning control (either conditions or unauthorised development).</p>			

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Cost	Category
			<p>6) Awarding appropriate site protection through designation, based upon routine environmental monitoring and assessment.</p> <p>7) Ensuring that all Partners and relevant landowners, service providers and operational contractors are informed of the existence and importance of Parkland, wood pasture and veteran trees (both designated and non-designated sites).</p>			
	Continuous.	1.2	Continue to collect and maintain up-to-date, standardised, biological data using the Museum's Local Record Centre. Promote and initiate appropriate management, monitoring and the exchange of environmental data, to ensure the maximum level of site protection is awarded and habitat condition is maintained.	DMBC, NE, Doncaster Naturalists' Society (DNS)	Staff costs and volunteer time. Other costs to be evaluated	Future Research & Monitoring

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Cost	Category
	By 2008.	1.3	Expand DMBC's Environmental Planning protected species protocol to include LBAP habitats and species.	DMBC	Staff costs	Advisory
	50% of sites by 2008, all by 2010.	1.4	Identify and audit all parkland habitats in the Doncaster area, developing standard assessment criteria. Include an audit of the parkland, and a survey of the most important trees within each parkland. Undertake invertebrate surveys of each parkland site.	DMBC, DNS, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT), NE Consultancy surveys	£28,000	Future Research & Monitoring
	A further 4 sites with management plans by 2010.	1.5	Prepare Management plans for DMBC owned parkland and wood pasture sites.	DMBC	£1000 per plan = £4000	Safeguarding & Management
	Management plans in place for 3 sites by 2008.	1.6	Encourage and advise local landowners to prepare management plans for privately owned key sites.	DMBC, DNS, NE	Staff costs	Advisory/ Safeguarding & Management
	Funding pursued for 3 sites by 2009.	1.7	Investigate external funding sources for management plans on private land, and advise private landowners accordingly.	DMBC, YWT	Staff costs	Advisory

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Cost	Category
2) To restore degraded sites and ensure the appropriate management of parklands and wood pasture.	All DMBC owned sites by 2008 Privately owned sites – continuous.	2.1	Influence the maintenance, restoration and improvements of parklands and wood pasture by providing specific advice on the restoration of degraded sites to improve biodiversity.	DMBC, DNS, NE	Staff costs Plus £1500 printed materials	Advisory/ Safeguarding & Management
	By 2009.	2.2	TPO review to highlight any notable or venerable trees during survey work. To include photograph, location, condition, size measurements, landowner contact if available, and any immediate management issues.	DMBC	To be evaluated	Future Research & Monitoring/ Safeguarding & Management
	2010.	2.3	Update the 'Notable and Venerable Trees' survey. Add necessary extra information (grid ref, management info etc) and map electronically onto CAPS. Add any new trees identified by the Tree Team/TPO review work.	DMBC	Staff costs	Future Research & Monitoring

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Cost	Category
	20 trees by 2008, 20 further trees by 2010.	2.4	Revisit the trees within/added to the Notable and Venerable Trees survey, meet landowners and advise on management. Produce individual management sheets for each.	DMBC	£5120 (Staff costs)	Advisory/ Safeguarding & Management
	By 2008.	2.5	All DMBC staff involved in the management of trees to attend a veteran tree workshop and be made aware of British Standard – Trees in Relation to Construction.	DMBC	£ 2,000	Advisory
	Implement species-specific management at all DMBC sites by 2010.	2.6	Identify all Parkland and wood pasture sites where Priority Species are present and implement appropriate specialist management schemes to benefit these species.	DMBC, NE, DNS	To be evaluated	Species Management & Protection
3) To create 2 ha of wood pasture/parkland or complementary	By 2008.	3.1	Ensure all known parkland and wood pasture sites are checked against SSI designation criteria. Designate any new sites as appropriate.	DMBC	Staff costs	Safeguarding & Management

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Cost	Category
habitat adjacent to parkland and wood pasture.	1 ha by 2010.	3.2	Recreate parkland/ wood pasture landscapes on an old colliery sites.	DMBC	£5000	Habitat Creation & Restoration
	1ha by 2009	3.3	Create additional complementary habitat in locations where parkland and wood pasture could be extended e.g. open woodland with scattered trees, heathland, and species rich hedgerows.	DMBC, YWT, NE	£5000	Habitat Creation & Restoration
4) Raise public awareness of the importance and special characteristics of parkland, wood pasture and veteran trees.	2008.	4.1	Increase public awareness of the value of parkland and wood pasture habitat by a leaflet to be available at DMBC owned sites and on web site.	DMBC	£1000	Communications & Publicity
	Continuous.	4.2	Encourage local landowners to take up ELS and CSS.	DMBC, NE, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)	Staff costs	Advisory
	Continuous.	4.3	Provide 'managed decline' advice for parkland veteran trees.	DMBC	£1500 - printed materials	Advisory

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead Partners	Cost	Category
	By 2010.	4.4	Develop a fungi atlas for the Doncaster Borough.	DMBC	£5500	Future Research & Monitoring/ Communications & Publicity
	Continuous.	4.5	Liaison with local specialists (e.g. Northern Fruit Group) for local information on veteran trees and associated species.	DMBC	Staff costs	Future Research & Monitoring

9. Indicative Habitat distribution & Opportunities map

The map for Parkland, Wood Pasture and Veteran Trees shows the locations of:

- All Parklands, whether current or historic.

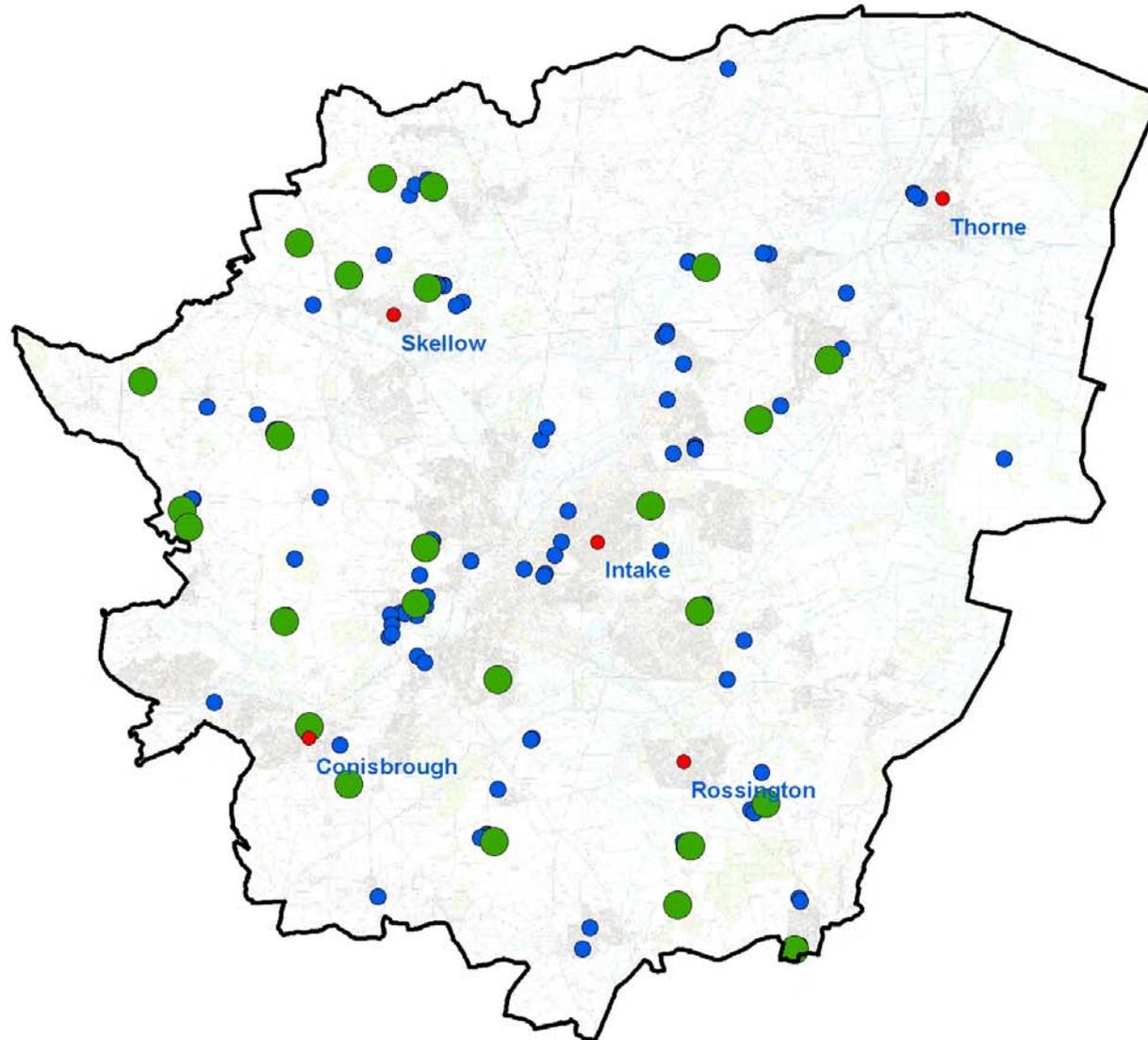
- Notable trees, these have been identified in one off the following ways:
 - All trees in the Notable and Venerable Tree list.
 - Some trees which are to be added to the Notable and Venerable Tree list.
 - Significant trees as mentioned in the HAP text, which are highlighted due to local knowledge.

Parkland, Wood Pasture and Veteran Trees

DATE: January 2007
 SCALE: 1:160,000
 DRAWING NO: HAP/1/PWW

LEGEND

-  Doncaster Borough Boundary
-  Village
-  Parkland
-  Notable Tree



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