



WOODLAND
TRUST

Management of our Woods

woodlandtrust.org.uk

The Woodland Trust

Management of our woods

The Woodland Trust owns over 1,000 sites across the UK, covering in excess of 23,000ha. This includes more than 4,000ha of ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW), and 3,000ha of non-native conifer plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS). We have created over 5,000ha of new native woodland. Our estate includes more than 200 sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and we manage some extensive areas of open ground habitats of value for their biodiversity, from upland bogs to lowland heaths, as well as features of archaeological and cultural interest. The objectives for the management of our estate are guided by our charitable purposes and our aims;

- To enable the creation of more native woodlands and places rich in trees
- To protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future
- To inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees

Our management objectives for our sites focus on;

- Maintaining or improving biodiversity
- Increasing people's understanding and enjoyment of woodland

Whilst managing our own estate to meet our charitable objectives, we are supportive of wider sustainable forest management in the UK and recognise the important contribution timber production makes to the UK economy and to the development of local initiatives for timber and woodfuel.

All our sites have a management plan which is publically accessible through our website. Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) through independent audit.

We spend around £4.5million a year on the management of our estate, an average of around £200 per hectare, of which around £2.3 million is spent on works to improve and maintain access and undertake people engagement activities, £1.2 million is spent supporting woodland creation and £1 million on works to maintain or improve the biodiversity value of our estate. Much of this comes from the generosity of our supporters. Income from timber harvesting, corporate sponsorship and a range of grants also support our management costs.

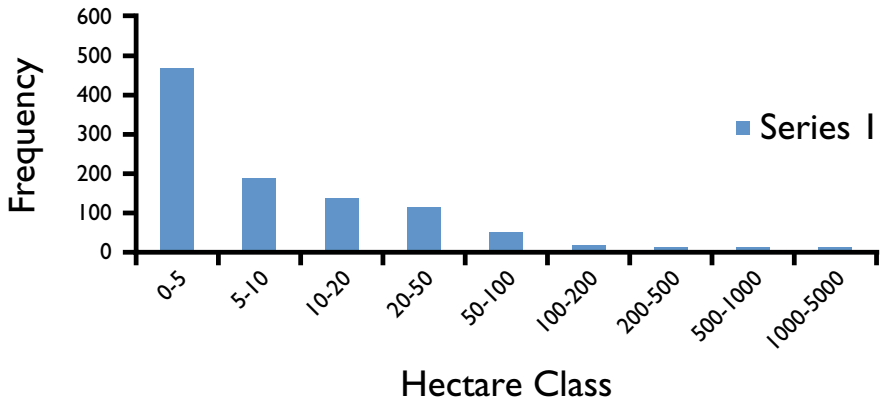
Our estate

Our sites range from very small – our smallest being just 0.06ha –to our largest sites at Glen Finglas (4,875ha) in the Trossachs National Park. We have ancient woodland sites as well as secondary woodland, coppice woods and wood pasture and other sites with ancient trees. Around 30 per cent of our sites are in urban areas. Over 65 per cent of our sites are less than 10 ha in size, and 45 per cent are less than 5 ha.

We have contributed to woodland creation in all the English Community Forests and the National Forest. Our Woods on Your Doorstep millennium project created 250 community woods in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In Scotland, as part of the Scottish Forest Alliance, we are working with partners to establish woodland that will store carbon, while also contributing to biodiversity and providing opportunities for woodland which people can enjoy.

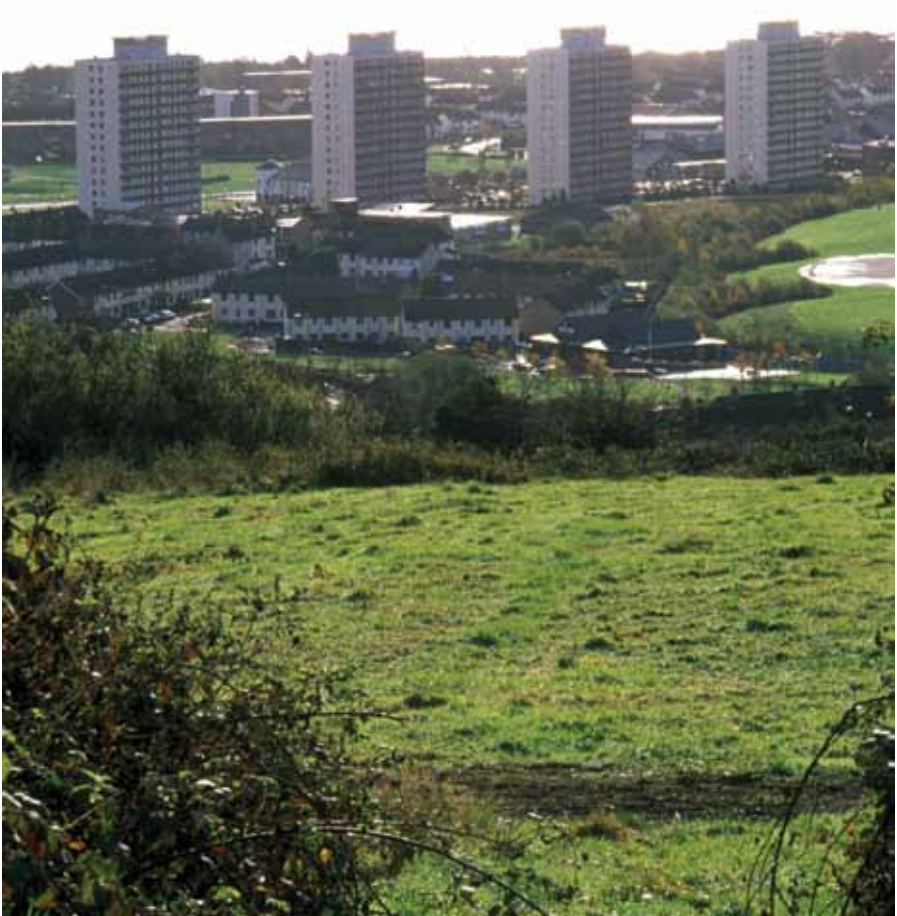
In short, our sites are many and varied and spread across the UK. This creates challenges for management and requires a flexible approach to the practical difficulties in managing small, sometimes isolated rural sites, as well as urban sites often under intense pressure from heavy use and abuse – such as fly tipping – as well as the more familiar woodland management issues such as deer management and invasive species. As the vast majority of our sites are accessible by the public, management to ensure public safety is of critical importance.

Size distribution of Woodland Trust sites



Management of our estate

All our sites have a management plan. These are agreed in consultation with stakeholders, including the local community, and prepared in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard. Our whole estate is certified under the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS). Management plans are publicly available via our web site, and are regularly audited, both by an internal audit team and external auditors for UKWAS. In this way we ensure that management of our sites is delivered in line with our objectives.



We own many urban woods which provide a valuable local amenity and form part of the 'Green Infrastructure'. Urban woods are important for providing accessible green space but also for their role in helping towns and cities adapt to climate change.

Access to our woods

Our woods are open for free public access on foot. We maintain thousands of miles of paths, numerous gates and entrances and, at our larger sites, car parks. As well as providing information and directions for all our sites, both on our website and through the 'Visitwoods' web site, the entrances to our woods display signs that make visitor welcome.

We work to ensure our woods are accessible to as wide a range of visitors as practical, and at many of sites we have developed access provision for horse riders and cyclists. Where possible we ensure sites are connected into wider path and access networks.

We also ensure sites are safe and welcoming for visitors through carrying out regular safety inspections of our trees and access infrastructure.

Our woods provide attractive settings where visitors can explore and enjoy activities such as walking the dog, taking exercise, having a picnic, enjoying the wildlife, and providing children with opportunities for play. Most visitors to our sites live locally, and want a peaceful, informal and tranquil place to enjoy; we try to ensure that sites reflect this.



Most visitors to our woods live locally. Having a wood on your doorstep, free to enjoy is one of the great benefits of many of our sites.

Peoples' understanding and enjoyment of woodland

We believe that positive and inspirational experience of trees and woodland from a young age is a key step towards a long-term care for the environment; therefore we would like more people to enjoy visiting our woodland. Our time and resources are focussed to attract new visitors and ensure enjoyable experiences for regular visitors. Exploration is encouraged through the careful use of on-site interpretation and discrete signs, supported by on-line information such as maps, images and year-round features of interest. In particular children are encouraged to play, explore and use their imaginations and local groups such as forest schools, walking and running clubs are invited to make use of their local wood for learning and recreation.

Through projects such as 'Nature Detectives' we produce materials for families that could be used in any wood. The Visitwood website aims to provide information on accessible woodlands in both private and public ownership across the UK. Events and activities at our woods are advertised locally or via our website.



'Forest of Flowers', pioneered by the charity Landlife, has helped us to create new woods that are rich in wildlife from the start. The stunning display of flowers draws people to explore and enjoy new woodland.

Management of ancient woodland

Ancient woods are sites with an unbroken history of tree cover and are uniquely valuable, although reduced to a tiny fraction of their former extent – just 2 per cent of the UK land area. The wildlife value of ancient woodland lies in the fact that their ecological communities have developed over a long period of time, with features accumulating over hundreds or even thousands of years. There are three key high conservation value features that can be readily identified with ancient woods – old trees and deadwood, woodland flora and woodland soils.

Management of ancient woodland requires careful consideration to ensure the protection and where possible enhancement of the features of high conservation value. This might be ancient or veteran trees, old lime coppice stools, important ground flora, fungi, deadwood beetles, birds, butterflies and a whole range of other wildlife. A balanced view of these features together with the needs for public access requires judgement before any intervention. We have produced a guide to Ancient Woodland Management which covers this in more detail.

We intervene in our woods when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity. This will need to take account of the wider changes to woodland ecosystems linked to climate change, eutrophication (in particular increased nitrogen levels), increasing shadiness, loss of open space and structural diversity, increased deer browsing and pressure from invasive and damaging non-native species. Any intervention needs to take account and monitor the impact of these wider pressures.

We undertake control of damaging impacts where this can be practically achieved and sustained. As many of our sites are small, control measures frequently require the co-operation of neighbouring land owners.

Our main priorities for the management of our ancient woods are:

- Restoration of Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS),
- Maintenance and reinstatement of coppicing at suitable sites,
- Management of ancient trees; and
- Management of important open spaces such as rides and glades

Restoration of Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)



The gradual removal of conifers from PAWS woodland allows remnant ancient woodland communities to recover.

Plantations on ancient woodland sites are ancient woods that have been planted with non-native species mostly during the 20th century. However non-native conifer plantations can have a negative impact on the ecology of ancient woods, through the management to establish them and then the impacts of the dense shade they cast. Such sites can lose much of their ancient woodland flora and fauna. However research has shown that in most PAWS site

sufficient remnant ecological features survive to allow the restoration of these valuable and threatened habitats. We have produced a guide on best practice restoration of PAWS based on our research and experience.

We own around 4000 ha of PAWS. All our PAWS sites are in active restoration programmes and continue to support evidence gathering and research. Restoration generally involves the protection of any remnant ancient woodland features and the gradual removal of the non-native trees, to be replaced by a predominately native woodland cover.

Coppicing

Coppicing is a traditional form of management where areas of trees cut down and harvested, usually on an 8-20 years cycle, and then allowed to re-grow, before the process is repeated. A large proportion of UK woods were once managed this way in order to provide a range of products such as charcoal, firewood, and small diameter material for hurdles, chairs, building, and so on.

We continue this management in our woods where there has been a recent history of on-going coppice management or where its reintroduction, as part of wider landscape scale initiatives, can help support species dependent on coppice management, such as nightingales. In some cases this coppice work may help to support and maintain traditional local coppice crafts.



Coppice management can provide important habitat for some species such as nightingales and willow warblers.

Ancient trees

The UK is important within Europe for the numbers of ancient and veteran trees and the unique wildlife they support. Conserving existing ancient trees and creating future generation is of great importance for biodiversity.

We have mapped as part of the Ancient Tree Hunt all the ancient trees on our estate. We manage our woods to protect and nurture ancient trees; for instance, removing vigorous plantation trees which are overshadowing ancient trees.

Where we own sites with a history of grazing and which contain species still dependent on this traditional management technique we maintain or restore these sites to a wood pasture system.

One of the key values of ancient trees is the amount and variety of deadwood that they provide which is in turn an important resource for rare fungi and insects. While seeking to minimise the risk to visitors we promote and retain as much deadwood habitat as possible in our woods for the biodiversity benefits it provides.



We have mapped all the ancient trees on our estate and undertake management to safeguard them and the wildlife they support

Woodland creation

Woodland creation provides the opportunity to locate woodland where it can benefit people and wildlife most, whether this is new accessible woodland for people to enjoy, helping to improve water quality, or buffering and extending existing ancient woodland.

We create new woodland through both tree planting and natural regeneration. The choice of approach depends on a range of circumstances including the opportunity to engage people with tree planting and the likely success of natural regeneration. We often employ natural regeneration to create new woodland next to ancient woodland.

We plant predominately native trees on our estate and ensure that the design and species mix is suitable to the local landscape. We involve local people in the design to ensure that woods fit with local needs and expectations.

We do not create woodland on valuable semi-natural habitats, such as unimproved grassland. Where appropriate we will create other habitats, such as wetlands and ponds, to reflect the local landscape and increase the opportunities for wildlife.



Woodland creation creates an opportunity for people of all ages to get involved in tree planting and to play a part in their local environment.

Conversion of secondary conifer woodlands



Where our sites are planted with non-native conifers, we gradually convert these to predominantly native woodland

Parts of our estate consists of non-native conifer or mixed plantations that have been established on previously open land such as arable or improved grassland sites. We gradually change these woods to predominately native woodland, while respecting local landscape or cultural aspects such as the retention of significant non-native trees.

Rides and glades



Sheltered and sunny woodland glades and rides can be important for butterflies, attracted to flowering plants once more widespread in the countryside.

The open ground represented by woodland rides and glades in woods are an important habitat supporting a diverse range of wildlife. They are often vital for species which at one time were found more frequently in the wider countryside when unimproved grassland and shrub habitats were more common. They also provide a focus for visitors to enjoy the associated wildflowers, butterflies and bats. We aim to restore and maintain existing rides and glades and, where appropriate, create new ones to enhance biodiversity and enjoyment for visitors.

Restoration and management of other semi-natural habitats

While our focus is on woodland conservation, we recognise the value of the all semi-natural habitats. We own around 4000 ha of open ground habitats including grassland, bog, upland moorland and wet habitats.

We aim to maintain these areas and the wildlife they support through active management which, in the case of grassland and moorland habitats, can include the maintenance or reintroduction of grazing.

Where semi-natural open ground habitats have been encroached or planted with woodland, we restore them to open ground where it is practical and can be sustained.



Grazing cattle can be an important management tool to maintain valuable open ground habitats.

Historic and cultural

As woodland is relatively undisturbed, it can often conserve historical or cultural features better than farmed land. These features can be small, such as remnants of charcoal and saw pits that reflect the previous management of the wood, through historic boundary ditches, hollow ways and tracks, to large ancient hill forts or more modern follies and buildings.

We aim to protect these features and, where appropriate provide interpretation which can add to the experience of the woodland for visitors. Management may involve the removal of trees in order to help preserve below ground archaeological interest or reveal the feature more fully, such as ancient hill forts, or nationally important structures such as Offa's dyke. Very occasionally it involves major works to conserve buildings such as ice-houses, follies and historical crofts.



Woods often contain important archaeological features.

Volunteers, community management and ownership

Many of our sites managers are supported by volunteers who undertake a range of tasks from keeping a watching eye on the wood, completing flora and fauna surveys, through to woodland creation and woodland management. In some cases local communities and volunteers take on the day-to-day care and management of their local site, helping to engage more visitors or raise money to help support our work.

Volunteers are invaluable to the management of our woods. Opportunities for volunteering are advertised on our website, and give the chance for positive active engagement with woodland.

We welcome volunteer and community based organisations using our woods for activities, where this doesn't conflict with the enjoyment of regular visitors. We have groups from the Scouts and Guides, probation service, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and many others that regularly use our woods.

We recognise the value of local people and organisations taking a greater stake in the management of our woods. We are therefore open to transferring sites into their care where they can continue to provide the wider local benefits provided by those sites.



Volunteers are an integral part of the Woodland Trust and make an enormous contribution to woodland conservation



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