

# Diggers 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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4. Key Features
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GLOSSARY

## 1. SITE DETAILS

### **Diggers Wood**

Location:	Shipton Under Wychwood Grid reference: SP270172 OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 163
Area:	2.48 hectares (6.13 acres)
External Designations:	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Internal Designations:	Woods on Your Doorstep

## 2. SITE DESCRIPTION

Diggers Wood is a 2.53 ha (6.25 acre) site which was acquired in 1999 through the Woodland Trust's 'Woods on Your Doorstep' project. The site is situated within the ancient Wychwood hunting forest area in the Oxfordshire Cotswolds AONB between the villages of Shipton under Wychwood 0.8km (0.5 miles) and Milton under Wychwood 1.2km (0.75 miles).

The Cotswolds National Landscape is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It is made up of 204,270 hectares spanning six counties, the largest of 46 AONB's in the UK. The landscape type is characterised by a high limestone plateau with a distinctive elevated and exposed character, broad skies and long distance views. Large scale arable fields dominate the landscape, with some medium-sized plantations partially obscuring the otherwise open views.

The soils are defined as shallow lime-rich soils over chalk or limestone, providing suitable habitat for beech hangers and other lime-rich woodlands.

Prior to planting the site was a low-grade arable field. Further back in history in Norman times, the Royal Forest of Wychwood covered much of West Oxfordshire. Tree planting on the site took place with considerable financial and physical support from the local community in 2000, with a mix of native trees and shrubs including oak, ash, field maple, wild cherry and wild service trees.

There are several paths through the site, some of which have glades alongside with wildflowers, planted originally by the local community.

The site has a northerly aspect looking towards the two villages. Although the site is relatively small it does offer a quiet short walk in a scenic landscape, and it is well connected to the surroundings by public rights of way.

The Woodland Trust has given the site a category C for access (Low usage site where we do maintain paths).

On the other side of Dog Kennel Lane from the wood is 'Wychwood wild garden', which is a community owned site with woodland and ponds.

### 3. LONG TERM POLICY

The long term intentions for Diggers Wood are focused on retaining and where possible improving woodland biodiversity and increasing people's understanding and enjoyment of woodland.

The woodland will, through light silvicultural intervention, be managed where necessary to deal with tree disease and improve conditions for selected retained specimens. Rides will be retained to increase structural diversity.

The woodland will always remain safe and open for people to enjoy in an informal way. This will be achieved through a managed path and entrance network and regular safety inspections of site infrastructure and of higher risk tree zones. Parts of the path network will also contain small sunny glades for visitors to enjoy the variety of habitats and wildlife the wood has to offer.

## 4. KEY FEATURES

### 4.1 F1 Secondary Woodland

<b>Description</b>
<p>A 2.53ha compartment covering the entire site comprising native broadleaved trees planted in 2000 at a rate of 1100 / ha (3m x 3m spacing)</p> <p>Existing small pockets of woodland lie close by connected by hedgerows. A small woodland is also connected directly at the south-eastern corner. To the north the stone track and public right of way, Dog Kennel Lane, borders the frontage and main entrance, and the remaining surrounding landscape is a mixture of arable and pastureland.</p> <p>The major species mix is approximately 30% oak, 10% ash, 15% field maple, 10% hazel, 15% goat willow, with a minor components of hawthorn, dogwood, wild cherry, small leaved lime, crab apple and wayfaring tree. There are also shrub species such as guilder rose, dog rose and spindle.</p> <p>There are paths and open glades (comprising 20% of the site) with wildflowers originally planted by the local community, including ragged robin, vetch, scabious, toadflax, primroses, bluebells, snowdrops and aconites, though these species are now uncommon/absent.</p> <p>The woodland has developed well, with canopy closure in many places.</p>
<b>Significance</b>
<p>New woodlands help absorb CO2 from the atmosphere, protect soils from erosion, create future wood fuel supplies, improve health and well-being, encourage wildlife and build resilience against pests and diseases while improving biodiversity.</p> <p>The creation of this woodland has helped increase the amount of new native woodland cover in an area where historically woodland cover would have been much greater.</p>
<b>Opportunities &amp; Constraints</b>
<p>Opportunities:</p> <p>Constraints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The lane leading to the woodland is narrow and un-surfaced with encroaching vegetation making management access difficult.</li></ul>



- Deer are present on site and browsing is evident. Squirrels continue to damage many of the tree species. Site not suitable for deer or squirrel control due to size and visitor pressure.

#### **Factors Causing Change**

- Death of ash due to colonisation of ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*)
- Herbivore damage at ground and canopy level (deer, rabbits, squirrels)
- Climate change including an increase in draught conditions will cause additional stress to trees.

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

In the long term Diggers Wood will be a resilient mixed native species woodland.

A variety of habitats will be present including;

- Uneven aged trees with a good dead wood component including both standing and on the ground.
- Permanent and temporary open space consisting of rides and glades with rotational coppice and shrub management. A diverse range of flora will be present in these habitats.
- The colonisation by ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) has affected ash trees on site and will change the species composition of the wood. Where necessary for visitor safety, ash trees will be felled and left as dead wood. Natural regeneration will be favoured over replanting.

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

Diggers Wood will be managed to maintain and improve conditions for continued healthy tree colonisation, and to diversify habitat and tree age where possible.

- Ride and glade management. Cut approx. 700m of rides and 6 glades. Operations planned twice a year for the duration of the plan period .
- A full woodland condition assessment will be carried out in 2027 to inform the next management plan review.

## **4.2 F2 Connecting People with woods & trees**

### **Description**

Diggers Wood is located 0.5km (0.3 miles) from Shipton-Under-Wychwood (population 1,244 - 2011 census), and Milton-under-Wychwood (population 1,648 - 2011 census).

The site is linked by a public footpath called Dog Kennel Lane to Shipton and Milton.

Three seats located at path junctions give suitable rest stops.

Within the site, two legal footpaths run north/south across the site. One passes from the north west corner in a south easterly direction, the second path passes from the north eastern corner in a south westerly direction and both exit mid-point on the southern boundary. A circular route permissive path and another linking the two footpaths combine to comprise in total some 775m of managed paths.

Wychwood Wild Garden is 200m east along the lane, which is owned and managed by the local community. It comprises 5Ha (12.5) acres of avenues, woods and ponds much of which was laid out in the 1860's.

The Cotswold Wardens have been actively involved at the site and there is an opportunity to maintain and enhance this relationship to assist in managing the habitats.

Wychwood Church Of England Primary School is located 1.8km (1.1 miles) away and Diggers could therefore provide an opportunity for engagement with local children.

### **Significance**

- Diggers Wood offers a place of peace and tranquility to local residents and visitors to the area.

### **Opportunities & Constraints**

Opportunities:

- To work with conservation organisations as a means of accessing practical volunteer effort
- Good access to wider countryside public rights of way.

Constraints:

- The woodland paths can become muddy in places, making access difficult
- Ash dieback

### **Factors Causing Change**

- Loss of open space biodiversity due to encroachment of scrub and broadening tree canopies.
- Visual changes as woodland matures, changing visitor experience.

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

- Informal public access will be provided at the wood.
- To continue to maintain access for visitors on foot along permissive routes and public footpaths.
- The site should be accessible and safe but not over-managed with excessive infrastructure and signage.
- Volunteers will be actively engaged with the management of Diggers Wood, carry out all practical management

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

Diggers Wood will be kept open and accessible for visitors all year round by;

- Tree safety inspection of Zone B biennially.
- Entrance infrastructure will be inspected at the mid-point of the plan (2025) with any remedial work undertaken as necessary
- Engage with Cotswold Wardens and their volunteers.

## 5. WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
2023	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
2023	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
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,	October
2024	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.	October
2025	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
2025	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,	October
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,	July
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,	October
2027	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing	July

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
		pot-holes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc,	
2027	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,	October

## APPENDIX 1 : COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
1a	2.53	Oak (pedunculate)	2000	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
<p>A 2.53ha / 6.25 acre compartment covering the entire site comprising native broadleaved trees planted in 2000 at a rate of 1100 / ha (3m x 3m spacing)</p> <p>The major species mix is approximately 25% oak, 10% ash, 15% field maple, 15% hazel, 15% goat willow, with a minor components of hawthorn, dogwood, goat willow, wild cherry, small leaved lime, crab apple and wayfaring tree. There are also shrub species such as guilder rose, dog rose and spindle. There are paths and open glades comprising 20% of the site.</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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