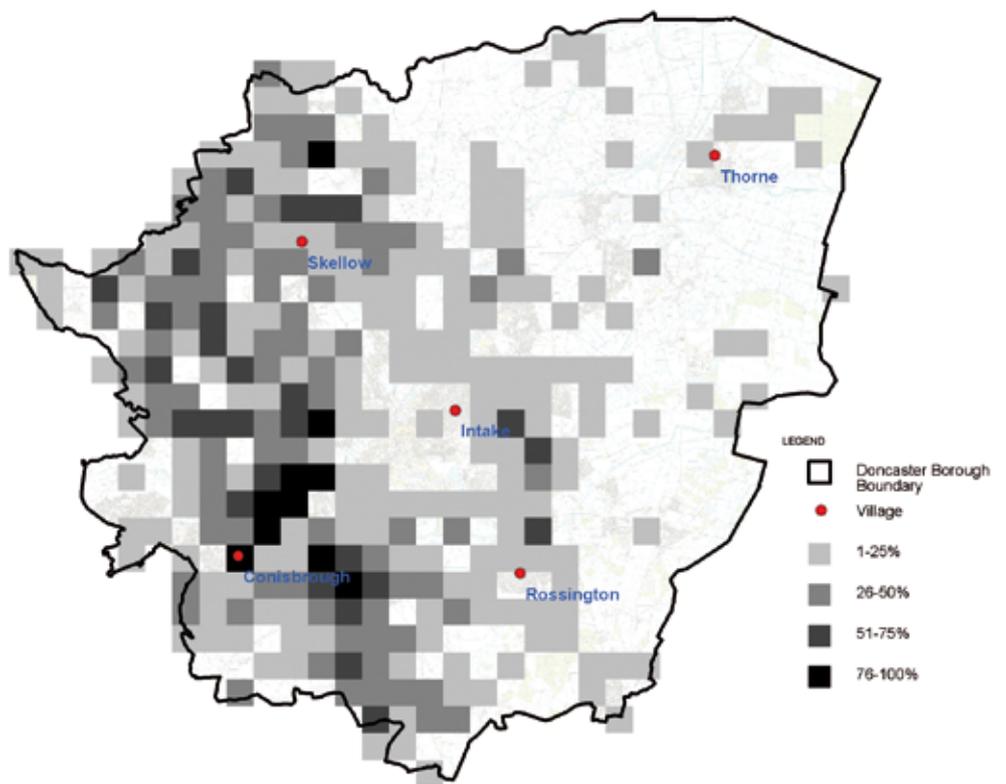


Limestone Woodland

Summary Habitat Action Plan

Doncaster Local Biodiversity Action Plan
January 2007



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1 Habitat description

The Southern Magnesian Limestone Natural Area is of very restricted extent in the British Isles, being limited to a narrow band that stretches from Ripon in the north to Nottingham in the south. The Domesday Book records this limestone area as having particularly fertile soils. Historically the increasing cultivation of arable crops resulted in extensive woodland clearance from most areas, although semi-natural woodlands survived in the more inaccessible river gorges and escarpments, or as part of private hunting grounds, and later as part of large country estates.

The limestone supports South Yorkshire's richest woodlands. A distinctive assemblage of tree species typically includes ash, wych elm, lime and yew, with some oak and hazel. The limestone ground flora is very often rich, including wild garlic, dogs' mercury and sanicle in abundance.

Particularly diverse ancient limestone woodland sites include Hampole Wood, Barnsdale Wood, Skellbrooke Rein and Harry Wood, Scorcher Hills Wood, Hooton Thorn Covert and Hooton Pagnell Wood and the woodlands of the Sprotbrough Gorge. Replanted ancient woodland sites such as Edlington Wood, Melton Wood and Scabba Wood have a planted canopy but retain extremely diverse herb layer and under storey.

2.1 Characteristic canopy species

Small-leaved lime
Large-leaved lime

Field maple
Beech

Sycamore
Silver birch

2.2 Characteristic lower canopy and shrub species

Holly
Spindle

Hawthorn
Dogwood

Purging buckthorn
Guelder rose

2.3 Characteristic herb layer species

Enchanter's nightshade
Ivy
Herb bennet
Lords and ladies
Common dog violet
Woodruff
Lily of the valley

Wood sedge
Pignut
Hart's-tongue fern
Primrose
Bluebell
Common twaybalde
Early purple orchid

Moschatel
Hard shield fern
Stinking hellebore
Spurge laurel
Wood barley
Giant bellflower

3 Current factors causing loss or decline

- There is a lack of traditional woodland management on many sites as there are few markets for the products of coppicing and pollarding.
- Uncontrolled grazing by deer and rabbits may decrease structural diversity and reduce natural regeneration.
- Invasion by non-native species.
- Major disruption to woodland can be caused by large-scale harvesting techniques and replanting using non-native species reduces habitat quality.
- Dead wood habitats are lacking in many public woodlands, where standing dead trees or dead limbs are often removed for reasons of public safety.
- Fragmentation and loss caused by development.
- Uncontrolled access and inappropriate recreational use.

4 Objectives, targets & proposed actions

Objective	Target	Ref	Action	Lead & Partners
2) To restore degraded sites and ensure appropriate management of Magnesian Woodland.	3 additional sites with management plans by 2008 and a further 3 by 2010.	2.1	Develop/review and implement woodland management for woodlands in public ownership. Ensure compatibility with HAPs and SAPs. Review Site Management Plans on a minimum 10 year cycle.	DMBC, Natural England (NE), Forestry Commission (FC), Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT), Don Gorge Strategic Partnership (DGSP)
	6 sites with active management by 2008 and a further 6 by 2010.	2.2	Identify land owners of existing SSI woodlands. Provide assistance to owners seeking funding and/or assistance for appropriate nature conservation and woodland management operations, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • selective felling of non-natives, • removal of invasive species, • replanting of native species, • re-introduction of traditional management (e.g. Coppicing) • promotion of natural regeneration by preventing grazing by herbivores. Monitor the effectiveness of the management, by regular assessment of critical habitat features and selected key or indicator species, and review the management regime as necessary.	DMBC, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), FC, NE, DGSP, Private landowners NE able to incorporate into Environmental Stewardship once sites have been identified
3) To create 8 ha of W8 woodland linked to existing woodlands within the Magnesian Limestone Natural Area.	2010.	3.2	Use new woodlands to link existing woodland sites (also calcareous grassland sites).	DMBC, YWT, FWAG, FC, NE, Private landowners
4) Raise public awareness of the importance and special characteristics of Magnesian Limestone Woodland.	1 per year.	4.2	Run species survey and identification workshops open to the general public.	Doncaster Naturalists' Society (DNS), DGSP
	Leaflet for 1 site by 2010.	4.3	Provide interpretive leaflet to explain the special value of Magnesian Limestone Woodlands and include a map showing the location of more accessible sites.	DMBC, NE, YWT, DGSP

5 This habitat in Doncaster

The following describes where in the Doncaster Borough good examples of this habitat can be found, however, named sites may be privately owned and therefore are not publicly accessible. For further information about this habitat and where it can be found in Doncaster see the 'Limestone Woodland Habitat Action Plan'.

This type of habitat is represented in the Doncaster Borough in two Sites of Special Scientific Interest and over 60 Sites of Scientific interest. Particularly diverse Ancient Woodland sites include Hampole Wood, Barnsdale Wood, Skellbrook Rein and Harry Wood, Burghwallis (Squirrel) Wood, Scorcher Hills Wood, Cliff Wood at High Melton, Hooton Thorn Covert and Hooton Pagnell Wood, and the woodlands of the Sprotbrough Gorge. Replanted ancient woodland sites such as Edlington Wood, Melton Wood and Scabba Wood have a planted broadleaved or mixed canopy but retain extremely diverse herb layer and under storey. Other woodlands such Bella Wood, Stainton Little Wood and Wadworth Wood have predominantly coniferous canopy however the rides, under storey and herb layer remain diverse.



6 How to take part

'Backyard Biodiversity – Nature in your Neighbourhood'

This is a new initiative launched by Doncaster Council to enable local people to learn about, protect and enjoy nature where they live. Community Groups and Organisations can loan activity packs and equipment to enable them to take part in activities such as bird watching, pond-dipping, building bird and bat boxes and bug hunting. The service is available FREE of charge from selected Customer Service Centres in Doncaster. A pack of Wildlife Gardening fact sheets has also been produced, which provides advice and information on how you can help the wildlife in your own garden.



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