



**Alex Wood**

**Management Plan  
2018-2023**

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## MANAGEMENT PLAN - CONTENTS PAGE

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
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 Natural Secondary Woodland	
5.2 Informal Public Access	
6.0 Work Programme	
Appendix 1: Compartment descriptions	
Glossary	
<b>MAPS</b>	
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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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.

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## 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.

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## 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>	Alex Wood
<b>Location:</b>	Ormskirk
<b>Grid reference:</b>	SD445093, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 108
<b>Area:</b>	0.68 hectares (1.68 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Green Belt

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Summary Description

This tiny wood has few visitors, but those who make the effort clearly enjoy it. It has only one entrance, on Cranes Lane, and consists of a long, thin track leading to a small area of mature broadleaf woodland.

## 2.2 Extended Description

Alex Wood is located in a rural, intensively cultivated arable part of Lancashire, halfway along a track that is used mainly to access local houses. To the south is a house and garden, and to the west, north and east are arable fields. Concentrations of both ancient woodland and secondary woodland are low in West Lancashire. The site is on Cranes Lane which is a long, poorly surfaced un-metalled private road and also a public footpath. It is possible to drive to the wood's entrance with a car, with care, otherwise park when just turning into the Lane, and walk. Cranes Lane connects with the public highways of Castle Lane to the west, and Hall Lane to the east. The shortest route is from Hall Lane, which is the B5240 between Ring o' Bells and Blaguegate. Halfway between these two hamlets, Cranes Lane (which is signposted) leads directly westwards. Follow this for about mile, when woodland appears on both sides. Alex Wood is on the right hand (north) side, just beyond a house.

The land the wood occupies is flat in nature and contains a small seasonal pond; the soil is shallow glaciofluvial deposits overlying reddish till.

The mature trees are even-aged, predominantly sycamore with a few oak. There is one very old oak and one large hybrid black poplar. The under storey is quite dense in places, and consists of elder, hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel and regeneration of elm and rhododendron. There is a scattering of younger trees, planted in 1988 which are ash, silver birch, cherry, rowan and hazel. On acquisition the wood also contained several mature elm but these died from Dutch elm disease. Flora found within Alex Wood includes Red Campion, Creeping Buttercup, Ivy, Cleavers and Broad Buckler Fern.

Management access to the site is poor due to the fact that the path is often wet and not suitable for use with mechanised equipment such as diggers or chippers. There is joint responsibility for the boundaries, which are hedges, to the east and west. All other boundaries are Woodland Trust responsibility.

The site was gifted to the Woodland Trust in two parts, in 1985 and 1991 by Miss Nancy Wiggins; a neighbour (now deceased). Little is known about the woodlands history prior to Woodland Trust ownership; it's highly likely that the woodland was planted for game cover.

The Woodland has two key features Informal Public Access and Secondary Woodland. It also contains one very old oak tree which is a conservation feature of the site and a seasonal pond.

Public Access is via a squeeze stile at the entrance, there is also a management gate and Woodland Trust sign. From this a track leads to the wood. The wood only has this one entrance, and no real paths around it, as it is visited infrequently, by local people. Despite its small size the wood is well known locally and local people have been interested and helpful in caring for it. Alex Wood functions mainly as a landscape feature and wildlife refuge in the very flat and intensively farmed landscape, and has very few visitors actually going into the wood. However, those that do clearly enjoy it. Together with other very small woods it gives the impression of a more wooded landscape.

## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

Alex Wood is on Cranes Lane which is a long, poorly surfaced un-metalled private road and also a public footpath. It is possible to drive to the wood's entrance with a car, with care, otherwise park when just turning into the Lane, and walk. Cranes Lane connects with the public highways of Castle Lane to the west, and Hall Lane to the east. The shortest route is from Hall Lane, which is the B5240 between Ring o' Bells and Blaguegate. Halfway between these two hamlets, Cranes Lane (which is signposted) leads directly westwards. Follow this for about ½ mile, when woodland appears on both sides. Alex Wood is on the right hand (north) side, just beyond a house. There is gate, squeeze stile and Woodland Trust sign at the entrance. From this a track leads to the wood. The wood only has this one entrance and a grassed management track/path. The woodland itself has no marked paths around it.

Parking is available on Cranes Lane but may be limited.

Nearest public toilet: No public toilets are known to be located within 5 miles of the site.

Nearest bus stop: Located at Westhead, opposite Castle Lane which is approximately 1 mile from the wood. Further information about public transport is available from Traveline- [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk) or phone 0870 608 2 608

### 3.2 Access / Walks

## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Alex Wood will be allowed to grow and develop naturally, as a refuge for wildlife. The wood will be managed as high forest of mixed broadleaves, including non-native trees common to the local area. It will be managed predominantly as a landscape and conservation feature, through minimal intervention. Gaps will be created in the canopy due to senescence and tree safety operations.

The old oak will be retained and conserved as it is becoming a veteran tree. If unsafe, tree surgery should be considered rather than felling. Halo thinning around it may also be necessary to maintain sufficient light.

Low key public access will continue to be provided at a level which is appropriate for a small quiet woodland.

Statutory obligations will continue to be met with respect to managing tree safety and ensuring public access via the permissive path.



## 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 Natural Secondary Woodland

#### Description

Mature broadleaved woodland on land that is virtually flat, very sandy, and poorly drained. It is in a rural, intensively cultivated arable part of Lancashire, halfway along a track that is used mainly to access local houses. To the south is a house and garden, and to the west, north and east are arable fields. The mature trees are even-aged, predominantly sycamore with a few oak. There is one very old oak and one large hybrid black poplar. The understorey is quite dense in places, and consists of elder, hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel and regeneration of elm. There is a scattering of younger broadleaved trees planted in 1988.

#### Significance

The wood is important as a landscape and conservation feature, and is used as a minor refuge for common woodland species. Together with other very small woods it gives the impression of a more wooded landscape.

#### Opportunities & Constraints

The wood is very small and almost entirely surrounded by intensively cultivated arable fields, which limits its conservation value to robust, common, or mobile species. There appear to be very few opportunities to alter this, as the surrounding farmland is high grade very productive and intensively farmed. Regeneration and survival of young trees may be difficult, due partly to shading but also to the fluctuating and poor drainage on the sandy soil.

#### Factors Causing Change

Ash dieback

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

Maintain a broadleaved high forest as a local conservation and landscape feature.

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

It is expected that tree safety work will continue to create gaps for natural regeneration to colonise within the woodland. A Woodland Condition Assessment will be carried out in the final year of the current plan period. This will make recommendations as to the management of the site, key elements of which are likely to include the effects of ash disease and the development of natural regeneration. Ash make up a very small component of the canopy of this woodland so the impact of Chalara is likely to be minimal.

## 5.2 Informal Public Access

### Description

Alex Wood has one main entrance off Cranes Lane where there is gate, pedestrian squeeze stile and a Woodland Trust sign. From this a linear grass track leads into the wood for approximately 200 metres, the wood does not have a circular route and does not link into any Public Rights Of Way.

### Significance

Despite its small size the wood is well known locally and local people have been interested and helpful in caring for it. Together with other very small woods it gives the impression of a more wooded landscape.

### Opportunities & Constraints

Alex Wood is very small, is in a quiet, not very accessible or well visited rural area, has only 1 entrance and virtually no paths. It is therefore, not likely to attract or be noticed by many visitors, apart from local people.

### Factors Causing Change

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

Public Access will be maintained at its current level at least, with one entrance and path leading to the wood.

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

Signs or plaques welcoming the general public to make use of the site will be maintained at the entrance points. Vegetation encroaching onto paths will be cut back and annual maintenance of all woodland fixtures; including, signs, gates, and fences will be undertaken. The site will be kept clear of litter and fly tipping.

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## 6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By
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## APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	0.68	Sycamore	1940	High forest	Site structure, location, natural features & vegetation	Informal Public Access, Natural Secondary Woodland	Green Belt

The wood is 0.68 hectares (1.68 acres) in size and consists of a long, thin track leading to a small, square-shaped mature broadleaved woodland. It is in a rural, intensively cultivated arable part of Lancashire, halfway along a track that is used mainly to access local houses. To the south is a house and garden, and to the west, north and east are arable fields. The mature trees are even-aged, predominantly sycamore, with a few oak. There is one very old oak and one large hybrid black poplar. The understory is quite dense in places, and consists of elder, hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel and regeneration of elm. There is a scattering of younger trees, planted in 1988 which are ash, silver birch, wild cherry, rowan and hazel.

## 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.