

# Top Ardles Wood

## (Plan period – 2023 to 2028)



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](http://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](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk)

or contact the Woodland Trust

[operations@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto: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

### Top Ardles Wood

Location:	Ravensthorpe Grid reference: SP673705 OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 141
Area:	4.79 hectares (11.84 acres)
External Designations:	Special Landscape Area, Tree Preservation Order
Internal Designations:	Woods on Your Doorstep

## 2. SITE DESCRIPTION

Top Ardles Wood was planted up as native broadleaved woodland in November 2000 by volunteers and contractors as part of the Woodland Trust's Millennium projects "Woods on Your Doorstep". The site is an undulating ex-arable site offering notable views of the nearby Ravensthorpe reservoir. The varied topography of the site provides further interest, such as wet flushes and sloping ground

Mature hedgerows runs along the western, northern and eastern boundaries. Some of these have been previously laid using traditional techniques, whereas others will be retained as tall bushy features.

The site was sown in August 2000 with a low maintenance grass mix and the following trees species were then planted: Oak, Ash, Field maple, Hornbeam, woody shrubs along the path edges and woodland margins (Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Hazel, Guelder rose, Spindle and Damson) with a few Small-leaved lime, Silver birch, Scot's pine (in groves on the higher ground) and Crab apple at a density of 2250 per hectare and planted with 30 - 45cm transplants in sleeves and shrub shelters. An older mature broadleaved plantation woodland abuts the site to the east.

0.5 hectares of hazel and osiers have been planted to be managed as coppice and part of the southern end of the site is maintained as open grassland in order to retain the notable views of the reservoir.

Access from the recreation ground is along an 8-metre-wide strip of land along the field edge to the site. This strip is marked with stock proof fencing along with the southern boundary. Grassy paths have been created within the site giving the visitor a choice of circular routes around the wood. Welcome signs and an information board have been erected at the main entrance. Car parking is available in the recreation ground car park, although the gates are not always open.

The name 'Top Ardles Wood' has been chosen locally and refers to the old field name for the site.

Key features for the site include Informal Public Access, New Native Woodland, Semi-natural Open Ground Habitat and Landscape Value, as briefly outlined above and further information for which can be found in section 5.0: Key Features.

### 3. LONG TERM POLICY

The Trust's corporate objective of increasing new native woodland has been achieved by the establishment of broadleaved woodland on this site.

In the long term the main body of the woodland will be managed as high forest. The small area of Hazel/willow coppice will be managed on a traditional coppice rotation (<3yrs Osier and <10yrs hazel) to retain the view and to provide produce for use, if required. A silvicultural thin will also likely be deemed appropriate for the rest of the matrix, following an inventory/mensuration of the site and to improve tree development, promote regeneration and potentially improve safety (through the promotion of more robust trees).

Appropriate levels of public access will be maintained by management of the paths and path edge trees. Signs, seats and the information boards will be kept clear and visible. An area at the southern end of the wood will be managed as open grassland in order to retain site of the reservoir from view points from that end of the site

Over the wood as a whole there will be three elements:- high forest, coppice woodland and open grassland. In the long term a proportion of deadwood will be retained on the site.

## 4. KEY FEATURES

### 4.1 f1 Informal Public Access

Description
<p>Top Ardles Wood has been planted up as part of The Trust's 'Woods on your Doorstep' project. Local people were involved in the fundraising, design and planting.</p> <p>The site is easily accessible from the village.</p> <p>Paths have been created throughout the site and they will be maintained as grassy rides. The large area of open grassland will be cut annually.</p> <p>Welcome signs and an information board have been erected at the main entrance.</p>
Significance
<p>As a Wood On Your Doorstep site, it is important site in an area of relatively little publicly accessible open space, consisting of semi natural habitat</p>
Opportunities & Constraints
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>Being so accessible to the local population there is an opportunity to involve the public in the ongoing management of the wood especially with coppicing, as well as community groups such as schools.</p> <p><b>Constraints</b></p> <p>High numbers of people and dogs using the site could have a detrimental impact on local wildlife.</p> <p>Paths become very wet in areas during winter</p>
Factors Causing Change
<p>Ride-side vegetation encroaching rides and paths.</p> <p>Increased public use causing further impacts.</p>
Long term Objective (50 years+)
<p>An established broadleaved woodland with informal public access.</p>
Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)
<p>Ensure the site is signposted from the car park.</p> <p>Cut grass paths regularly to maintain open path network (minimum of 2m width).</p> <p>Manage ride side vegetation as necessary to prevent encroachment hindering public access and maintain levels of</p>



public access for a category C site.  
Monitor impacts of public use.

#### 4.2 f2 New Native Woodland

<b>Description</b>
The site was planted up as a native broadleaved woodland in November 2000 using species in keeping with the area. Mostly ash, oak and field maple.
<b>Significance</b>
Increasing new native woodland is one of The Woodland Trust's key objectives, especially in an area of relatively low woodland cover.
<b>Opportunities &amp; Constraints</b>
Opportunities: Creation of a new native woodland with diverse species and structure.  Constraints: 'Chalara' ash dieback is present among the ash population and has resulted in the deterioration of ash trees on the site. Squirrel bark stripping is abundant and has the potential to significantly hinder the development of healthy broadleaf trees. The woodland's small size may prove a challenge when instructing woodland management tasks such as thinning.
<b>Factors Causing Change</b>
'Chalara' ash dieback is the most prominent factor causing change. The progression of this fungal disease and its impact on the woodland's ash trees, has the potential to significantly alter the woodland canopy composition. Squirrel bark stripping should also be recognized as a factor for causing change, as this has the potential to restrict the development of broadleaf trees. Without thinning, trees will be too congested and grow poorly.
<b>Long term Objective (50 years+)</b>
Establishment of a native broadleaved woodland with a varied structure and species mixture.
<b>Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)</b>
Instigate a program of selective thinning to target the removal of ash infected with 'Chalara' & also to release the canopy from internal competition. Thinning should retain better formed trees where appropriate. Coppice established areas of hazel & osier. Hazel = 10-year rotation. Osier = 3-year rotation. Monitor grey squirrel population impacts and potentially control. Undertake regular tree safety surveys and complete recommended works.

#### 4.3 f3 Landscape Value

<b>Description</b>
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The woodland held picturesque views across the Ravensthorpe reservoir to the north-east from several points in the wood. The reservoir is a very important landscape feature and management operations should be based around this consideration.
<b>Significance</b>
Retention of views and consideration for the landscape are extremely important at this woodland. Establishment funds would not have been forthcoming if the WT had not agreed to incorporate the views into the design.
<b>Opportunities &amp; Constraints</b>
<p><b>Opportunities</b> As the woodland matures, it may act to enhance the retained views through framing and definition via retained vistas.</p> <p><b>Constraints</b> Certain viewpoints will be lost as the wood matures.</p>
<b>Factors Causing Change</b>
Views destined to be maintained, blocked as woodland matures in age or coppice rotations lapse.
<b>Long term Objective (50 years+)</b>
Views of Ravensthorpe reservoir maintained from seat on edge of recreation ground, Kildonan House and at points along the main ride within the woodland.
<b>Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)</b>
<p>Coppice hazel and osiers on approximately a suitable rotation to maintain views and create traditional coppice habitat</p> <p>Maintain open grassland area by cutting at least annually.</p> <p>Maintain ride edge vegetation through rotational coppicing to maintain views from within the woodland &amp; prevent encroachment on pathways.</p> <p>Target specimens blocking the views during thinning operations.</p> <p>Cut hedge along access route to allow Kildonan House views of the reservoir.</p>

#### 4.4 f4 Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat

<b>Description</b>
The open ground habitat within the woodland consists of an area of improved grassland and a network of connected woodland rides.
<b>Significance</b>
The woodland's open ground offers a variation in habitat type and supports the site in providing home and forage to a variety of species. It is significant to local wildlife and to the general public who visit
<b>Opportunities &amp; Constraints</b>
Opportunities: Open space provides a home to a variety of wildlife and if managed appropriately, could increase levels of biodiversity through recruitment of less generalist species. Open space within the woodland has the potential to

encourage further usage for public recreation.

Constraints: High frequency of use by people and dogs could be detrimental to wildlife through disturbance.

**Factors Causing Change**

Lapsed management resulting in succession to scrub woodland could alter the habitat type resulting in the loss of species diversity.

**Long term Objective (50 years+)**

Open space to be maintained as grassland in perpetuity

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

Annual cut & collect of arisings in wider grassland.

Annual mow of grassland ride network.

Cyclical cutting of ride side vegetation to provide variation in woodland structure and promote edge habitat.

Removal of ragwort.

## 5. WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
2023	WC - Site Maintenance	Works associated with routine site management and maintenance works on Woodland Creation sites such as boundary ditches and fencing works , hedge trimming etc	February
2022	AW - Management Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of management access infrastructure and tracks Such as repairs to vehicle entrance points, maintaining vehicle bridges and repairing / reinstating surfaced management access routes.	March
2023	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
2023	WMM - Coppice Management	Works associated with the management of coppice areas – such as coppicing, maintenance of protective fencing, etc	December
2024	WMM - Coppice Management	Works associated with the management of coppice areas – such as coppicing, maintenance of protective fencing, etc	February
2024	SL - Tree Safety Works - Zone B	Work associated with planned tree safety works alongside routes such as paths and rides within the woodland	February
2024	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,	July
2024	AW - Visitor Access Infrastructure	Works associated with the construction of a new or extension to existing car parking facilities.	August
2024	WMM - Coppice Management	Works associated with the management of coppice areas – such as coppicing, maintenance of protective fencing, etc	December
2025	WMM - Coppice Management	Works associated with the management of coppice areas – such as coppicing, maintenance of protective fencing, etc	December
2025	WMM - Ride Management	Works associated with the management of existing rides/open areas for biodiversity - ride edge coppicing and thinning programmes, ditch works	December
2025	WMM - Coppice Management	Works associated with the management of coppice areas – such as coppicing, maintenance of protective fencing, etc	December

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
2026	WMM - Coppice Management	Works associated with the management of coppice areas – such as coppicing, maintenance of protective fencing, etc	December
2026	WMM - General Site Management	Works associated with maintaining conservation and physical features within the sites such as boundary ditches, fences and walls, hedges,	December
2026	WMM - Ride Management	Works associated with the management of existing rides/open areas for biodiversity - ride edge coppicing and thinning programmes, ditch works	December
2027	WMM - Ride Management	Works associated with the management of existing rides/open areas for biodiversity - ride edge coppicing and thinning programmes, ditch works	December
2027	WMM - Coppice Management	Works associated with the management of coppice areas – such as coppicing, maintenance of protective fencing, etc	December

## APPENDIX 1 : COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
1a	4.22	Ash	2000	High forest		
<p>The compartment was an undulating arable field that was sown with a low maintenance grass seed mix in August 2000. Planted up as a native broadleaved woodland using the following species: oak, ash, field maple, hornbeam, small-leaved lime, silver birch, crab apple, scot's pine and woody shrubs (hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, guelder rose, spindle and damson). 30 - 45cm transplants were used in sleeves and shrubshelters at a density of 2250 per hectare. The shrubs planted along the ride edges and woodland margins. The scot's pine planted in 3 groups on the higher ground to reflect the surrounding historic planting in the landscape.</p>						
1b	0.5	Hazel	2000	Coppice		
<p>An area of hazel (0.3ha) and osier (0.2ha) coppice. <i>Salix viminalis</i> has been planted on the wetter lower ground.</p>						

**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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