



# Gault Wood

## Management Plan 2016-2021

---

## MANAGEMENT PLAN - CONTENTS PAGE

### ITEM

### Page No.

Introduction

Plan review and updating

Woodland Management Approach

Summary

1.0 Site details

2.0 Site description

2.1 Summary Description

2.2 Extended Description

3.0 Public access information

3.1 Getting there

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 Long term policy

5.0 Key Features

5.1 Secondary Woodland

5.2 Community Woodland Group

5.3 Informal Public Access

6.0 Work Programme

Appendix 1: Compartment descriptions

Glossary

### MAPS

Access

Conservation Features

Management

## THE WOODLAND TRUST

### INTRODUCTION

The Trust's corporate aims and management approach guide the management of all the Trust's properties, and are described on Page 4. These determine basic management policies and methods, which apply to all sites unless specifically stated otherwise. Such policies include free public access; keeping local people informed of major proposed work; the retention of old trees and dead wood; and a desire for management to be as unobtrusive as possible. The Trust also has available Policy Statements covering a variety of woodland management issues.

The Trust's management plans are based on the identification of Key Features for the site and setting objectives for their management. A monitoring programme (not included in this plan) ensures that these objectives are met and any necessary management works are carried out.

Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

### PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATING

The information presented in this Management plan is held in a database which is continuously being amended and updated on our website. Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations. Please either consult The Woodland Trust website [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk) or contact the Woodland Trust ([wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk)) to confirm details of the current management programme.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and a summary of monitoring results can be obtained on request.

---

## WOODLAND MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The management of our woods is based on our charitable purposes, and is therefore focused on improving woodland biodiversity and increasing peoples' understanding and enjoyment of woodland. Our strategic aims are to:

- Protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future
- Work with others to create more native woodlands and places rich in trees
- Inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees

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.

In addition to the guidelines below we have specific guidance and policies on issues of woodland management which we review and update from time to time.

We recognise that all woods are different and that the management of our sites should also reflect their local landscape and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives. Guidelines like these provide a necessary overarching framework to guide the management of our sites but such management also requires decisions based on local circumstances and our Site Manager's intimate knowledge of each site.

The following guidelines help to direct our woodland management:

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.
2. We establish new native woodland using both natural regeneration and tree planting, but largely the latter, 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.
4. The long term vision for our non-native plantations on 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 heritage and cultural value of sites is taken into account in our management and, in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.
7. Woods can offer the potential to generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We will therefore consider the potential 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 allow our woods to be used to support 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. In particular we will develop and maintain a network of long-term monitoring sites across the estate.
10. Any activities we undertake will conform to sustainable forest management principles, be appropriate for the site and will be balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

---

## SUMMARY

This public management plan briefly describes the site, specifically mentions information on public access, sets out the long term policy and lists the Key Features which drive management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site - their significance is outlined together with their long (50 year+) and short (5 year) term objectives. The short term objectives are complemented by a detailed Work Programme for the period of this management plan. Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. A short glossary of technical terms is at the end. The Key Features and general woodland condition of this site are subject to a formal monitoring programme which is maintained in a central database. A summary of monitoring results is available on request.

## 1.0 SITE DETAILS

<b>Site name:</b>	Gault Wood
<b>Location:</b>	March
<b>Grid reference:</b>	TL399945, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 143
<b>Area:</b>	6.47 hectares (15.99 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Cambridgeshire Woodland Fund

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

Gault Wood was planted in 1994 and is owned by the Woodland Trust. It has a well maintained entrance, two pond areas, a number of open grass areas as well as wooded areas. It is located close to March and is surrounded by intensive flat arable agricultural land in the Fens. As a result it is a haven for wildlife. Wildlife is managed by March and District Woodland Group. There are many benches to rest weary legs and to sit and enjoy the peace and birdsong.

## 2.2 Extended Description

Gault Wood was planted on an arable field between December 1994 and February 1996 entirely by volunteers, (The friends of Gault Wood) as part of the Cambridgeshire Woodland Fund project. Within the planting there is an artificial badger set which was constructed using the spoil from the new pond that was dug in 1995. Sadly, it has yet to be inhabited by badgers. The pond however has proved to be a significant habitat for local wildlife with water vole being recorded in residence since 2001. Another, larger, pond was dug in 2004 as the original pond was prone to excessive drying out.

The wood is situated in the heart of the Fenland just on the edge of the clay island that the town of March developed on. The surrounding landscape is predominately intensively managed arable with little obvious wildlife interest. There is some less intensively managed land to the south where a golf course has been developed and some of the surrounding arable is under set aside. Gault Bank, after which the wood is named, forms the southern boundary of the wood this bank and deep ditch is ancient in origin and has a line of veteran willow pollards planted along it.

The wood is connected into the public rights of way network and has a small grass surface car park, which closed during the winter to prevent surface damage or cars becoming stuck.

A true community woodland, the bulk of the day to day management is carried out by Gault Woodland Group (volunteers), who also run a series of low-key events throughout the year.

The key features of the site are:

- Secondary woodland
- Community Woodland Group
- Informal Public Access

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

Access to the wood is via Grange rd just off the A 414 to the west of March Town. A public bridleway runs along the southern edge of the wood (Gault Bank). There is a woodland Trust car park on site. The paths are level and although unsurfaced are in good condition. A pedestrian gate leads off the car park.

The nearest public toilets are in the town of March, 1km to the east, on Broad Street March. 7.30am to 5.00pm with disabled facilities.

Access to the site via public transport is by the regular bus service though the main street of March, although you would then have to walk 2km west and then cross the busy A414. For times and routes contact Travel line on [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk) or 08712002233

### 3.2 Access / Walks

## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

In 50 years, Gault wood will be a, emerging high forest, with complexity of structure, diversity of species and strong community ties. Resilient in the face of climate change, the site will continue to benefit from the practical conservation work of local people as it develops as a space for nature. But also remain a valued and regularly visited community space for quite informal recreation.

Paths will be safe, inviting and easy to follow, with signage and infrastructure maintained to a good standard at all times.

Non-woodland habitats, such as ponds and open areas, will be maintained where practicable in favour of species diversity and to add complexity of structure to the ecosystem.

## 5.0 KEY FEATURES

The Key Features of the site are identified and described below. They encapsulate what is important about the site. The short and long-term objectives are stated and any management necessary to maintain and improve the Key Feature.

### 5.1 Secondary Woodland

#### Description

Young, native broadleaf plantation woodland. Closed canopy and with an average top height of over 6m. The use of a wide range of tree and shrub species has aided the woods development. The wood is primarily oak, ash but there are another 11 tree species and 10 shrub species planted, giving a significant amount of scrub habitat on the wide ride margins. In addition there is a well established wildlife pond, an artificial badger set and large areas of grassland managed for wildlife. A second pond was dug in 2004 as the first was prone to drying out.

#### Significance

The wood is the largest area of semi natural habitat in the immediate locality. This part of Cambridgeshire is one of the least wooded districts in the country.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

##### Constraints

- A relatively small area
- Intensive arable management on three sides (significant "edge effects")
- Island habitat /Isolated from other woodland

##### Opportunities

- The drains, and hedgerows, which form boundaries, already act as wildlife havens for common species. This could be extended and buffered in surrounding farmland to create greater permeability for wildlife through the landscape.
- A possible breeding site for the endangered water vole.

#### Factors Causing Change

- Climate change - new pests and diseases.
- Natural Succession open water to wetland
- Mammal damage (deer, rabbits, hare, vole, squirrel, etc.)

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

Broadleaved high forest with a variety of species and ages of trees, to include old and over mature, dead wood lying and fallen as well as young seedlings and saplings . The wood to include the range of other habitat types in roughly the same proportions as exist at present.

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



A lighter management touch is desirable on this small site as it develops. Parts of the wood have been recently thinned to waste (using hand tools) to encourage structural diversity. This has created a substantial fallen deadwood habitat, which is good for the great crested newts thought to be on site, but does look "untidy" in places. The trees are currently well spaced for their growth stage and thinning should not be continued in the short term to allow for the effects of Chalara to be appreciated and prevent unintentional canopy loss in stands with higher percentages of ash. Biennial inspection by site manager in summer to monitor ash decline. Identify deadwood liability/ safety risks, and monitor mammal damage to natural regeneration. Tree Protection and/or mammal control to be considered dependent on findings.

Small scale coppicing on the wood edges and on internal rides, however, should continue to ensure open conditions remain between 15% and 25% of the site area, and rides are no narrower than 4m full width.

The main pond glade and the rides are to be cut once every year in August, with cuttings removed if possible. Open water on ponds should be maintained where practicable, though edges and sides should not be deeper than 2m below ground level, if it is necessary to exceed this depth, a natural pond will not be deemed viable. However liners may be considered if there is significant environmental benefit to be gained/ maintained. (e.g. breeding water vole)

## 5.2 Community Woodland Group

### Description

The wood was created due to the efforts of the local community in March. From the original action group Friends of Gault Wood was formed which is now part of the March Wildlife Group who also manage a number of smaller areas of semi natural habitat in and around the town.

### Significance

The group is the driving force behind the existence of the wood. Members of the group warden the site, carry out important maintenance works and biological recording on the site on a regular basis.

### Opportunities & Constraints

#### Opportunities:

An active environmental group in a very intensively use landscape that can act as a catalyst for further similar projects

#### Constraints:

Increased skill level and training required as trees become larger. (H&S restrictions of volunteer operations)

### Factors Causing Change

Loss of Key members

Fluctuations in work party turnout

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

There is continued community involvement as the wood matures and develops. That the group take on as much of the management responsibility for the site in the long term as they feel confident in handling

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

To maintain community involvement and development within Gault wood. Works identified in KF 1 & 3 to be undertaken by the group wherever possible and safe.

Work programme to be set annually between site manager and Community group.

### 5.3 Informal Public Access

#### Description

Gault Wood was planted up as part of the Trust's Cambridgeshire Woodland Fund project. Within walking distance of the town of March it is accessible from Grange Rd and Gault bank public bridleway. The wood is well used for quiet enjoyment with a large car park integrated into the design

#### Significance

The wood was very much a product of the local communities interest to create local woodland and has proved a great success. There is very little woodland of any kind in the locality, the nearest woods 10kms away. The nearest semi natural woodland is 16km away to the west. There is no woodland open for public access within 10km's.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

##### Constraints

Residents of March have to cross a busy highway and walk a couple of kilometres to reach the wood

##### Opportunities

The wood paths are linked in with parish public rights of way system, the linking drove is hard surfaced It is level enough for wheeled access in good weather

It is quiet and has excellent views of the surrounding fen landscape

#### Factors Causing Change

Vegetation growth restricting access.

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

Enhance public access so that visitors to the site enjoy the experience.

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

To maintain site as an area of public open access, with ride system cut to a minimum of 2m at least 3 times during the growing season to allow unhindered access for the public. Areas of open space will not allowed to scrub up with natural regeneration, with annual mowing in august (see KF1).

Entrances kept in a presentable and tidy condition in line with latest WT brand / standards.

---

## 6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By
------	--------------	-------------	--------

## APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	6.50	Ash	1994	High forest		Community Woodland Group, Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	Cambridgeshire Woodland Fund

New native woodland planted on arable land between December 1994 and March 1996, primarily an oak, ash, field maple woodland with alder and willow in the lower lying areas and a shrub component of hawthorn, hazel, blackthorn and dogwood. There are however a number of other species in the mix including crab apple, large and small leaved lime, Scots pine, white willow, wayfaring tree, goat willow, guelder rose, holly and spindle. In addition there is a millennium Yew and approximately 70 disease resistant Elm's. The compartment has an overhead power line cutting across it from NE to south this is a very wide grassy ride maintained under an annual hay cutting regime, a hay cut is also taken from the circular ride that runs around the centre of the wood and from the large glade in the SW of the wood centred on the pond that was created in July of 1995. The spoil from this pond was used to bank up an artificial badger sett in the wood. No badgers have ever been recorded in the wood but many other species of wildlife have been noted including the protected and declining water vole and breeding grass snake. A large car park is located in the SE corner of the wood surrounded by banks and hedges. There are several seats and benches scattered around the path network.

## GLOSSARY

### **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. Either by hand cutting or with carefully selected weed killers such as glyphosate.

## **Windblow/Windthrow**

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