

Sleaford Wood

(Plan period – 2026 to 2035)



WOODLAND
TRUST

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Introduction to the Woodland Trust Estate

The Woodland Trust owns and cares for well over 1,250 sites covering almost 30,000 hectares (ha) across the UK. This includes more than 4,000ha of ancient semi-natural woodland and almost 4,000ha of non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites and we have created over 5,000ha of new native woodland. We also manage other valuable habitats such as flower-rich grasslands, heaths, ponds/lakes and moorland.

Our Vision is:

“A UK rich in native woods and trees for people and wildlife.”

To realise all the environmental, social and economic benefits woods and trees bring to society, we:

- **Create Woodland** – championing the need to hugely increase the UK’s native woodland and trees.
- **Protect Woodland** – fighting to defend native woodland, especially irreplaceable ancient woodland and veteran trees; there should be no loss of ancient woodland
- **Restore Woodland** – ensuring the sensitive restoration of all damaged ancient woodland and the re-creation of native wooded landscapes.

Management of the Woodland Trust Estate

All our sites have a management plan which is freely accessible via our website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) under licence FSC-C009406 and through independent audit.

The following principles provide an overarching framework to guide the management of all our sites but we recognise that all woods are different and that their management also needs to reflect their local landscape, history and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives.

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene in our woods when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity, safety and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.
2. We establish new native woodland for all the positive reasons set out in our Conservation Principles, preferably using natural regeneration but often by planting trees, particularly when there are opportunities for involving people.
3. We provide free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe. Where possible, we pro-actively engage with people to help them appreciate the value of woods and trees.
4. The long term vision for all our ancient woodland sites is to restore them to predominantly native species composition and semi-natural structure, a vision that equally applies to our secondary woods.
5. Existing semi-natural open ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained and new open ground habitats created where appropriate.
6. The natural and cultural heritage value of sites is taken into account in our management and in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.
7. Land and woods can generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We therefore consider the appropriateness of opportunities to generate income from our Estate to help support our aims.
8. We work with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders in developing the management of our woods. We recognise the benefits of local community woodland ownership and management. Where appropriate we encourage our woods to be used for local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.
9. We use and offer the Estate where appropriate, for the purpose of demonstration, evidence gathering and research associated with the conservation, recreational and sustainable management of woodlands. We maintain a network of sites for long-term monitoring and trials leading to reductions in plastics and pesticides.
10. Any activities we undertake are in line with our wider Conservation Principles, conform to sustainable forest management practices, are appropriate for the site and balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

The Public Management Plan

This public management plan describes the site and sets out the long term aims for our management and lists the Key Features which drive our management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site – their significance is outlined together with our long, 50 years and beyond, and our short, the next 5 years, term objectives for the management and enhancement of these features. The short term objectives are complemented by an outline Work Programme for the period of this management plan aimed at delivering our management aims.

Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and we continually monitor our sites to assess the success of our management, therefore this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme.

Please either consult The Woodland Trust website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

or contact the Woodland Trust

operations@woodlandtrust.org.uk

to confirm details of the current management programme.

A short glossary of technical terms can be found at the end of the plan.

Location and Access

Location maps and directions for how to find and access our woods, including this site, can be found by using the following link to the Woodland Trust web-site which contains information on accessible woodlands across the UK

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/find-woods/>

In Scotland access to our sites is in accordance with the Land Reform Act (of Scotland) 2003 and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

In England, Wales and NI, with the exception of designated Public Rights of Ways, all routes across our sites are permissive in nature and where we have specific access provision for horse riders and/or cyclists this will be noted in the management plan.

The Management Plan

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3. Long Term Policy
4. Key Features
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GLOSSARY

1. SITE DETAILS

Sleaford Wood

Location:	Sleaford	Grid	reference:	TF070469	OS	1:50,000	Sheet	No.	130
Area:	10.68 hectares (26.39 acres)								
External Designations:	Tree Preservation Order								
Internal Designations:	N/A								

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

Sleaford Wood is a mature secondary wood, lying on the north side of Sleaford in Lincolnshire, adjacent to residential housing and an industrial park to the east and south. It is just to the south of the A17 trunk road. The surrounding landscape contains few woods, especially those accessible to people, and as such Sleaford Wood is of greater interest in landscape and conservation terms than it would be elsewhere. The Trust acquired the wood in 1995 from a direct sale.

High Wood, also owned and managed by The Woodland Trust, is approximately 4 miles away and is the nearest other accessible woodland.

The origins of the wood are obscure, but the study of old maps seems to indicate that the wood was planted as part of the Earl of Bristol's estate sometime between 1766 (doesn't appear on old estate maps) and 1881 (when it appears on the first edition OS maps) when the area was referred to as Sandy Furlong. The site did not appear on the enclosure act of 1794 and is therefore likely to have been planted after then.

Sleaford Wood is a predominantly broadleaved wood and is a fine example of long established secondary woodland with a varied and interesting ground flora. Remnants of the original planting can be seen in the scatter of large mature oaks which represent approximately 20% of the wood. The remainder of the wood is dominated by ash especially, with an increasing proportion of sycamore. The wood is currently under-managed which has created a narrow-age structure and many thin drawn-up trees. Smaller percentages of other species including hazel, hawthorn, elm, birch and wild cherry are also present. The ground layer of the woodland contains large blanket patches of dog's mercury in spring; bramble, privet and ivy are also commonly found.

Many trees came down in the storm in 2000 and this has led to a reasonable amount of fallen deadwood. The deadwood is an important conservation resource in the wood, supporting insect fauna and fungi especially.

The wood is only accessible on foot. The main rides through the wood are in the shape of a cross through the centre, but there is a network of other permissive paths including a circular route closely following the boundaries. The wood conveniently links to a public park to the southwest of the wood, which is managed by the local Town Council. The public park has a small car park area, accessed off Beech Rise, which is the best place to park for visitors arriving by car. Sleaford Wood is well used by local people, especially for exercising dogs. There are no formal rights of way through the wood, and therefore, no accessible links to the surrounding landscape. The main access point to the wood is just to the north of the public park, behind the houses off Summerfield Court. The wood is on fairly flat terrain, but all paths are unsurfaced and the wood can be very wet underfoot during the winter months. The wood can suffer from occasional anti-social behaviour. A new access point for both site management and the public was completed in 2025 and is located off Pride Parkway on the industrial estate, [///enclosing.secret.districts](#).

The Key Features which are relevant to this site and which the Trust focuses its management towards are:

Secondary Woodland
Informal Public Access

3. LONG TERM POLICY

Sleaford Wood will be managed to create a diverse broadleaved woodland, which will be predominantly composed of native trees with the addition of a sycamore component (up to a limit of approximately 20%). Ash is likely to be a decreasing component of the woodland, due to ash dieback disease, and will no longer be the dominant tree species in the future. Hence, the wood will be managed and monitored to address the risk associated with this disease, and to aid its transition to a more varied structure in terms of species and tree age. This diversity and variation will make the wood more robust and resilient to future changes imposed on it (eg by tree diseases). In the future, the major tree species are likely to be oak, cherry, birch and sycamore with a residual component of ash. Elm has shown some tolerance to Dutch elm disease in the wood and therefore will also form part of the mixture. Sycamore will not be allowed to dominate the woodland canopy, but will continue to be part of the mix (up to a limit of 20%).

There will be a significant amount of deadwood retained in the wood, with tree death and branch failure from ash dieback continually adding to this habitat. The main central rides through the wood will be wide and sunny, with a lower coppiced growth on their edges – producing good woodland edge habitat.

To ensure resilience, the woodland will be regenerating with a diversity of broadleaved species, and supplementary planting will be carried out to achieve this diversity if necessary. Understory shrub species will also be present throughout the woodland and will also be regenerating. Shrub species are likely to include hazel, hawthorn, privet and holly. There may still be patches of non-native species/shrubs present (eg. snowberry) but these will only be retained if their spread is negligible and they don't become invasive.

Public (pedestrian) access will be maintained at the wood in perpetuity. There will be a good standard of access provision at the wood albeit low key. The path network will be kept open for use and the entrances will be welcoming, accessible and clearly signed. The wood will be made as safe as practical for visitors through regular tree safety inspections in high risk zones, plus silvicultural interventions to address ash dieback disease. The wood will be regularly monitored for any anti-social problems, and these will be dealt with promptly so the character of the wood is not spoilt.

4. KEY FEATURES

4.1 f1 Secondary Woodland

Description
<p>Sleaford Wood is a mature secondary woodland planted at some point between 1766 and 1888, as proven by map evidence. Although not native woodland, the site contains a well-developed structure including a scattering of large older oak trees estimated to be at least 150 years old, together with much younger classes of trees. The wood is currently dominated by ash, which accounts for approximately 50% of the tree composition. Other tree species include oak, cherry, sycamore, birch and field maple. The wood approximates to an NVC (National Vegetation Classification) of W8 'ash-maple-dog's mercury woodland', with dog's mercury now well established in the wood. Ivy and bramble are also common in the ground layer but wood anemone has also been recorded.</p> <p>Storm damage over recent years (especially during the storm of 2000) and the impact of ash dieback has seen the production of a large deadwood resource which is likely to be of importance for fungi, invertebrates and associated fauna.</p> <p>Many of the older ash and sycamore are multi-stemmed which indicates a past history of coppicing. There are also a surprising number of disease-free mature elms in the wood.</p> <p>The understory (shrub layer) contains a mixture of hazel, hawthorn, wild privet, guelder rose and bird cherry. There are small patches of non-native shrubs, namely snowberry and mahonia, which appear not to be invasive.</p> <p>Sleaford is isolated in the landscape, and is not linked or close to other woodland or semi-natural habitat (apart from a public park to the southwest). The wood is not currently at threat from deer browsing, and it is assumed that high visitor numbers and the isolated nature of the wood keep deer numbers to a minimum.</p>
Significance
<p>An important broadleaved wood located in an area with low woodland cover, the site also contains a number of veteran and future veteran trees which are underrepresented in the local area.</p>
Opportunities & Constraints
<p>Constraints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The wood can be very wet during the winter months. <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The wood is currently dominated by one particular tree species (ash) and many of the ash stands are under-thinned with resulting single-aged trees which are thin and drawn-up. Ash dieback disease is a threat to the wood and a large proportion of the ash stock could eventually be killed. However, the disease also provides the opportunity to diversify the woodland composition in both species content and age range (structure), and to aid the development of a greater degree of natural regeneration.-Management access has been improved thanks to the new gate to the North West of the site.

Factors Causing Change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ash dieback disease. - Further development of the industrial estate on the northern edge of the wood in the future.
Long term Objective (50 years+)
<p>Sleaford Wood will be managed to create a diverse, well-structured broadleaved woodland, which will be predominantly composed of native trees with the addition of a sycamore component (to a maximum percentage of 20%). Ash is likely to be a decreasing component of the woodland, due to ash dieback, and will no longer be the dominant tree species in the future. Hence, the wood will be managed and monitored to address the risk associated with the disease, through timely intervention and thinning work as required, to aid its transition to a more varied and resilient structure. In the future, the major tree species are likely to be oak, cherry, birch and sycamore with a residual component of ash. The objective is not to remove the majority of ash, but more to ensure that the wood is diverse in species, and age range, and is also regenerating sufficiently to ensure resilience against losses. Elm has shown some tolerance to Dutch elm disease in the wood and therefore will also form part of the mixture. Sycamore will not be allowed to dominate the woodland canopy, but will continue to be part of the mix.</p> <p>There will be a significant amount of deadwood retained in the wood, with tree death and branch failure from ash dieback continually adding to this habitat. The main central rides through the wood will be wide and sunny, with lower coppiced growth on their edges – producing good woodland edge habitat.</p> <p>To ensure resilience the woodland will be regenerating with a diversity of broadleaved species, and supplementary planting will be carried out to achieve this diversity if necessary. Understorey shrub species will also be present throughout the woodland and will also be regenerating. Shrub species are likely to include hazel, hawthorn, privet and holly. There may still be patches of non-native species/shrubs present (eg snowberry) but these will only be retained if their spread is negligible and they don't become invasive.</p>
Short term management Objectives for the plan period (10 years)
<p>The main short term objectives during this plan period are to begin the process of re-structuring the woodland in response to ash dieback disease and to create more open structured rides through the wood. The following activities/operations will help deliver these objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carrying out woodland thinning operations at least once during this 10 year plan period. These operations will ensure that the ash content along the main cross rides, boundaries and other major paths through the wood is reduced by at least 30%. Additional felling along the main cross rides, including other tree species (such as sycamore and oak), will also be carried out to create open sunny conditions along these rides. Thinning of ash within the lesser priority areas (the body of the woodland) will progress later in the plan period to encourage a greater diversity of broadleaved trees species throughout. It is anticipated that approximately 6ha of the woodland will be thinned/worked by the end of this plan period (2035). Timber will be extracted and sold on the local market. 2. Monitoring will take place in 2026, 2028, 2031 and 2033 to map and check on the spread of non-native shrubs (mahonia and snowberry) to ensure they do not become invasive. Action (removal) will subsequently be taken if their spread is found to be rapidly increasing. The shrubs currently cover very small areas and the indication is that their spread is not an issue, but something which stills needs to be monitored. 3. Monitoring will also be carried out in 2026 and 2031 to check on the level of natural regeneration through the woodland, following thinning operations. This will determine whether supplementary tree planting needs to be carried

out to ensure the development of a diverse crop of young trees.

4. A further WCA in 2030 will guide further silvicultural interventions and should involve creating a species list for the site.

4.2 f2 Informal Public Access

Description

Sleaford Wood is a moderately sized native woodland on the northeast edge of Sleaford. It has open access to the public, with a pedestrian-only path network. There are over 2km of footpaths through the wood, offering a variety of walks and routes. The main rides through the wood are in the shape of a cross through the centre, but there is a network of other permissive paths including a circular route closely following the boundaries. The wood conveniently links to a housing estate immediately to the west and to a public park to the southwest of the wood, which is managed by the local Town Council. The public park has a small car park area with a capacity of approximately 20 cars. It can be accessed off Beech Rise, which is the best place to park for visitors arriving by car. Being so close to where people live, Sleaford Wood is well used by local people, especially for exercising dogs. There are no formal rights of way through the wood though, and therefore no accessible links to the surrounding landscape. The main public access point to the wood is just to the north of the public park, at the end of a small residential road called Summerfield Court, there is another public and management access point through the new industrial estate to the North West of the site. The wood is on fairly flat terrain, but all paths are unsurfaced and the wood can be very wet underfoot during the winter months. The wood can suffer from occasional anti-social behaviour.

Facilities at the wood are low key, but there is welcome signage at the main entrance together with metal fencing and barriers to deter access by unauthorised motor vehicles.

Significance

Given its location on the edge of a large town, the wood is ideally placed to provide informal recreation to a large number of local residents in an area with a very poor level of tree cover and publically accessible woodland.

Opportunities & Constraints

Occasional anti-social problems such as illegal fires, flytipping and vandalism can spoil the attractiveness and appeal of the wood. The size and location of the wood will probably mean that it is most likely to be of appeal to local people only.

Factors Causing Change

Extension of the industrial estate to the rear of the site.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain safe pedestrian-only public access at the wood in perpetuity. Facilities at the wood will continue to be low key as fitting a wood of mainly local interest. Welcome signage will greet visitors at the main entrance, and there will be a managed path network. Any new access infrastructure will be made robust to ensure it is not vulnerable to vandalism. The wood will be made as secure as possible to prevent access by unauthorized users (eg motorised

vehicles). The wood will be routinely monitored to ensure footpaths and boundaries are as safe as possible, and anti-social problems are kept to a minimum.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (10 years)

During this 10 year plan period the short term objective will be to maintain safe and low-key public access, and to ensure that anti-social problems are minimised as much as possible. This will be achieved by:

1. Carrying out annual management to maintain a path network of approximately 2km in total length and to a minimum width of 2m. Annual management will also ensure the main entrance is signed and welcoming and litter is kept to a minimum.
2. Carrying out regular tree safety surveys, in accordance with Woodland Trust health and safety guidance and best practice, in high risk zones such as property and business boundaries, and the path network. High risk boundaries will be surveyed annually. Woodland management work will further reduce the safety risk associated with the trees (see objectives for secondary woodland key feature).
3. Undertaking monitoring visits four times during this plan period to assess the levels of any anti-social behaviour, and to carry out any measures resulting from these.
4. Check that the paths and entrances are safe and in good order 2028 and 2033.

5. WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
2025	WMM - Secondary Silviculture	Works associated with silvicultural operations within secondary woods to meet our primary aims of conserving woodlands and encouraging public enjoyment– such as the removal of non-natives, thinning and promotion of native trees and shrubs, creating and managing view points and providing welcoming sites for visitors	December
2026	AW - Management Access Capital	Works associated with installing new or replacement management access infrastructure. Such as management access gates, vehicle bridges, fencing and surfacing works.	April
2026	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing pot-holes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc,	September
2030	WMM - Secondary Silviculture	Works associated with silvicultural operations within secondary woods to meet our primary aims of conserving woodlands and encouraging public enjoyment– such as the removal of non-natives, thinning and promotion of native trees and shrubs, creating and managing view points and providing welcoming sites for visitors	September

APPENDIX 1 : COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
1a	10.65	Ash	1790	High forest	Archaeological features, Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site, No/poor vehicular access to the site, People issues (+tve & -tve), Site structure, location, natural features & vegetation	Tree Preservation Order
A mature, secondary woodland with the major tree species being ash, oak and sycamore. Ash is currently dominant and makes up around 50% of the composition. Other more minor tree species include cherry, birch and elm. The understorey contains hazel, hawthorn, privet and guilder rose.						

Ancient Woodland

Ancient woods are defined as those where there has been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD. In Scotland ancient woods are defined strictly as sites shown as semi-natural woodland on the 'Roy' maps (a military survey carried out in 1750 AD, which is the best source of historical map evidence) and as woodland all subsequent maps. However, they have been combined with long-established woods of semi-natural origin (originating from between 1750 and 1860) into a single category of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland to take account of uncertainties in their identification. Ancient woods include Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (see below). May support many species that are only found in ancient woodland.

Ancient Semi - Natural Woodland

Stands in ancient woods defined as those consisting predominantly of native trees and shrubs that have not obviously been planted, which have arisen from natural regeneration or coppice regrowth.

Ancient Woodland Site

Stands in ancient woods that have been converted to plantations, of coniferous, broadleaved or mixed species, usually for timber production, including plantations of native species planted so closely together that any semi-natural elements of the understorey have been suppressed.

Beating Up

Replacing any newly planted trees that have died in the first few years after planting.

Broadleaf

A tree having broad leaves (such as oak) rather than needles found on conifers (such as Scots pine).

Canopy

The uppermost layer of vegetation in a woodland, or the upper foliage and branches of an individual tree.

Clearfell

Felling of all trees within a defined area.

Compartment

Permanent management division of a woodland, usually defined on site by permanent features such as roads. See Sub-compartments.

Conifer

A tree having needles, rather than broadleaves, and typically bearing cones.

Continuous Cover forestry

A term used for managing woods to ensure that there are groups or individual trees of different ages scattered over the whole wood and that some mature tree cover is always maintained. Management is by repeated thinning and no large areas are ever completely felled all at once.

Coppice

Trees which are cut back to ground levels at regular intervals (3-25 years).

Exotic (non-native) Species

Species originating from other countries (or other parts of the UK) that have been introduced by humans, deliberately or accidentally.

Field Layer

Layer of small, non-woody herbaceous plants such as bluebells.

Group Fell

The felling of a small group of trees, often to promote natural regeneration or allow planting.

Long Term Retention

Discrete groups of trees (or in some cases single trees) that are retained significantly past their economic felling age. Operations may still be carried out within them and thinning is often necessary to maintain stability.

Minimum Intervention

Areas where no operations (such as thinning) will take place other than to protect public safety or possibly to control invasive exotic species.

Mixed Woodland

Woodland made up of broadleaved and coniferous trees.

National vegetation classification (NVC)

A classification scheme that allows an area of vegetation to be assigned to the standardised type that best matches the combination of plant species that it contains. All woodlands in the UK can be described as being one of 18 main woodland types (W1 - W18), which principally reflect soil and climatic conditions. For example, Upland Oakwoods are type W11, and normally occur on well drained infertile soils in the cooler and wetter north and west of Britain. Each main type can be subdivided into numerous subtypes. Most real woods contain more than one type or sub-type and inevitably some woods are intermediate in character and can't be properly described by any sub type.

Native Species

Species that arrived in Britain without human assistance.

Natural Regeneration

Naturally grown trees from seeds falling from mature trees. Also regeneration from coppicing and suckering.

Origin & Provenance

The provenance of a tree or seed is the place where seed was collected to grow the tree or plant. The origin is the geographical location within the natural range of a species from where seeds/tree originally derives. Thus an acorn collected from a Turkey oak in Edinburgh would have an Edinburgh provenance and a southern European origin.

Re-Stocking

Re-planting an area of woodland, after it has been felled.

Shrub Layer

Formed by woody plants 1-10m tall.

Silviculture

The growing and care of trees in woodlands.

Stand

Trees of one type or species, grouped together within a woodland.

Sub-Compartment

Temporary management division of a compartment, which may change between management plan periods.

Thinning

The felling of a proportion of individual trees within a given area. The remaining trees grow to fill in the space created.

Tubex or Grow or Tuley Tubes

Tubes placed over newly planted trees or natural regeneration that promote growth and provide protection from animals such as rabbits and deer.

Weeding

The control of vegetation immediately around newly planted trees or natural regeneration to promote tree growth until they become established.

Windblow/Windthrow

Trees or groups of trees blown over (usually uprooted) by strong winds and gales.

Registered Office:

The Woodland Trust, Kempton Way, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 6LL.

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Conservation Map Sleaford Woods



Sleaford Wood Hazard Map



Sleaford Wood Management Proposals

