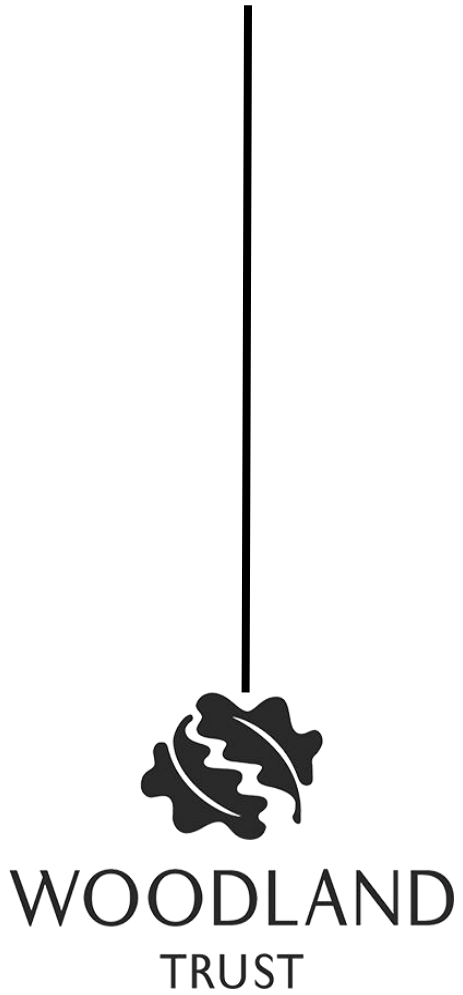
Welcombe Millennium Wood

(Plan period – 2021 to 2026)



Management Plan Content Page

Introduction to the Woodland Trust Estate

The Woodland Trust owns and cares for well over 1,250 sites covering almost 30,000 hectares (ha) across the UK. This includes more than 4,000ha of ancient semi-natural woodland and almost 4,000ha of non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites and we have created over 5,000ha of new native woodland. We also manage other valuable habitats such as flower-rich grasslands, heaths, ponds/lakes and moorland.

Our Vision is:

"A UK rich in native woods and trees for people and wildlife."

To realise all the environmental, social and economic benefits woods and trees bring to society, we:

- **Create Woodland** – championing the need to hugely increase the UK's native woodland and trees.
- **Protect Woodland** – fighting to defend native woodland, especially irreplaceable ancient woodland and veteran trees; there should be no loss of ancient woodland
- **Restore Woodland** – ensuring the sensitive restoration of all damaged ancient woodland and the re-creation of native wooded landscapes.

Management of the Woodland Trust Estate

All our sites have a management plan which is freely accessible via our website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) under licence FSC-C009406 and through independent audit.

The following principles provide an overarching framework to guide the management of all our sites but we recognise that all woods are different and that their management also needs to reflect their local landscape, history and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives.

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene in our woods when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity, safety and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.

2. We establish new native woodland for all the positive reasons set out in our Conservation Principles, preferably using natural regeneration but often by planting trees, particularly when there are opportunities for involving people.

3. We provide free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe. Where possible, we pro-actively engage with people to help them appreciate the value of woods and trees.

4. The long term vision for all our ancient woodland sites is to restore them to predominantly native species composition and semi-natural structure, a vision that equally applies to our secondary woods.

5. Existing semi-natural open ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained and new open ground habitats created where appropriate.

6. The natural and cultural heritage value of sites is taken into account in our management and in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.

7. Land and woods can generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We therefore consider the appropriateness of opportunities to generate income from our Estate to help support our aims.

8. We work with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders in developing the management of our woods. We recognise the benefits of local community woodland ownership and management. Where appropriate we encourage our woods to be used for local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.

9. We use and offer the Estate where appropriate, for the purpose of demonstration, evidence gathering and research associated with the conservation, recreational and sustainable management of woodlands. We maintain a network of sites for long-term monitoring and trials leading to reductions in plastics and pesticides.

10. Any activities we undertake are in line with our wider Conservation Principles, conform to sustainable forest management practices, are appropriate for the site and balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

The Public Management Plan

This public management plan describes the site and sets out the long term aims for our management and lists the Key Features which drive our management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site – their significance is outlined together with our long, 50 years and beyond, and our short, the next 5 years, term objectives for the management and enhancement of these features. The short term objectives are complemented by an outline Work Programme for the period of this management plan aimed at delivering our management aims.

Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and we continually monitor our sites to assess the success of our management, therefore this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme.

Please either consult The Woodland Trust website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

or contact the Woodland Trust

operations@woodlandtrust.org.uk

to confirm details of the current management programme.

A short glossary of technical terms can be found at the end of the plan.

Location and Access

Location maps and directions for how to find and access our woods, including this site, can be found by using the following link to the Woodland Trust web-site which contains information on accessible woodlands across the UK

https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/find-woods/

In Scotland access to our sites is in accordance with the Land Reform Act (of Scotland) 2003 and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

In England, Wales and NI, with the exception of designated Public Rights of Ways, all routes across our sites are permissive in nature and where we have specific access provision for horse riders and/or cyclists this will be noted in the management plan.

The Management Plan

1. SITE DETAILS

Welcombe Millennium Wood

Location:	Welcombe nr Hartland Grid reference: SS233183 OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 190
Area:	3.02 hectares (7.46 acres)
External Designations:	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast
Internal Designations:	Woods on Your Doorstep

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

Created during the Trust's Woods On Your Doorstep project Welcombe Millennium Wood was planted in late 2000 with native broadleaf species on an area agricultural grassland located on the outskirts of Welcombe and its surrounding residences. It lies directly next to the Village Hall, is used regularly by the community as a setting for events and for dog walking and therefore provides an important amenity and area of open space. It helps to fulfil 3 of the Trust's aims of creating native woods and places rich in trees, protecting native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future and inspiring everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees.

Standing on fairly level but exposed ground close to the coast near Hartland Point the wood forms a prominent feature in an area where most woodland is located within the steep coastal valleys and will be visible from much of the surrounding area. The wood lies within the Culm Natural Area with the underlying rocks being of Upper Carboniferous period shales and sandstones. Soils tend to be of poorly draining brown earths and stagnogleys. While the Culm natural area still supports one of the greatest concentrations of species rich grasslands in the UK much, including the land into which the wood was planted has been converted to improved grassland and shows little evidence of conservation value. The wood is bounded on three sides by substantial Devon hedge banks and on the fourth by a deep gully holding a small stream all support groups of stunted trees, scrub and shrub that help compliment the new woodland. Combined with several wet flushes within the seasonally wet land the wood already presents a wide range of habitats or potential habitats for wildlife.

A public highway runs along the wood's northern boundary. Two field gates enter from this highway at the north western and north eastern corners and a hunter's gate enters from the Village Hall car park area providing good management and pedestrian access into the wood. The wood is crisscrossed by a number of overhead power lines and the unplantable land below these provides corridors of open grassland. A wide track and pedestrian path with natural grassy surfaces linking two open glades as well as all the entry points form a pleasant circular route around the wood. Due to the network of tracks and paths as well as corridors under the power lines the main tree species are limited to just a few small clumps with minor trees and shrubs planted for continuity of cover and to create wood edge habitat and lower canopy heights elsewhere.

3. LONG TERM POLICY

The long term vision for Welcombe Millennium Wood is of an attractive mature broadleaf woodland with an understorey of woodland shrubs complimented by other habitats such as rough grassland and open glades, clumps of shrubs and scrub, wide rides, over mature trees and adjacent hedges. It helps to fulfil 3 of the Trust's aims of creating native woods and places rich in trees,, protecting native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future and inspiring everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees. The maturing woodland will generally be managed via limited intervention towards high forest under a continuous cover regime allowing the main tree species to develop and to start to diversify the age and size structure naturally. It is intended that the alder in the species mix will start to recede due to dry conditions at around 30 years creating open spaces and low density stocking where minor broadleaved species can develop and natural regeneration can create structural diversity. The remaining tree species will mature at 80-100years with the oak forming the climax woodland species with minor trees and shrubs as understorey and woodland edge element. The competitive agricultural grass sward and ruderal species present in the early stages of the wood's development will have given way to more woodland associated species which will have colonised from the surrounding populations in the boundary banks and stream gully. Clusters of flora establishing within the grass sward will be encouraged to aid spread throughout the wood. Due to the internal and external infrastructure the wood is not well suited for silvicultural management regimes and therefore where intervention is required to help diversify structure, thinning and coppicing will be undertaken selectively and to help deliver other aims and objectives at the same time, such as, woodland resilience, deadwood, boundary safety, and amenity enhancement. . Areas of the wood planted with clumps of minor trees and shrubs will provide wood edge habitat and keep the canopy to a height and size where tree safety along the roadside, around the hall and along power lines will be more easily maintained and vistas from viewpoints will not be lost too quickly. The path and tracks will provide aesthetically pleasing walks at appropriate levels for the community needs and where possible the fence between the hall and the wood will be removed to reduce perceived barriers to access and help the hall and wood appear better integrated. The edges of the wide rides and spaces under the power lines will be managed by irregular mowing regimes to encourage naturalisation to rough grassland that will improve nectaring for insects and colonise to scrub and natural low level woodland habitat types to provide 'links' between wooded blocks, nesting cover and food sources wildlife.

4. KEY FEATURES

4.1 f1 Secondary Woodland

Description
Native broadleaf woodland planted in 2000 with native broadleaved species into improved grassland. Oak forms major part of woodland. Ash and Alder within the matrix established quickly providing shelter and canopy closure to suppress ruderal species. Native broadleaf shrubs and minor tree species will form the understorey and wood edges/encroaching woodland effects into the open areas. Shrubs are concentrated close to rides and near the road and village hall boundaries to provide aesthetic benefits, reduce tree safety liabilities in the future, reduce shading, maintain views and create a more welcoming impression. It has two unplanted glades on the higher drier ground as well as relatively substantial areas of grassland left unplanted under the power lines. Hedges form three boundaries and a deep stream gully forms the fourth, all support remnant populations of locally native plants and animals which will gradually spread into the woodland. Shrub and scrub encroachment extends to varying degrees into the wood from each boundary and this has been left to compliment the woodland habitat.
Significance
Woodland habitat created in the unwooded landscape and the shelter afforded to neighbouring farmland/grassland habitat. The Woodland Trust believes that there should be twice as much native tree cover in the UK as there is at present. Through the creation and management of Welcombe Millennium Wood we aim to create an exemplar of encouraging other land owners locally to plant and manage their woodland and therefore help deliver our aims of protecting native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future as well as helping to double the area of existing broadleaf woodland across the UK. The wood helps to deliver national regional and local Biodiversity Action and Habitat plans
Opportunities & Constraints
Exposure may constrain future development and growth of trees. Overhead power lines taken into account as part of this small woodland's design may affect future management by requiring or constraining thinning and felling works.
Factors Causing Change
Deer and squirrel damage affecting natural tree and flora regeneration Loss of substantial proportion of the trees cover via Chalara (Ash Die back) Faster establishing species (ash/alder/willow) suppressing minor tree species which will stop them adding diversity to the wood Invasive species colonisation
Long term Objective (50 years+)
A healthy native broadleaf species high forest with open glades and woodland fringe areas in rides and boundary edges providing a diverse age and size structure with a good proportion of mature trees having large spreading 'open grown' type crowns . Common alder will have receded allowing Ash and Gean to mature and Oak to form climax woodland species. Minor trees and shrubs will form a diverse understorey and woodland edge element around glades and wide rides. Areas of the wood under the power lines and those planted with clumps of minor trees and shrubs will have

naturalised with a scrubby canopy height and size to retain views and reduce roadside tree safety issues in the future. Trees on boundary hedge banks will have developed as veteran trees. Open glades, grassland area and wide ride sides will have become colonised by rough grasses, wild flowers and scrub providing varied habitats, and nectaring areas for wildlife.

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

Develop a healthy and vigorous, well stocked young woodland with a varied size structure, range of habitat types and open rides and glades.

Manage the young trees to maintain vigour and health, by removing tree shelters by end of the plan period; and controlling competing bramble, over dominant species and scrub where it adversely affects trees .
Monitor levels of deer damage and undertake control measures as necessary

Manage open space and power line corridor areas to allow the colonisation of scrub and shrub to improve habitat diversity where this doesn't compromise tree growth and health by reducing the intensity of mowing of track and open space edges against the planting to an irregular regime on a 2-4 year rotation according to amounts of colonisation.

Allow natural regeneration and colonisation of scrub and tree species to develop throughout to provide a more diverse spacing and give natural gradation between planting blocks, hedges, glades and rides linking this to the rotational track edge cutting above as appropriate

Coppicing of some localised areas of predominantly willow and alder adjacent to ride edges and glades where they are impeding access;, where their shading is affecting richer floral areas through overhanging branches; where they are suppressing preferred species such as ash oak and minor species and where proactive management, especially around boundaries with the hall and road will maintain a lower canopy height and reduce future, shade and tree safety liabilities.

Manage roadside boundaries to comply with Highways requirements, by flailing outside and top of hedge and verge.

4.2 f2 Informal Public Access

Description

A network of wide grassy tracks and pedestrian paths linking two open glades/viewpoints and areas of open ground with shrub clump plantings to retain vistas and views as well as provide a wooded effect, but at the same time keeping trees back from the road edge and village hall. Two glades located on areas of 'higher ground' that offer visitors viewpoints out over the surrounding countryside and sea. Extending from these in line with the best views are strips of ground where planting has been in the form of shrub/ minor tree clumps. Similar areas are also designed along the northern roadside boundaries close to the road and village hall.

Significance

It is close to the village hall and is used as an 'extension' of the hall grounds for local events and has become part of the focal point for the locality. It is also well used by the fairly disparate but 'active' community for leisure and dog walking

as such it fulfils the Trust's belief that everyone should recognise that trees and woods are an essential part of a healthy environment and that there should be a wood with open access close to everyone's home.

Opportunities & Constraints

It is close to the village hall and well used by the fairly disparate but 'active' community and is often used to 'extend' events held in the hall and therefore there is an opportunity to remove fences along the hall and roadside boundaries to the help integrate the two and remove physical 'barriers' . Power lines that cross the site pose visual as well as potential management and woodland development constraints.

Factors Causing Change

Increase in levels of use.
Abuse/misuse of/unauthorised access to the woodland if boundary fences removed

Long term Objective (50 years+)

A woodland that is well integrated with the adjacent village hall and offering a welcoming network of attractive and safe tracks maintained to provide the required level of community and management access. Managed open grassland and shrub clump areas and woodland glades with naturalised plants and shrubs along their margins graduating between the differing heights and benefiting wildlife but also being aesthetically pleasing to visitors.

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

An easily accessible network of naturally surfaced and grassy tracks and paths that will sustain and maintain the steady but relatively low level of access required. Currently the wood is assessed to be of Access Category C offering low but sufficiently regular access levels to require management of the facilities provided

Manage tracks for management and public access benefits by mowing the central 3-5m wide strip by undertaking 2 cuts per year. Raise cut height and vary the regularity of mowing along track edges to promote a coarser and more conservationally valuable sward
Mow narrow pedestrian paths to min 1.5m width ensuring branches and growth does not encroach from the sides between cuts to hinder access

Manage open grassland areas to develop better conservation values by mowing approximately 60% of the grass once annually to encourage visitors and allow them to enjoy them for leisure. As with tracks raise cut heights around wood edges and reduce and rotate the cut to once every 2-4 years to develop naturalised vegetation of differing heights to graduate from mown grass to shrub/tree heights for aesthetic and conservation benefits. Maintain gates, and signs, ensure tracks and paths are free from obstruction and clear litter annually to encourage safe and attractive access.

APPENDIX 1 : COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
1a	3.03	Mixed native broadleaves	2000	High forest	Services & wayleaves	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast
Planted in November/ December 2000 with native broadleaved species into a predominantly improved ryegrass grassland. Predominantly of Oak with Ash, alder and Gean as minor components and native broadleaf shrubs and minor tree species as an understorey and to form wood edges/encroaching woodland effects into the open areas. Deer populations in the area increased in 2002 and many trees became browsed. Shelter extensions were fitted to 1000 trees in 2003 and left in place until the trees were above deer height when the extensions were moved to other trees needing protection. Most trees have been successfully protected and, and most shelter extensions were removed during 2006 by a group of local volunteers. The ground is relatively level, but due to gentle slope of surrounding areas toward the site ground conditions can get wet with surface water. The wood is also quite exposed to salt laden coastal winds. Access off the highway is via two management gates into the NE and NW corners of the wood. A pedestrian gate enters from the village hall car park. Wide grass management tracks are incorporated in the design and open corridors left under O/H electric cables. In addition to these two permanent open grassland areas have been created on 'higher spots' to act as viewpoints.						

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.

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