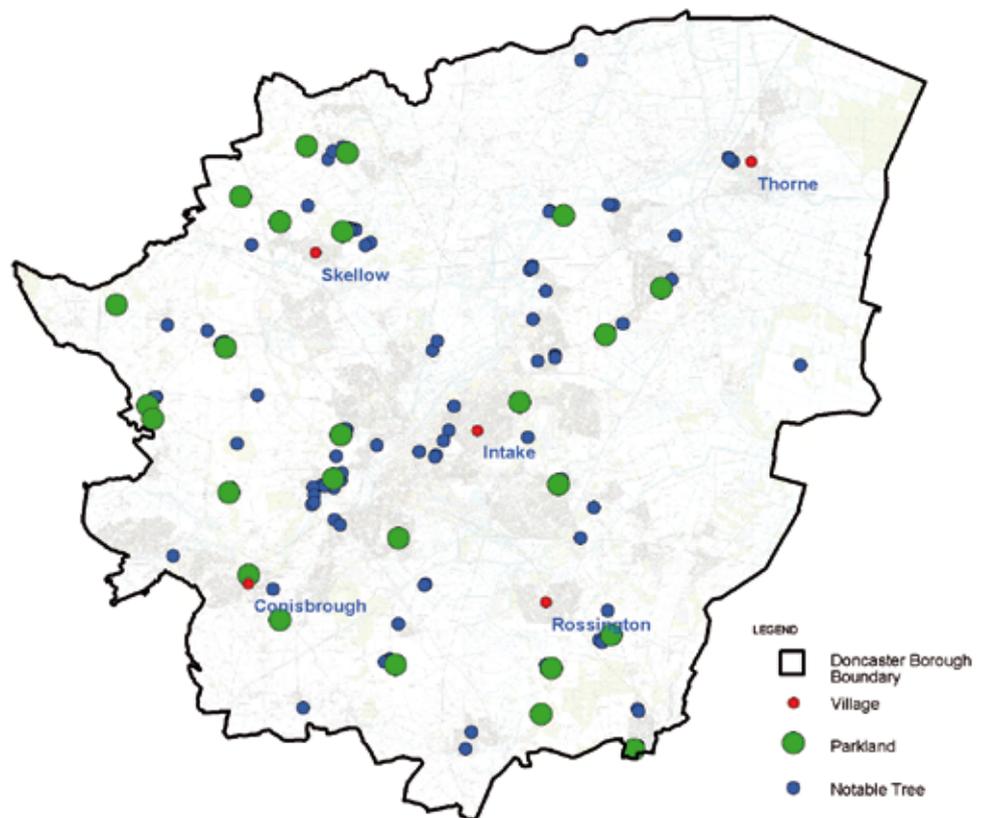


# Parkland, Wood Pasture and Veteran Trees

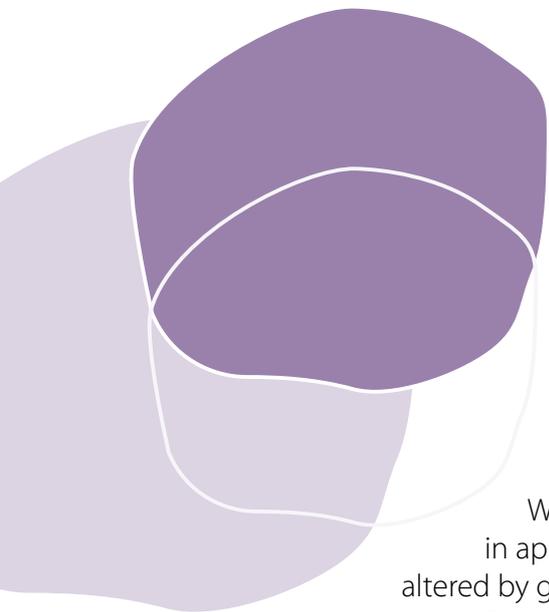
## Summary Habitat Action Plan

Doncaster Local Biodiversity Action Plan  
January 2007



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## 1 Habitat description

Parklands 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. Livestock 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.

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 formally laid-out parkland. The grazing of woodland results in alterations to the woodland plant communities, creating a more open structure and benefiting species not normally successful in a more close woodland setting.

Veteran trees are of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of their age, size or condition. They often represent the last remnants of an ancient woodland or hedgerow. Veteran pollarded willows are a distinctive feature in the Borough, being characteristic of old hedgerows by ditches in the Sykehouse area.

## 2 Characteristic species

|                  |                 |                    |
|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Pendunculate oak | Daubenton's bat | woodpecker         |
| Hawthorn         | Natterer's bat  | Spotted flycatcher |
| Sycamore         | Pipistrelle     | Oak bush cricket   |
| Elder            | Hawfinch        |                    |
| Noctule bat      | Lesser spotted  |                    |

## 3 Current factors causing loss or decline

- Neglect and loss of expertise of traditional tree management techniques.
- Agricultural improvement can cause the loss of pasture, and 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.
- The improvement of grassland around veteran trees can also place stress on an ancient tree, reduce its biodiversity value and kill off fungi species.
- Built development can cause the loss of sites, or can stress and damage a veteran tree to the extent that it is soon dead after the development is completed, even if it has been retained within the new development.
- Public access to sites can raise health and safety issues resulting in the removal of veteran trees and dead wood considered 'unsafe', or for tidiness.
- Alterations to site hydrology can also be fatal to veteran trees, with the effects only being seen some time after the event.
- 'Restoration' of historic landscapes can threaten valuable wildlife habitats.
- Loss of parts of a site will result in fragmentation and isolation of remnants. Many species that live on old trees are unable to move between sites due to their poor powers of dispersal.

## 4 Objectives, targets & proposed action

| Objective  | Target                                      | Ref | Action  | Lead & Partners   |
|--|---|-----|---|---|
| 1) To ensure the protection and maintenance of existing parklands and wood pasture.                        | 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, Doncaster Naturalists' Society (DNS), Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT), Natural England (NE), Consultancy surveys |
| 2) To restore degraded sites and ensure the appropriate management of parklands and wood pasture.          | 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  |
|  | 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  |
| 3) To create 2 ha of wood pasture/parkland or complementary habitat adjacent to parkland and wood pasture. | 1 ha by 2010.                               | 3.4 | Recreate parkland/ wood pasture landscapes on an old colliery site.   | DMBC  |
| 4) Raise public awareness of the importance and special characteristics of parkland and wood pasture.      | By 2010.                                    | 4.4 | Develop a fungi atlas for the Doncaster Borough.  | DMBC  |



## 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 'Parkland, Wood Pasture and Veteran Trees Habitat Action Plan'.

Local sites of particular interest include St Catherine's Plantation, which was originally planted to provide a shelter-belt for St. Catherine's Hall and at Hatfield Manor, which has the structural characteristics of wood pasture, with neutral grassland below the occasional sycamore and elder. Wyndthorpe Hall is ornamental parkland with small pockets of woodland. A yew bower is an uncommon feature that can be found in Melton Wood. Both Hesley Hall and Bramwith Hall still retain some areas of wood pasture. Skelbrooke Hall, which is still in private ownership, is an interesting site with outstanding mature trees. The grounds of Cusworth Hall (which includes a specimen strawberry tree), Brodsworth Hall and the surroundings of Conisbrough Castle are of horticultural or historic landscape interest.



## 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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