

Ramsley woodland creation

Introduction

This new woodland has been designed in line with our management objectives, particularly those concerning landscape scale management of habitats and maintaining broadleaf woodland and associated flora and fauna. Deciduous woodland and scrub are significant features within our management planning and this location has been recognised and having potential to greatly improve both the wildlife and landscape value of this area. Woodland is limited within the Peak District National Park, restoration and creation of native woodland has been identified as a conservation priority by the Peak District National Park Authority in their Biodiversity Action Plan 2011-2020. The site is part of the Dark Peak NIA, this woodland creation sits within objective 3 of the NIA; connectivity of habitats and expanding areas of sessile oak woodland and scrub. Being located on the moorland fringe provides us with an opportunity to maintain a rich mosaic of habitats of which woodland will form a significant part.

The new woodland will link into other woodland in the surrounding area, extending the green corridors out of Sheffield. This area is an important route during bird migration and it is thought that establishing woodland along this passage would be beneficial to many of the bird species passing through. It will also act to join up scattered trees and fragmented groups of trees which are already present within the proposed area. The woodland will provide valuable habitat for the usual woodland and woodland edge bird species, some of which are listed as target species for the area (lesser spotted woodpecker, spotted flycatcher, hawfinch, marsh tit, red start, pied flycatcher, wood warbler and tree pipit). Suitability for species with specific needs, e.g. mature trees/deadwood, will develop with time but during the establishment stage suitable tree species and planting have been chosen and appropriate management planned for the future to influence the trajectory of the woodland towards providing the best possible habitat conditions. The importance of including scrub in addition to the existing heath and scattered gorse should not be understated as it could be particularly significant with regards to nightjar, which are known to be in the local area, and species such as Dartford warbler which are expected to shift their range northwards as a reaction to the changing climate.

The proposed area is located on Ramsley moor, on a westerly facing bank with varying degrees of slope. To the north is an existing woodland and to the south is Shillito Wood plantation. At the top of the slope is a fenced area of dry heath and acid grassland, below is a stream and a bridleway. Currently much of the area planned for planting is dominated by bracken stands which have little value for wildlife and additionally may encroach onto neighbouring habitats which are considered to have high conservation value and form part of the SSSI designation.

The tree species which have been chosen are native and found locally. Due to the relatively low altitude (<300m) and mild conditions of this site compared to much of the Peak District National Park a wider variety of tree species would be suitable compared to the usual upland clough woodland mix (W17). Although oak will be a key species along with rowan and birch, the woodland will follow NVC W10 allowing us to create a diverse woodland similar to that of the neighbouring woodland. Hazel has been included due to its wildlife benefits and potential to harvest with a coppice system, pollen data from local peat cores also indicates this species was once common in the landscape. A small amount of cherry has also been incorporated into the species mix due to its wildlife benefits, particularly for species such as hawfinch which is a target species and has been recorded locally. Some of the tree species chosen for planting, along with the plan to retain of much of the present sycamore, should also benefit species of lichen and fungi. As well as the usual scrub species crab apple has been included as both the flowers and the fruit are valuable to wildlife and it is also found locally on the other side of the valley.

Historically this location was used for production, being known as Fox Lane plantation. It is planned that a component of the woodland will be used for production on a small scale. This will potentially be through coppicing and small group selection felling. Planting density will vary; low density to allow development of large standard trees, higher density

where there is the possibility for production, and the use of scrub to create a transition habitat between the woodland and open habitats. High density planting is particularly relevant to the oak groups in order to encourage good form. Planting at a high density within the oak groups will then allow us to plant the rest of the stand at a lower density but still achieve the required 1600 stems per ha. Elsewhere tree species will be group planted (approx. 20 stems /group). Within the proposed woodland area there are sections which will remain clear of planting; this is due to existence of other valuable habitat, archaeology, to allow livestock movement or due to the impact on the landscape. The area is popular with the public so it is important they see the benefit in the creation of this woodland. Therefore the impact on people has been considered influencing design elements such as planting to retain views and the location of fencing in order to minimise disturbance to popular routes. As such a small proportion of the planting will be outside the fenced enclosures but due to the grazing regime this is not thought to be a problem.

A small number of the existing sycamore will be felled to allow planting in the space currently occupied by their canopies. This will allow us to integrate the remaining trees more effectively into the new woodland as well as creating a more heterogeneous structure (mature trees and coppice stools in addition to the new planting). The timber will be left in-situ to act as deadwood, currently there is no deadwood present so felling of selected trees will start to address this issue. The feasibility of using pigs for ground preparation is being explored. This would allow us to control the bracken prior to planting; making planting easier, reducing competition with the trees, enabling natural regeneration of species such as birch and improving the ground flora. If possible this would be carried out in such a way that it could act as a test site. If successful the process could be demonstrated to other landowners in the Peak District that are want to control bracken and plant woodland but are looking for an alternative to Asulox. It is also hoped that volunteers/groups will be involved in the planting of the woodland.

Method statement

A total of 8322 tree whips (60-120cm) will be planted, staked and guarded (where required) across an area of 9.5ha. The species mix and stem numbers are shown in table 1, the map in Figure 1 shows the compartment areas to be planted, figure 2 shows the tree species to be planted in each compartment. Trees will be planted in blocks, planting will be done by Eastern Moors staff and volunteers over 2 years from winter 2014/15 to winter 2015/16.

Table 1: Stem numbers

Species list		Total Stems	14/15 Comp 4&3	15/16 Comp 1	15/16 Comp 2
Sessile oak	<i>Quercus petraea</i>	3307	712	2125	470
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	1030	358	452	220
Silver birch	<i>Butula pendula</i>	0	0	0	0
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	1264	178	646	440
Gorse	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>	1112	512	600	0
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	548	198	240	110
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	682	442	240	0
Crab apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>	214	74	120	20
Wild cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>	63	36	0	27
Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	102	102	0	0
Total		8322	2612	4423	1287

Figure 1: Planting compartments

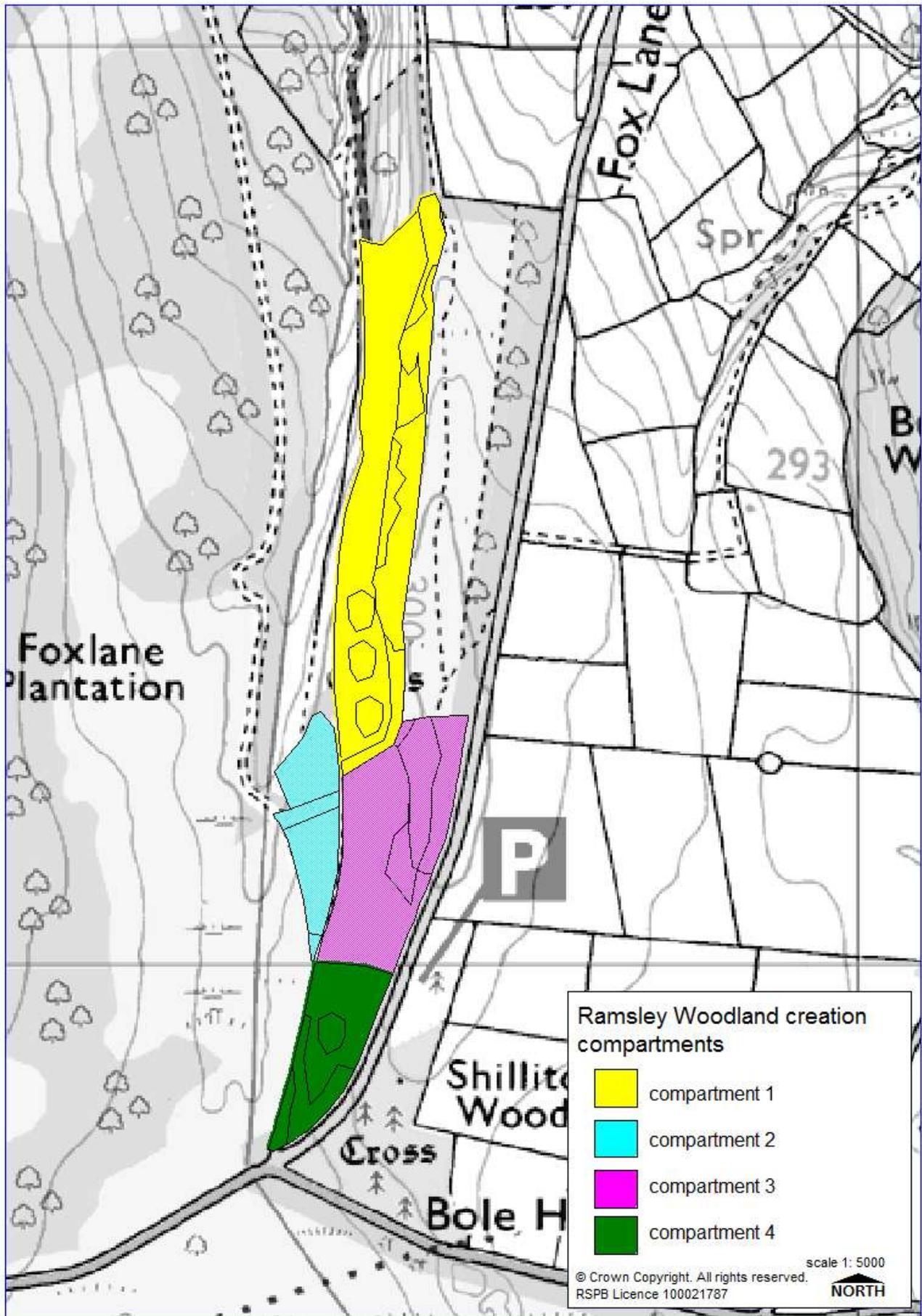


Figure 2: Planting plan

