

Loxley Wood

(Plan period – 2024 to 2029)



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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GLOSSARY

1. SITE DETAILS

Loxley Wood

Location:	Shapwick Grid reference: ST 40601 37662 OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 182
Area:	21.17 hectares (52.31 acres)
External Designations:	County Wildlife Site (includes SSCI, SINC etc), Planted Ancient Woodland Site
Internal Designations:	Ancient Woodland Restoration Project

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

Loxley Wood is a 21.17 hectare (52.31 acres) woodland on the Polden Hills, situated between the Somerset Levels, on the north side of the A39 between Bridgwater and Glastonbury and forms the majority of a slightly larger area of woodland surrounded by farmland within The Mid Somerset Hills National Character Area (NCA) 143 and has slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged clay soils over Jurassic and Cretaceous clay.

Loxley Wood was acquired by the Woodland Trust in 1999 and is a mixed broadleaved Ancient Woodland Site with some planted conifers (PAWS). The previous native broadleaved canopy - most likely mature oak - was cleared and replanted in 1967 and the majority of the site (compartment 2) now consists of a mix of mostly regenerated ash, with oak and field maple, a hazel understorey and a proportion of planted larch and Norway spruce throughout the stands. The latter are occasionally dominant. Through the Woodland Trust's gradual restoration approach, the proportion of conifers has been reduced through thinning interventions between 2002-4. A band of mature broadleaf oak woodland which was seemingly not felled with the rest of the wood remains along the roadside, part of this area is classified as Ancient semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW).

There are many old banks within the wood which are thought to indicate historical ownership boundaries. There is an old ditch and bank system around the edges of the wood, and one of these parallel with the A39 may have been along the route of the old Roman road.

Records of rare invertebrates, generally species associated with deadwood, are held. These have declined over the last 60 years due to changes in habitat. The main ride and some other parts of the wood have a rich ground flora and many invertebrate associates. There are two small seasonal ponds on the northern boundary.

There is access and parking for up to three cars in the management gateway from Wood Lane. There are 2 lay-bys on the A39 from which unauthorised access to the wood is obtained by crossing a short section of land owned by Somerset County Council. The main permissive footpath runs from Wood Lane through the central ride running West-East and connects with the public footpath on the eastern boundary to Shapwick Village. A circular route can be found back along the northern boundary. The main track through the wood is unsurfaced and can be wet and muddy in places all year round, and other informal tracks exist within the wood. All paths throughout the wood are relatively flat.

3. LONG TERM POLICY

Ancient Woodland Site - In 50 years' time the PAWS area will have been restored through gradual thinning and selective felling to promote a broadleaved canopy with a diverse structure favouring ancient woodland features and semi-natural flora and vegetation; composition will be largely composed of native and honorary native broadleaved species, although some conifer trees will be retained in reference to the plantation history of the site and to improve long term resilience at no more than 5% canopy cover with no regenerating conifers. The woodland will be managed through a Continuous Cover Forestry based approach to develop and maintain a mixed age and species structure, to promote healthy, species-rich and resilient woodland with a steady accumulation of standing and fallen deadwood. The main ride edges will have a varied structure maintained through 2-zone management. All historic features will remain in good condition and be protected during harvesting operations. Non-native and invasive species will have been controlled, and deer levels will remain low un-impeding regeneration.

Connecting People - In 50 years' time the importance of the wood as a local recreational resource will have been maintained and improved, so the site is valued by local users and visitors, both as a through route and a recreational and interesting woodland resource in its own right. Access will continue to work towards the Trust's objectives of inspiring everyone to value woods and trees, and appropriate access infrastructure will be installed and maintained to support visitors. The Trusts duty of care to visitors will be addressed through ongoing tree safety, tree health checks, litter picks, management of misuse of the site, and appropriate site risk assessment regimes, which may require remedial works as required.

4. KEY FEATURES

4.1 f1 Ancient Woodland Site

Description

Loxley Wood is a mixed broadleaved Ancient Woodland Site which was planted with conifers (larch and Norway Spruce) in 1967 when most of the ancient woodland broadleaved trees (mostly oak) were felled. The site was acquired by the Woodland Trust in 1999 and restoration through the thinning of conifers began between 2002 – 2004. It now has a mixed canopy of mostly ash, with some oak, field maple, and willow, with a hazel, spindle and dogwood understory as well as approximately 30% remaining planted larch and Norway spruce. A strip of semi-natural ancient woodland remains along the south-eastern roadside boundary which is predominantly mature oak, with mature horse chestnut, ash and sycamore trees over a hazel understory with a rich ground flora. Part of the area is owned by Somerset County Council, and ownership of a further small section at the eastern end of the woodland is unknown.

The central ride running West-East through the wood has been coppiced on rotation since 2013 into approx. 20 scalloped glades approx. 25m in length with 4 cut annually on a 5-year rotation. It has a diverse understory including hazel, ash, dogwood, spindle, willow sp, field maple and alder with a species rich ground flora including Early purple, common spotted and butterfly orchids, wood millet and other species indicative of ancient woodland. It also supports a wide range of invertebrates rich in butterflies, and dragonflies and damselflies.

Management access is gained from a small side road directly into the wood, and from a field gate on the A39 in the south of the wood. The site has slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged clay soils over Jurassic and Cretaceous clay. There are two seasonal small ponds on the northern boundary which can dry up. There are 3 small fenced deer enclosures in the woodland to show the woodland flora where it is unimpeded by browsing. Historical OS maps show many more access and extraction racks scattered throughout the woodland connecting the current main central ride and surrounding roads.

Due to the spread of ash dieback in the region since 2015 much of the dominant ash canopy has been affected. Partial stand collapse has occurred in the ash, with growth and development of overshaded alternative broadleaved species including oak, cherry, birch and other understory species increasing, but the rich understorey of hazel, field maple, elm, willow sp. and hawthorn for example are allowing a lower canopy to develop and function ecologically as a woodland with acceptable amounts of bramble and rich ground flora.

Significance

The wood is a mainly a Plantation on Ancient Woodland (PAWS) site with a small strip of ancient woodland. It has a Local Wildlife Site due to its Ancient Woodland Site status and associated ecology.

Although the Mid Somerset Hills feel fairly wooded, only 5% of the area is covered in woodland and Loxley is the only Ancient Woodland Site within a 5 mile radius, although much of this also includes areas of the Somerset Levels. Past

records show the wood had a very rich invertebrate fauna, particularly those associated with dead wood. It is in a largely agricultural landscape and is large enough to sustain viable populations of woodland species acting as a reservoir for their future spread.

The Woodland Trust's aim is to protect and restore all ancient woodland and the ownership of Loxley Wood helps contribute to this through the use of the site to demonstrate PAWS restoration.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints

Dumping and litter from the users of lay-bys introduce litter and invasive non-native plant species.

Factors Causing Change

- Deer browsing affecting recruitment of natural regeneration, of increased importance in light of pests and diseases, also limiting the success of rotational rideside coppicing to create and maintain transitional habitat
- Squirrel damage preventing some broadleaf trees from reaching maturity, notably of future concern (beyond scope of this plan) given the likely increase of oak (susceptible to squirrel damage) as a canopy tree with the demise of ash.
- Pests and tree diseases – ash dieback and Phytophthora ramorum in larch, leading to a potential stand collapse (ecological functioning) if trees succumb quickly which could also cause a flush of bramble leading to the suppression of natural regeneration of tree and flora species.
- Fly Tipping/litter primarily along the A39 road edge but also around the main entrance.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Ancient Woodland Site - In 50 years' time the PAWS area will have been restored through gradual thinning and selective felling to promote a broadleaved canopy with a diverse structure favouring ancient woodland features and semi-natural flora and vegetation; composition will be largely composed of native and honorary native broadleaved species, although some conifer trees will be retained in reference to the plantation history of the site and to improve long term resilience at no more than 5% canopy cover with no regenerating conifers. The woodland will be managed through a Continuous Cover Forestry based approach to develop and maintain a mixed age and species structure, to promote healthy, species-rich and resilient woodland with a steady accumulation of standing and fallen deadwood. The main ride edges will have a varied structure maintained through 2-zone management. All historic features will remain in good condition and be protected during harvesting operations. Non-native and invasive species will have been controlled, and deer levels will remain low un-impeding regeneration.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

Maintain the area of ASNW in its current condition with maturing trees, a rich shrub layer and small amounts of regeneration, and extensive ASNW ground flora.

As part of holistic silvicultural strategy maintain PAWS restoration programme across cpt 2 using gradual approach to move composition towards a predominantly broadleaved composition, selectively thinning stands by removing approximately 20% basal area across the compartments every 5 years, promoting existing broadleaved trees and remnant features including veteran trees; a proportion of felled timber should be left in situ to create deadwood

habitat.

As part of the above PAWS restoration interventions, ash (as well as larch) will also be targeted for selective thinning to promote other (often suppressed) broadleaved species notably oak. Thinning the ash will also enable retained healthy trees to develop larger canopies providing better growing conditions and vitality, better enabling them to resist ash dieback for as long as possible while providing better natural regeneration opportunities. Trees infected with ash dieback and severe canopy loss will be managed through our tree safety approach where there is public access.

To enhance the quality of transitional woodland habitat, maintain and extend 2-zone ride management across the main ride (between 2a and 2b), extending cyclical cutting and mowing to the main track running N-S.

Deer management will be implemented to reduce the impact of browsing and support natural regeneration processes and ensure success of ride management. Maintain monitoring through deer impact assessments.

4.2 f2 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

Loxley Wood is close to the village of Shapwick approx 1km away, and is located 10km west of Glastonbury. Parking for up to three cars exists in the management gateway from Wood Lane. There are 2 lay-bys on the A39 from which unauthorised access to the wood is obtained by crossing land owned by Somerset County Council. Public access from Wood Lane runs through the central ride running West-East along central track and connects with the public footpath on the eastern boundary to Shapwick Village. A route has now been opened incorporating the main woodland ride and linking with an adjacent footpath, and a circular route can be found along the northern boundary. The main track through the wood is unsurfaced and can be muddy in places, and other informal tracks exist within the wood. All paths throughout the wood are relatively flat.

It lies on a gentle north facing slope of the Polden Hills that rise up from the Somerset Levels, with the popular RSPB Ham Wall and Shapwick Heath NNR approximately a mile north of the wood on the Avalon Marshes.

Significance

Provision of public access and increasing people's enjoyment of woodland is a key aim of the Woodland Trust, and it is furthered by ownership and management of Loxley Wood. The wood is the only open access wood for miles in all directions. A successful fundraising campaign highlighted local interest in opening the wood for public access.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints

The A39 on the southern boundary is a very fast road which may discourage visitors from visiting. Accessing or exiting the wood via this route would not be in the interest of public safety.

Lay-bys along the main road and the small car park on Wood Lane receive some anti-social activity and fly-tipping.

Factors Causing Change

Fly Tipping and litter

Long term Objective (50 years+)

In 50 years' time the importance of the wood as a local recreational resource will have been maintained and improved, so the site is valued by local users and visitors, both as a through route and a recreational and interesting woodland resource in its own right. Access will continue to work towards the Trust's objectives of inspiring everyone to value woods and trees, and appropriate access infrastructure will be installed and maintained to support visitors. The Trust's duty of care to visitors will be addressed through ongoing tree safety, tree health checks, litter picks, management of misuse of the site, and appropriate site risk assessment regimes, which may require remedial works as required.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

The short-term objective is to maintain and improve the site as easily accessible, attractive, well maintained and safe woodland in accordance with access category C. This will be done by:

Main paths are to be cut and maintained as necessary twice each year in June and September, and cleared of litter and obstructions such as fallen branches.

Litter clearance around entrances and parking areas will take place every quarter in March, June, September, and December. Targeting main gate from Wood Lane and both road laybys on A39. Litter pick at least 5m into the wood at each location.

Entrance furniture will be maintained to keep them welcoming and in good condition, and maintained during path cuts to improve access.

Legal responsibilities – Cut along the two roadside edges on West and Southern boundaries with tractor mounted flail or similar. NOTE part of the A39 roadside does not belong to the Trust so please check map carefully.

5. WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
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APPENDIX 1 : COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
1a	0.64	Oak (pedunculate)		High forest	Archaeological features	County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc), Planted Ancient Woodland Site
A thin roadside strip of mature pedunculate oak over a hazel understorey. Occasional ash, sycamore and horse chestnut. Rich ground flora including wood anemone, yellow archangel, early purple and common spotted orchids. (reduced in 2017 to cover only the ASNW area to the east of the strip).						
2a	12.98	Ash	1967	High forest	Archaeological features	County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc), Planted Ancient Woodland Site
Naturally regenerated ash with P67 larch and Norway spruce. Conifers were thinned 2002/4 resulting in over 50% semi-natural composition of ash over hazel coppice. Scattered regeneration of oak, field maple and woody shrubs including hazel, dogwood, wild privet, honeysuckle and spindle, and ground flora including wood anemone, yellow archangel. Bounded on northern edge by margin of more natural vegetation including ash, field maple, scattered oak and woody shrubs of a wide range of ages including some very old individual trees. Rich flora along main ride inc early purple, common spotted and butterfly orchids, and wood millet.						
2b	7.55	European larch	1967	High forest		
Northern section above ride. Ash, larch and spruce, occasional oak, elm, field maple, hawthorn and hazel. Bounded on northern edge by bank and old hedgerow margin of ash, field maple, scattered oak and woody shrubs of a wide range of ages including some old, mature individual trees. Rich flora along main ride inc early purple, common spotted and butterfly orchids, and wood millet. There are two small ponds on the northern boundary.						

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:

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