

Blackcap Woodland Management Plan Summary 2023-2033



National
Trust

Compartment BC2



**101.1 hectares of
mixed woodland in
East Sussex**

Habitats and Species

Secondary ash woodland and scrub habitats sit on the on the scarp slope. Ash woodland is covered by the lowland mixed deciduous woodland Priority Habitat. Although generally of recent origin and of low botanical interest, these areas do have wildlife value including rich scrub-edge habitats, supporting species not found in the more open grassland, as well as the addition of structural diversity to the otherwise open landscape, with gradual transitions from woodland to grassland.

Ashcombe Bottom is an area of former wood pasture which has since become in-filled by scrub and secondary woodland. This vegetation is covered by the wood pasture and parkland Priority Habitat. Notable features include: Scattered open grown oaks and other trees, including large mature specimens with wood-decay habitats supporting notable invertebrates; Areas of old hazel coppice (an uncommon habitat in the South Downs), providing a habitat for a population of the Priority and European Protected Species dormouse; A network of bracken-dominated glades (an uncommon habitat in the South Downs). These support a varied ground flora, particularly on the path edges; A series of small glades supporting areas of remnant calcareous grassland. Most of these are closely rabbit-grazed and very herb-rich, with dense mats of rock-rose; Rich communities of breeding birds including Priority & Red List spotted flycatcher and turtle dove, and Amber List nightingale. Scrub and scrub edge habitats are also important for certain scarce invertebrates, including a Red Data Book solitary bee which requires flowers of white bryony.

Designations

All of the woodlands at Black Down sit within the South Downs National Park. They also sit within Clayton to Offham Escarpment SSSI, designated for the nationally uncommon chalk grassland, woodland and scrub which is better represented here than on the other chalk sites in East Sussex, And the rich community of breeding birds that the site supports.

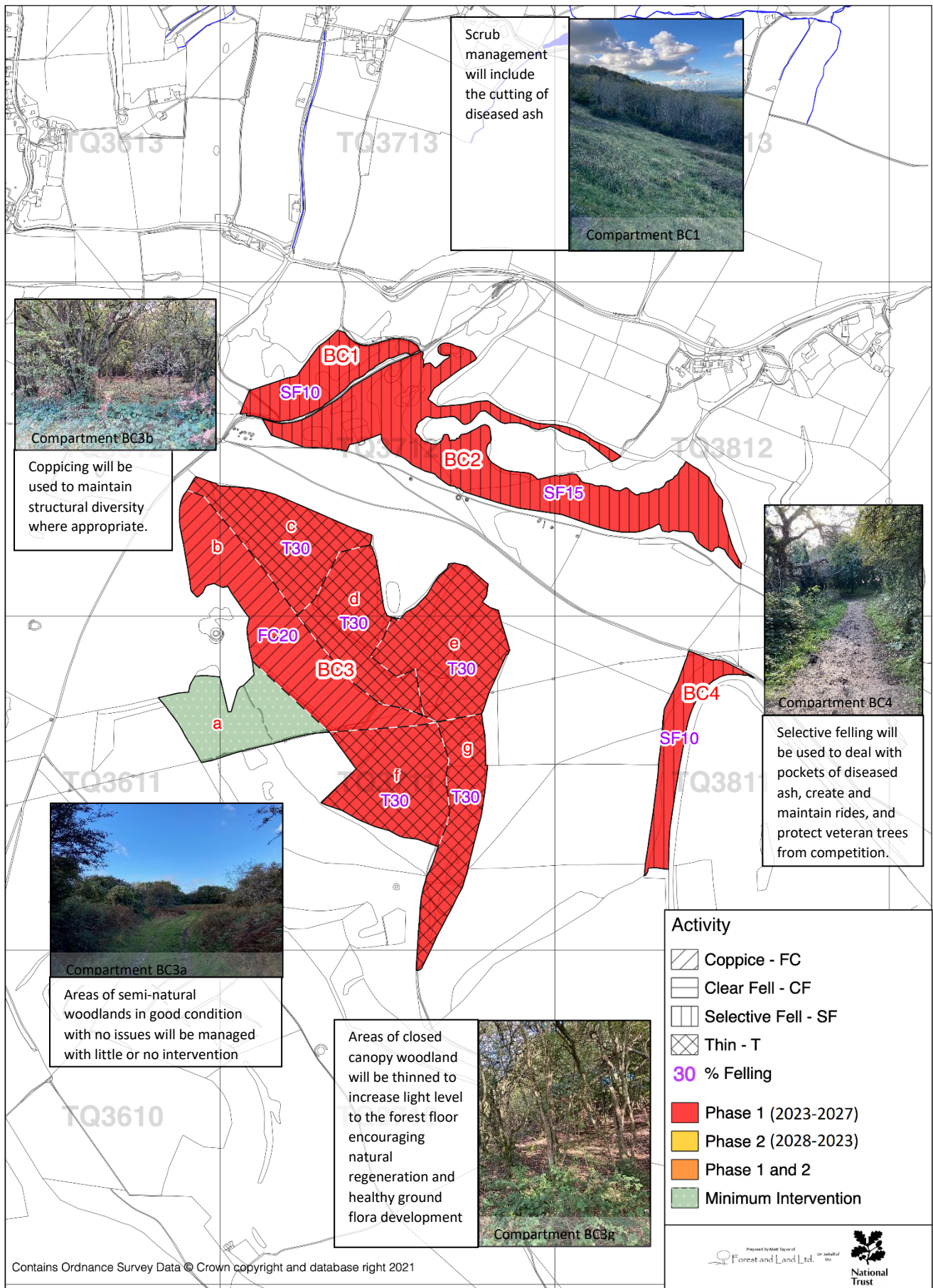
Natural England's 'Views about Management' Document for the site include cutting of scrub and woodland thinning and coppicing to maintain structural and species diversity.

Management Approaches

In compartments BC1,2, and 4, we have identified a need for selective felling to allow us to deal with Chalara infected ash trees, this activity will target areas of high public access and we will take the opportunity to widen rides in compartments BC1 and 2.

In much of Ashcombe Bottom, thinning will encourage natural regeneration of native trees, opening the canopy allowing maintenance and enhancement of the ground flora will be achieved through natural processes where possible. In compartment BC3b, coppicing will be used to achieve structural diversity.

The importance of veteran trees will be recognised due to their importance for wood decay and epiphyte communities. Veteran trees will be identified and protected from competition for light from adjacent trees through targeted thinning and selective felling.



South Downs Woodland Management Plan—Black Cap Map 2: Activity and Work Phase

Scale 1:10000 at A3