



WOODLAND  
TRUST

# Laycombe Wood

# Management Plan

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## 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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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>	Laycombe Wood
<b>Location:</b>	Wotton-under-Edge
<b>Grid reference:</b>	ST763954, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 162
<b>Area:</b>	48.67 hectares (120.27 acres)
<b>Designations:</b>	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Ancient Woodland Site, Area of Landscape Value, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Planted Ancient Woodland Site

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

## 2.1 Summary Description

Laycombe Wood is part of a cluster of Woodland Trust owned woods in close proximity on the Cotswold Scarp. The Woodland Trusts 'Cotswolds Woods' (Penn Wood, Stanley Wood, Coaley Wood, Laycombe Wood) are made up of 4 individual woods totalling 138.22 Ha. All 4 sites connect and link into the wider wooded landscape which defines the Cotswold scarps. The Cotswolds hosts a significant ancient woodland resource which strengthens ecological and landscape connectivity, with beech a nationally important feature, particularly along the scarp and incised valleys. The Woodland Trusts Cotswold Woods are managed with cohesive conservation and public access objectives that fit with those of the Cotswold landscape.

The Woodland Trust's sites are all part of the National Character Area 107: Cotswolds, and are all within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The woodlands on the Cotswold escarpment are identified as an important landscape feature in the Cotswolds AONB Management Strategy. The Cotswold beech woodlands are of high conservation value due to the landscape mosaic of deciduous woodland with rides and open semi-natural habitat and permanent pasture. All are within an area designated a Special Landscape Area and lie within the Greater Cotswolds Natural Area 69.

Laycombe Wood (Cpts 8-13) is a 48 ha mixed conifer and broadleaf woodland which includes areas of both Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) and Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (AWS). It is situated just north of Wotton-under-Edge, in between the villages of Bowcott, North Nibley, and Waterley Bottom. Laycombe Wood is a winding, steep sided wood following the Cotswold escarpment, with views from the top of the slope over the Severn Estuary, Tyndale Monument and Waterley Bottom, and forms part of a larger continuous strip of escarpment woodland with mainly private woodland owners to the north and south.

The Woodland Trust's Cotswold Woods are not served by any official WT car parks, but as with much of the Cotswold ridges, parking is available in many formal and informal lay-bys and pull-ins directly connected to the sites. One large public car park at Coaley Peak Picnic Site, managed by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (formerly Glos Council), provides parking for much of the area and the network of recreational space along the Cotswold Scarp. The Cotswold Way, a National Trail, runs through various parts of the central Cotswolds region, and all woods are serviced by an extensive PROW and permissive path network.

Cotswolds bat populations are a particularly significant species group and are important in a national context. The range of species includes pipistrelle, Daubenton's, Brandt's, noctule, brown long-eared, Natterer's, and whiskered, and barbastelle. Of particular significance are the breeding and hibernating populations of greater horseshoe lesser horseshoe bats.

## 2.2 Extended Description

Laycombe Wood is part of a cluster of Woodland Trust owned woods in close proximity on the Cotswold Scarp. The Woodland Trusts 'Cotswolds Woods' (Penn Wood, Stanley Wood, Coaley Wood, Laycombe Wood) are made up of 4 individual woods totalling 138.22 Ha. All 4 sites connect and link into the wider wooded landscape which defines the Cotswold scarps. The Cotswolds hosts a significant ancient woodland resource which strengthens ecological and landscape connectivity, with beech a nationally important feature, particularly along the scarp and incised valleys. The Woodland Trusts Cotswold Woods are managed with cohesive conservation and public access objectives that fit with those of the Cotswold landscape.

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## 3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

### 3.1 Getting there

Laycombe Wood is just north of Wotton-under-Edge, in-between the villages of Bowcott and North Nibley, adjacent to Waterley Bottom. It can be accessed from these villages or from the Old London Rd, and the site runs adjacent to this and the B4058. These have several lay-bys or grassy verges for informal parking, as does Waterley Bottom. Public footpaths also enter and exit in various places across private land.

Public transport services currently link Wotton-under-edge with Nailsworth via the B4058 close to the site. [www.traveline.info](http://www.traveline.info)

The Cotswold Woods form part of the central Cotswolds in the AONB guide

<https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Explore-Booklet-2018-web.pdf>

There are no known public toilets close to the woods. Public toilets are located in Stroud, Stonehouse, and Wooton-under-Edge. Stroud District council publish a list of the services open to the public which can be accessed at <https://www.stroud.gov.uk/community-and-living/public-toilets>

## 3.2 Access / Walks



## 4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

### In fifty years-

#### Ancient Woodland Site:

A diverse and continuous mixed broadleaf woodland canopy will exist across all of the ancient woodland and secondary woodland areas, broken occasionally by semi-natural glades, rides and open space to provide associated habitats. Areas of Plantation on Ancient Woodland (PAWS) will have been restored through a gradual restoration approach to a predominantly broadleaved composition. ASNW and PAWS areas will be managed seamlessly with good vehicle access through a Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) approach, utilising selective thinning interventions to create and maintain an irregular woodland structure with a diverse range of predominantly native broadleaved species supporting the highest levels of biodiversity. Deer populations will be managed at levels enabling natural regeneration processes to occur unimpeded by browsing. Open space will be created and maintained through a network of rides and small glades promoting transitional woodland habitat and associated species. Both standing and fallen deadwood will provide a significant habitat. Existing and future veteran trees will be protected and actively managed for as part of the adopted silvicultural strategy, using halo and selective thinning as appropriate.

#### Connecting People:

The Welcoming Site Programme will lead to a series of lasting upgrades that will improve the visitor experience and will likely increase the number and range of visitors to this complex of outstanding woodland. An attractive and serviceable network of tracks, paths, and parking areas will further encourage the appreciation of the woodland complex both on the site and in the locality. The complex of sites will be managed to meet the required high standards of the Welcoming Site Programme and will provide welcoming, well-maintained entrances, access furniture, signage and other infrastructure to better facilitate use by a wider range of visitors. Interpretation will bring the sites together and promote the interests and key features of the complex as a whole and in context with the wider local landscape. The site will be a truly valued resource in the local community and well respected.

## 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 Ancient Woodland Site

#### Description

Laycombe Wood (Cpts 8-13) is a 48 ha mixed conifer and broadleaf woodland which includes areas of both Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) and Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (AWS), just north of Wotton-under-Edge. Broadleaf areas are either beech or ash dominant: beech likely planted with naturally regenerated ash; or with conifer nurse crops; and ash naturally regenerated following previous wind-blow and/or clear fell areas. Oak, elm, field maple, hawthorn and hazel are also present.

Conifer blocks are partly restored to ASNW in some areas, or are still pure conifer plantations (part of Cpt 3a and 5a, and Cpt 6c) with species consisting of larch, Douglas fir, Norway spruce, Scots pine, Western Red Cedar, Silver Fir and Corsican pine. The far NW area known as 'American Corner' in cpt 6c contains Grand fir, Western Hemlock and Coastal Redwood.

The majority of the woodland across the 'Cotswold Woods' management area is ancient semi-natural in composition, with a good majority most closely resembling NVC W12 *Fagus sylvatica* - *Mercurialis perennis* (Beech- Dog's Mercury) woodland, with large areas of mainly secondary ash and sycamore developing where beech is lacking in dominance. This is largely interwoven with occasional areas more closely resembling NVC W8 *Fraxinus excelsior* - *Acer Campestre* - *Mercurialis perennis* (Ash - Field Maple - Dogs Mercury), with ash, oak, elm, sycamore and whitebeam. Holly, field maple, Whitebeam and hazel are all present within the understorey. There are some small areas of impressive mature beech high forest at Laycombe, as well as ancient hedgerows with some impressive layered and coppiced beech still remaining along bank tops. In some areas where larger trees have been felled, pioneer species such as birch and willow have colonised well. Young beech, ash and sycamore are growing well almost everywhere and should ensure the woodland remains a broadleaf high forest.

The ASNW, PAWS and Secondary woodland features throughout all four of the Cotswolds woods are intricately mixed as a result of the successes of the many management processes undertaken during the 1950s and 60s, including thinning, felling and restocking: in some areas this consisted of pure conifer planting; while in others cleared areas were restocked with beech in mixture probably with a pine or larch nurse crop. Some areas appear to have regenerated naturally, are the result of failed plantation, or suffered severe wind-blow during the Great Storm of 1987, and have regenerated naturally with broadleaves dominant in young ash.

Seemingly, the ancient woodland inventory has struggled to cope with this complex array of historic plantings and coniferisation, and has for the most part classified much of the woodland incorporated within the management unit plan as Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) or Plantation on an Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS). ASNW covers most of the north half of Laycombe wood (5a, 5b, 6a, and 6b), except for two unclassified areas of pure conifer plantation (roughly covering Cpt 6c, plus a

small compartment comprising part of 5a, 5b and 6a). The remainder in the south is classified as Plantation on an Ancient Woodland Site (1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a, 4a, and 4c).

However, areas of conifer remain across Laycombe Wood (notably cpts 1b, 2b, 3a, 4a, 5a and 6c). They are generally planted in single species blocks circa P1960, and haven't undergone regular thinning interventions. Parts of cpt 3a, 5a, and 6c are all highlighted as threatened in PAWS assessment 2018. While these areas remain dominated by conifers overall, some stands are still relatively permeable for biodiversity through light availability, especially blocks of larch plantation and native broadleaved regeneration tends to be prolific (1b, 2b and 4a, plus parts of Cpt 3a and 5a - PAWS assessment 2018).

Previous management has often resulted in an even age broadleaf structure, with tall, leggy stems particularly in secondary growth of ash. The shallow soils on the steep scarp slopes cause shallow root systems and present a risk of windthrow. This is in stark contrast to mature trees (especially large beech) which likely grew in much more open conditions and thus have a far more developed root system anchoring themselves into the steep slopes. In 2017, ash dieback (ADB) was first reported across all 4 sites, and in 2019 was apparent in much of the site. The speed of decay from dieback in ash will dramatically affect much of the woodland composition over the coming years.

#### Open space

Open space is largely achieved through a number of open glades mixed with a ride network lining many of the tracks. Ride edge habitat has developed a mix of herb communities of locally typical ancient woodland indicators and species characteristic of limestone grassland. There is a small area maintained through coppicing in Laycombe Wood at a viewpoint and large scrub bank known as 'The Butterfly Bank' with several rare orchids and a seat with views over the Severn Estuary.

#### Species

-Woodland flora is abundant in many areas complementing the NVC type notably Ivy, Dogs mercury, Sweet woodruff, bluebell, spurge laurel, yellow archangel, sanicle, Herb Robert, hemp agrimony, wild strawberry, wood spurge as well as a number of ferns. A strong community of common spotted orchids were previously identified within a glade at Laycombe (4a). Angular Solomon's Seal has been recorded.

-Dormice have previously been recorded within Laycombe and are possibly still present throughout the woodland area.

-Deer are present across the woodland areas, notably roe and muntjac, and fallow are likely.

#### Management Access

Laycombe Wood has no clear or wide roadside entrance, although there is a large network of historic tracks and rides internally, and one linear length of ride/track throughout, most of which has been constructed through levelling, and some surfacing. Some sections of track can be steep, and a few have localised drainage issues reducing their bearing capacity. Many less well used tracks have regenerated trees and shrubs overhanging or within them, potentially causing a loss of ride side habitat over time. The top track through the woodland (largely following the Eastern boundary) has been subjected to ride side coppicing to widen and lighten the track. Timber extraction and transportation is limited due to the lack of a good roadside entrance. A right of access exists through the farms to the north west of the site, and also through Rushmire Farm to the south east which could possibly facilitate timber transportation. One small very narrow management access exists on the SW lane to Waterley Bottom, this crosses a 10m section of private land with a WT access by

kind permission.

Management history since WT ownership:

-Part of Cpt 4a at Laycombe was brought into coppice management during 2000s to promote woodland flora, by managing as a glade through mowing. Some small scale attempts at PAWS restoration by WT has occurred through thinning to waste and ring barking.

Ash dieback is widespread within the Cotswold Woods in 2019 with significant mortality, particularly within Laycombe Wood. Along the Zone A boundaries, ash will need to be annually surveyed as part of site risk assessment, and resultant future safety felling will need to be managed carefully due to the high level of ash. The Zone B network of paths may need to be rationalised with restricted access on some, and safety felling on main paths, to avoid large scale safety felling due to dangerous trees, as the steep slopes and complex network of PROW running along the contours of the scarp mean many will be with reach of the tree safety zones.

### Significance

The Woodland Trust is committed to the protection and restoration of ancient woodland sites and believes that semi natural ancient woodlands are irreplaceable.

-The woodlands making up the management unit form an important BAP habitat within the Cotswold area providing not only a refuge for wildlife but also facilitating wider ecologically functioning and connectivity within the landscape.

-The woodland forms an important landscape feature of the Cotswold escarpment within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

-The woodland hosts a number of important Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and European Protected Species, notably Greater and Lesser Horseshoe bats and dormice.

### Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities

- PAWS restoration to Ancient semi-natural woodland, with predominantly native broadleaf trees.
- Restructure even-aged stands highly susceptible to windthrow in order to protect wider canopy cover both from a connectivity perspective as well as landscape.
- Investigate significance of bat population throughout scarp woodlands (likely with other partners).
- Opportunities of joint working with NT and GWT across Cotswolds woodlands and landscape.

Constraints:

- Poor accessibility to some areas.

### Factors Causing Change

-Ash dieback is likely to have a major impact across the Cotswold woods. Much will depend on the required pre-emptive interventions required for health and safety purposes, which is likely to affect all roadside boundaries and public rights of way. This is likely to create an opportunity for alternative species to regenerate and create structural diversity, as long as the local deer population can be kept low enough to ensure natural regeneration opportunities can develop unhindered. There will likely be a major impact on species obligate to ash although this process will occur over time.

-Phytophthora ramorum in larch

-Deer browsing remains a threat to successful natural regeneration

-Windthrow is likely to become an increasing issue where stands of even-aged trees have been unthinned on shallow soils, this will increase notably if large areas of ash also start to fail

-Squirrels damage on SY and BE will continue to be a threat for young pole stage trees, becoming increasingly significant if the proportion of ash reduces over time due to ash dieback

### Long term Objective (50 years+)

In fifty years-

Ancient Woodland Site:

A diverse and continuous mixed broadleaf woodland canopy will exist across all of the ancient woodland and secondary woodland areas, broken occasionally by semi-natural glades, rides and open space to provide associated habitats. Areas of Plantation on Ancient Woodland (PAWS) will have been restored through a gradual restoration approach to a predominantly broadleaved composition. ASNW and PAWS areas will be managed seamlessly with good vehicle access through a Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) approach, utilising selective thinning interventions to create and maintain an irregular woodland structure with a diverse range of predominantly native broadleaved species supporting the highest levels of biodiversity. Deer populations will be managed at levels enabling natural regeneration processes to occur unimpeded by browsing. Open space will be created and maintained through a network of rides and small glades promoting transitional woodland habitat and associated species. Both standing and fallen deadwood will provide a significant habitat. Existing and future veteran trees will be protected and actively managed for as part of the adopted silvicultural strategy, using halo and selective thinning as appropriate.

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

- Maintain programme of selective thinning/felling of the Laycombe Wood PAWS areas highlighted in PAWS assessment (cpts 1b, 2b, 3a, 4a, 5a and 6c) to gradually restore broadleaved composition, promote ancient woodland features, widen rides, and promote broadleaved natural regeneration, as well as increasing levels of standing and fallen deadwood. If natural regeneration is unsuccessful, consider enrichment planting of broadleaved species (such as oak, lime, beech) in areas of open canopy.
- Initiate regeneration felling to widen main network of rides along PROW within ASNW and secondary wood areas (Laycombe Wood 2a, 2b, 3a, 4a, 4b, 5a, 5b, 6a, 6b); to diversify structure, promote natural regeneration, maintain temporary open and edge habitat, and increase light levels reaching ground favouring native ancient woodland flora. To include halo thinning around veteran trees where accessible, and also to increase levels of standing and fallen deadwood.
- Ash dieback tree safety assessments and subsequent felling of dead or dangerous ash along Zone A and B areas as per WT ash dieback guidance on manging ash dieback on the estate. Annual inspections, and safety works with pro-active felling where necessary. Rationalisation of non PROW permissive paths will also be needed with closure of some paths with high density of dangerous or dying ash trees.
- Creation and maintenance of new deer exclosures to monitor deer impact.
- To carry out a deer impact assessment and maintain programme of deer control accordingly.
- Commission (European Protected Species) EPS survey in Cotswold Woods to inform future management.
- Maintain and repair tracks in Laycombe Wood following harvesting.

## 5.2 Connecting People with woods & trees

### Description

Laycombe Wood is just north of Wotton-under-Edge, in-between the villages of Bowcott, North Nibley, and Waterley Bottom. It can be accessed from these villages or from the main entrance off of Old London Rd via a public bridleway. The site runs adjacent to the Old London Rd and the B4058. These have several lay-bys or grassy verges for informal parking, as does Waterley Bottom. Public footpaths also enter and exit in various places across private land. Designated PROWs within the site are public footpaths, with permissive paths, all with open entrances or kissing gates. One open public bridleway that runs through the wood in the south west of the site, and a permissive bridleway running much of the top path from south to north, which provides a flat, well surfaced linear route through the site. All other paths are generally free draining and naturally stony with some steep sections.

The Cotswold Woods form part of the central Cotswolds in the AONB guide

<https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Explore-Booklet-2018-web.pdf>

There are no known public toilets close to the woods. Public toilets are located in Stroud, Stonehouse, and Wotton-under-Edge. Stroud District council publish a list of the services open to the public which can be accessed at <https://www.stroud.gov.uk/community-and-living/public-toilets>

### Access/Infrastructure

Laycombe Wood and the Woodland Trusts 'Cotswold Woods' are not served by any official WT car parks, but as with much of the Cotswold ridges, parking is available in many formal and informal lay-bys and pull-ins directly connected to the sites. One large public car park at Coaley Peak Picnic Site and managed by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (formerly Glos Council) provides parking for much of the area and the network of recreational space along the Cotswold Scarp. Public transport is good with bus services connecting many of the area's Cotswold villages, with larger towns such as Stroud. The Cotswold Woods form part of the central Cotswolds in the AONB guide

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### General Communication Drivers

The sites lend themselves to visits by both the local community and visitors to the area. The local population is made up of several large and small towns in the immediate area including: Stroud, Cam & Dursley, Wotton-under-Edge, Stonehouse, and Nailsworth; and many other neighbouring villages, mean the sites are in easy reach of a relatively large population.

The sites contain some of the best examples of publicly accessible woodland habitat available in the area, with many neighbouring woodlands in private ownership. Beech woods within the Cotswolds are nationally important feature which strengthens ecological and landscape connectivity, and the Cotswolds hosts a significant ancient woodland resource with beech especially a particularly distinct and prominent feature. There are several prominent viewpoints from the Cotswold scarp across the area, notably at the Butterfly Bank in Laycombe Wood.

Current signage branding is a mixture of large and small di-bond welcome boards, and a WT ladder board at the main entrance off of the public bridleway. There are no orientation boards onsite.

Events: There are currently no WT events operated within this complex of sites. It is likely that events would be popular especially in school holidays when families are likely to visit. Outside school holiday, local events may be popular for smaller interest groups, as will events on the Cotswold Way. External horse riding, cycling and running organisations run occasional events along

the PROW network that pass through WT land, but are mainly coordinated from surrounding land. These are run under their own insurance and risk.

Welcome Sites: Current visitor numbers are unknown. There are no known current user groups other than the general public although the sites are likely to be interesting to conservationists, historians, geologists, walkers/ramblers and horse riders.

There are few barriers to access in general, although there is limited Woodland Trust parking and no clear way marked circular routes which may deter some visitors. Information on the terrain of walks is also limited and often many routes include long sections of steep paths/tracks, although a good network of linear tracks along the contours do provide good year round access.

Volunteering: There are currently no volunteers operating at these sites.

Schools: There are some schools in the local area covering the complex of sites, predominantly based around Stroud, Dursley and Wotton-under-Edge. Currently there is no formal engagement between them and The Woodland Trust at these sites.

Forest Schools: Laycombe Wood is used by Fireside Forest School in a small section of the wood under a service level agreement, running under their own insurance and risk. This was until recently a weekly event for home-schooled children, but now runs as a holiday club every Easter and summer holiday.

Wider Community Engagement: is currently minimal

Horseriders - Public and permissive bridleways cross all of the sites. One open public bridleway that runs through the wood in the south west of the site, and a permissive bridleway running much of the top path from south to north, which provides a flat, well surfaced linear route through the site.

Cyclists - Increasing numbers of cyclists use the permissive as well as public bridleways within the woods, including during night-time.

## Significance

The Woodland Trusts Cotswold Woods are all within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and connect and link into the wider wooded landscape which defines the scarps, Beech woods within the Cotswolds are a nationally important feature.

The Cotswold Woods provides a destination for a diverse visitor base throughout the year and is popular with local people from the surrounding towns and countryside. It provides several stretches of the Cotswold Way National Trail, and is utilised regularly by walkers, specialists, locals, forest schools and more.

The sites have been selected as one of the top 250 sites owned by the Woodland Trust which are likely to see further investment in the visitor experience in near the future.

## Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:

- To engage with a large number of people across the Woodland Trusts Cotswolds Woods, which connect and link into the wider wooded landscape;
- Wider partnership collaboration across whole of Cotswolds woods/AONB and partner NGO's.
- To reconfigure the car parking lay-bys and pull-ins to enable better usage of the space available.

Constraints:

- The steeper slopes across the sites restrict access to some areas by those people with mobility limitations.

## Factors Causing Change



- Possible increase in anti-social behaviour with increasing visitor numbers.
- Illegal use of PROW by motorbikes
- Use of public footpaths by horse riders and cyclists
- Ash dieback and reconfiguration of permissive path routes.

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

#### **Connecting People:**

The Welcoming Site Programme will lead to a series of lasting upgrades that will improve the visitor experience and will likely increase the number and range of visitors to this complex of outstanding woodland. An attractive and serviceable network of tracks, paths, and parking areas will further encourage the appreciation of the woodland complex both on the site and in the locality. The complex of sites will be managed to meet the required high standards of the Welcoming Site Programme and will provide welcoming, well-maintained entrances, access furniture, signage and other infrastructure to better facilitate use by a wider range of visitors. Interpretation will bring the sites together and promote the interests and key features of the complex as a whole and in context with the wider local landscape. The site will be a truly valued resource in the local community and well respected.

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

- Maintain and improve the existing PROW and most used permissive path network in favourable condition, liaising with the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens and Cotswold AONB, GCC PROW Team, and local volunteers;
- Reconfigure the car parking lay-bys and pull-ins to enable better usage of the space available.
- Maintain the site as easily accessible, attractive, well maintained and safe woodland. The path network and entrances should remain in good condition and appropriate for level and type of use and in accordance with access categories.
- Ensure visitor safety via ongoing tree and infrastructure monitoring regime and remedial works as necessary.

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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	2.28	Mixed broadleaves	1950	High forest	Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc		Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Planted Ancient Woodland Site
<p>LW - The very southern tip of the woodland with roadside boundary and management access across private property. Canopy consists of naturally regenerating stored coppice Ash and Hazel with some Sycamore and Silver Birch. It is likely that the area was planted with beech but this species now forms a small component of the semi-mature canopy structure (planted stock has been overwhelmed by regenerating ash and coppice species). Some stools adjacent to the path were coppiced in 1997. An old hedge and bank on the southern external boundary with remnants of wall exist. PAWS on the inventory. Roadside ash felled in 2019. Ground flora rich in wild garlic, bluebells and wood anemones.</p>							
1b	0.84	Mixed broadleaves	1950	PAWS restoration	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc		Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Planted Ancient Woodland Site
<p>LW - This consists mainly of hybrid Larch planted in the 1960s with a significant amount of naturally regenerating Ash and a small area (0.1Ha) of Norway spruce. The semi-mature Larch and Norway spruce could have some commercial value. Flora indicates that the current conifer crop is possibly a second rotation. PAWS on the inventory.</p>							
4a	8.69	Mixed conifers	1970	PAWS restoration	Gullies/Deep Valleys/Uneven/Rocky ground, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc		Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Planted Ancient Woodland Site

LW - Although all PAWS on the inventory. 4a has a mixed mosaic of semi natural ancient woodland (representing 2.68 Ha) and PAWS (representing 5.92 Ha). The PAW area was planted with various conifers between 1970 and 1974. It now consists of separate areas of mixed Larch, Douglas fir and occasional Norway spruce (2.6 Ha), Larch, Hazel and Ash, (2.1 Ha), an area of almost pure Douglas fir (0.6 Ha), another of Norway spruce and Hazel (0.3 Ha). The broadleaved intrusion is high across areas of larch but establishment of dense DF has formed solid blocks. The more dense area of DF on the centre west boundary was thinned heavily in 2000. The DF throughout the site suffers from lime induced chlorosis; badly affected trees were removed during thinning. The compt. contains a badger sett and wood ant hills. The semi natural ancient woodland area consists of mixed broadleaf with Ash, Hazel, Oak and Silver birch dominating. The canopy is well developed from semi-mature aged trees derived from standards. A permanent glade to the east along the main ride at ST 76620 95250 was created in the Cpt to facilitate the development of ground flora inc. butterfly and common spotted orchids, and other limestone grassland flora.

4b	1.14	Mixed broadleaves	2010	Coppice	Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc		Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Planted Ancient Woodland Site
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LW - PAWS on inventory. The Cpt is actually an area of grassland, scrub and semi natural ancient woodland where conifer plantation over thin soils failed and was slowly taken over with regenerating native trees and shrubs including Whitebeam, Holly, Ash, Oak, Goat willow, Spindle, Wild privet, Dogwood and Guelder rose. The area developed flora communities representative of limestone grassland and has been associated with notable species of butterfly and common lizard. Hence it's title of "Butterfly Bank". The area is managed by rotational coppicing of successional scrub. Angular Solomon's seal is present in this area, and dormouse signs have been reported. The Butterfly bank contains a WT oak seat and views across the area ST 76399 95383.

5b	2.23	NULL	1960	High forest	Archaeological features, Gullies/Deep Valleys/Uneven/Rocky ground, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc		Ancient Woodland Site, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
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LW - This sub-compartment consists entirely of mixed broadleaf mainly semi-mature Ash, Sycamore, Hazel, Beech and some patches of Wild cherry. A ruin is present at 77099578 (see Conservation Features map reference point H1). ASNW on inventory.

9a	1.47	Mixed broadleaves	1960	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc		Ancient Woodland Site, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
<p>LW - This consists mainly of pole, and younger, Ash and Beech with occasional Pedunculate Oak but with a small area (0.2 Ha) of mature Beech adjacent to Laycombe Ditch that has a particularly good spring ground flora. This compartment had evidence of dormouse activity in 2002. PAWS on the inventory.</p>							
9b	2.19	Japanese larch	1960	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc		Ancient Woodland Site, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Planted Ancient Woodland Site
<p>LW - Although all PAWS on the inventory - 9b represents features remnant of both semi natural ancient woodland (0.64Ha to the north) and PAWS (1.6 Ha to the south). The PAWS type area was planted with Japanese Larch in 1960 but has since been thinned and now has significant self-regenerating Ash. The remaining area consists of pole Ash and likely planted Beech. An overhead high voltage electrical transmission line crosses this sub-compartment at the south of cpt near bridleway and this provides a linear strip of shrub layer representative of semi natural ancient woodland.</p>							
10a	8.19	Mixed broadleaves	1970	High forest	Gullies/Deep Valleys/Uneven/Rocky ground		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Ancient Woodland Site, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
<p>LW - A mixed mosaic of semi natural ancient woodland (representing 3.83Ha) and PAW (representing 4.35 Ha). The PAW area was planted with various conifers between 1970 and 1974. It now comprises of separate areas of mixed Ash, Oak and Douglas fir (1.4 Ha), almost pure Douglas fir (0.2 Ha), mixed Ash and Japanese larch (1.4 Ha), Norway spruce and Ash (0,5 Ha), Scots pine and Ash (0.8 Ha) and of mixed broadleaf mainly Ash and Sycamore (3.9 Ha). The semi natural ancient woodland area represents an island of failed conifer plantation and areas on the eastern boundary. A ruined building is located within the lower area of semi natural ancient woodland (see Conservation Feature map H1). PAWS on the inventory.</p>							

12a	8.70	Mixed conifers	1970	High forest	Archaeological features, Gullies/Deep Valleys/Uneven/Rocky ground, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc		Ancient Woodland Site, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Planted Ancient Woodland Site
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LW - ASNW on inventory. A mixed mosaic of semi natural ancient woodland (representing 2.06 Ha) and PAW (representing 6.55 Ha). The PAW site was coniferised circa 1970. The areas are defined blocks of mixed species of Japanese Larch with occasional Norway spruce (5.0 Ha), mixed Larch and Douglas fir (1.4 Ha), one small patch of pure Douglas fir (0.1 Ha), another of Scots pine (0.1 Ha). All crops with Larch in the mix and the areas of SP have a good proportion of ash regeneration in the canopy. The semi natural ancient woodland component is dominated by semi-mature cover of mixed broadleaf, mainly Ash, Hazel and Oak. North west external boundary has SMR 4034 lynchets running along the boundary line; all heavy machinery work in the area of the boundary to be subject to Glos CC approval.

13a	5.15	Mixed broadleaves	1920	High forest	Gullies/Deep Valleys/Uneven/Rocky ground, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc		Ancient Woodland Site, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
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LW - This area is ASNW on inventory, dominated by mature Beech, some of which is approaching 100 years old and is ASNW on inventory. Most of the beech is well spaced, crown thinning having taken place in 1998, with good self-regeneration of Beech and Ash in between. One area has Sycamore regenerating as well. Hazel is well developed and there are patches of Wild cherry and Scots pine with occasional Wych elm. There is significant squirrel damage to the Beech and this appears to be limited to the pole stage component and younger. A glade has been created and maintained along the top track of the compt. at ST 77021 95953.

13b	5.99	Mixed broadleaves	1960	High forest	Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc		Ancient Woodland Site, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
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LW - The major part of this sub-compartment has been clear felled of mature Beech circa 1960. No replanting has taken place. Some original and therefore mature Hazel stools, Ash and Beech remain. Natural regeneration has been particularly good, especially of Ash on the north-east facing slope. Sycamore has also regenerated and there are some very dense patches. Some removal of semi-mature and whip Sycamore has taken place over the last ten years with a small amount of beech. ASNW on inventory.

13c	1.59	Mixed conifers	1970	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc		Ancient Woodland Site, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Planted Ancient Woodland Site
<p>LW - Although not classed as ANSW or PAWS, this Cpt is essentially a PAWS area. This sub-compartment has been replanted, possibly in 1977, with Giant fir (0.4 Ha), Western hemlock (0.2 Ha), Douglas fir (0.5 Ha) and Coast redwood (0.5 Ha) the last having a significant amount of regenerating Ash and Silver birch. The area of Giant Fir and Coastal Redwood has been felled to waste in places, but the conifer canopy generally limits ground flora. This area is taking on a characteristic of its own, hence its nickname "American Corner" and being a relatively small part of Laycombe Wood there is an opportunity to allow development of the majestic coastal redwood stand.</p>							

## 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.