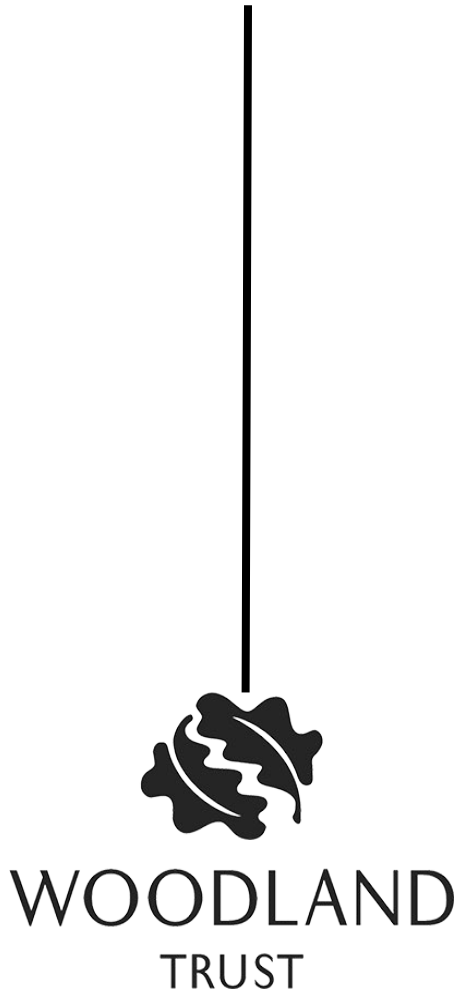
White Ponds

(Plan period – 2023 to 2028)



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

White Ponds

Location:	Steeple Morden Grid reference: TL282429 OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 153
Area:	1.45 hectares (3.58 acres)
External Designations:	Cambridgeshire Woodland Fund
Internal Designations:	N/A

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

White ponds wood exists on a previously arable field, which was planted up entirely by the local community in March of 1993. The name is derived from the appearance of many small ponds in the field during the winter months. After planting the rides were sown with a species rich wildflower meadow mixture. The wood lies on the west bank of the Guilden Morden Brook, this stream was bridged when the wood was planted, and management access is over a concrete culvert in the north-eastern corner of the wood.

The wood contains mainly ash but also includes field maple, wild cherry, birch, willow, alder, beech, oak, and broadleaved shrubs such as hazel and blackthorn. Although a small woodland, there are well managed rides included with in the original design which have developed nicely. Because of the way the rides and paths have been managed since planting,they are quite species rich with plants such as meadow sweet, ragged robin, white clover, and red campion as well as the occasional Twayblade.

All of the trees which were planted at a density of 1100 trees per hectare they have done very well. Within the planting rows there is also much evidence of ash colonisation particularly in the central northern part of the wood. Many of the ash standards and regeneration are affected by ash dieback and this is beginning to create opportunities for natural regeneration to develop through the wood.

The wood is surrounded on three sides by well-established mixed hedges, which include species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, willow, and elm as well as lots of ash, there is some dead wood in the hedges and also small headlands strips of tall herbs and bramble between the wood and the hedgerows. In addition to the main brook running along the eastern side of the wood there is a smaller feeder ditch, which runs along the west, south and northern boundaries. Water voles are known to inhabit the stream bank sides.

The wood is set on the deep rich soils in the bottom of a chalk valley and is bounded by a mixture of other land use types, arable to the west and north, horse pasture to the west, set aside to the south and a flourishing species rich meadow created and owned by the parish council to the SW. There is also an overhead electrical service that runs East/West through the wood which UK Power Networks manage the vegetation underneath and directly adjacent to the power line.

3. LONG TERM POLICY

The long-term intention for the wood is to be managed as high forest consisting of primarily native broadleaved tree and shrub species with developing standing and fallen deadwood habitat .

The wood was predominantly planted with Ash and therefore this is the dominant species, however the Ash within the woodland is affected by Ash dieback . This will have an effect on the future species composition of the wood and in time Ash will no longer be the dominant tree species within the site. Given the other tree species present in the wood such as Field Maple, Wild Cherry, Birch, Willow , Alder, Beech and Oak there is opportunity for these species to replace the Ash through a combination of natural regeneration and good forestry management practices. Species such as Oak, Birch and Field Maple will become the dominant species replacing the Ash. The Ash has a part to play in the future make up of the woodland, and where possible Ash will be left as standing deadwood habitat to further increase the structural diversity within the woodland.

Shrub species within the wood consists of species such as Hazel and Blackthorn and these should be managed on rotation, particularly along the ride edges to provide a low under storey component within the site.

The network of paths and open areas will be maintained to provide a variety of biological niches for wildlife, this includes- dead wood- standing, lying, and fallen (in a safe condition) ,hedge/scrub and tall herb communities , particularly on the outer edges of the wood near the stream as well as old hedges and open rides/paths ,with a range of varying age structure to the ride/path edges.

The woodland will be open to the public in perpetuity. Low key public access will be maintained to the site and the paths, signs, bridges, and other furniture that allow safe access for the public are to be maintained in good order. The wood is primarily for the use and enjoyment of the people of Steeple Morden parish and the other immediately neighbouring parishes. The wood will also maintain linkages to the public rights of way in the local area.

4. KEY FEATURES

4.1 f1 Informal Public Access

Description
White ponds wood was planted up as part of the Trust's Cambridgeshire Woodland Fund project. Local people were involved in the fundraising, design, planting and maintenance. Within easy walking distance of the village of Steeple Morden it is accessible from the recreation ground where there is a car park following a permissive path over the parish meadow and crossing the Brook. There are 550m of paths throughout the site and an area of open grassland near the brook. The wood is well used for quite enjoyment being far enough away from the village to provide protection from vandalism yet close enough to be accessible to most people
Significance
The wood was very much a product of the local communities interest in creating a local woodland and has proved a great success There is very little woodland of any kind in the locality , the nearest being approximately 1/.2 mile away in Guilden morden. The nearest semi natural woodland is 5km away to the north. There is no woodland open for public access within 10km's.
Opportunities & Constraints
Constraints Management access for vehicles is difficult. Parts of the wood flood in wet weather Opportunities The wood paths link in with parish public and permissive rights of way system Within easy access for the local population
Factors Causing Change
Long term Objective (50 years+)
The woodland will be open to the public in perpetuity. Low key public access will be maintained to the site and the paths, signs, bridges, and other furniture that allow safe access for the public are to be maintained in good order. The wood is primarily for the use and enjoyment of the people of Steeple Morden parish and the other immediately neighbouring parishes. The wood will also maintain linkages to the public rights of way in the local area.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)
The 500m of paths and rides are to be managed annually, ensuring works are carried out as necessary to keep the path network open and easy to use for informal public access ,as detailed in EMC Spec 2.01 Associated signage (site name/ welcome signs) to be kept in good condition at all times. Zone B Tree Safety Inspections to be carried out every 24 months .

4.2 f2 Secondary Woodland

Description
A new native woodland planted in 1993 which has already attained canopy closure over 90% of its planted areas with a top height of 12m+. The use of a range of tree and shrub species including fast growing alder, birch and willow as well as longer lived ash, oak and field maple has created an already interesting young woodland habitat for wildlife to exploit. The design also compliments the existing hedge, headland and stream side habitats by providing a range of ancillary habitats for many common species of plants and animals, scrub/ tall herb, open grassland, shaded rides and stream banks.Ash dieback has created areas of open canopy allowing natural regeneration and scrub habitat to colonise creating an increasingly diverse habitat structure
Significance
In a locality with little semi natural habitat the wood helped protect the species that had hung on in the ditch/stream habitat and old hedgerow. Cambridgeshire is one of the least wooded counties in England and this part of Cambridgeshire is one of the least wooded districts in the county
Opportunities & Constraints
Constraints It's a very small area which still has intensive arable management on two sides Opportunities The brook, ditches and hedgerows which form boundaries already contained small populations of notable plants and animals which could move into the new woodland. The rich damp soils and protected position are very good for tree growth and propagation
Factors Causing Change
Ash dieback
Long term Objective (50 years+)
Broadleaved high forest with a variety of species and ages of trees including standing and lying dead wood. The long-term intention for the wood is to be managed as high forest consisting of primarily native broadleaved tree and shrub species with developing standing and fallen deadwood habitat . The wood was predominantly planted with Ash and therefore this is the dominant species, however the Ash within the woodland are affected by Ash dieback . This will have an effect on the future species composition of the wood and in time Ash will no longer be the dominant tree species within the site. Given the other tree species present in the wood such as Field Maple, Wild Cherry, Birch, Willow

, Alder, Beech and Oak there is opportunity for these species to replace the Ash through a combination of natural regeneration and good forestry management practice. Species such as Oak, Birch and Field Maple will become the dominant species replacing the Ash. The Ash has a part to play in the future make up of the woodland, and where possible Ash will be left as standing deadwood habitat to further increase the structural diversity within the woodland.

Shrub species within the wood consists of species such as Hazel and Blackthorn and which are managed on rotation, particularly along the ride edges to provide a low under storey component within the site.

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

Biennial inspection by Site manager to check woodland health and tree safety inspection. Works to be ordered through observation actions as required. Ash Dieback has caused the ash within the wood to decline. Annually remove the declining ash within falling distance of the pedestrian path, whilst continue small scale coppicing of ride edges. Any ash that are showing signs of tolerance should be retained.

Biannual tree safety and woodland health assessment.

Annual felling of dead and failing ash within falling distance of the paths and bi annual coppice sections of ride edge to a depth of 1.5 metres. Stack all brash and timber in neat piles within the woodland away from the path edge. Oct 2024 – Oct 2026

5. WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
2024	WMM - Ride Management	Works associated with the management of existing rides/open areas for biodiversity - ride edge coppicing and thinning programmes, ditch works	March
2026	WMM - Ride Management	Works associated with the management of existing rides/open areas for biodiversity - ride edge coppicing and thinning programmes, ditch works	March

APPENDIX 1 : COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
1a	1.12	Ash	1993	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site	Cambridgeshire Woodland Fund
A new native woodland roughly rectangular in shape planted on a previously arable field in march of 1993.It has approximately 550m of paths, and rides sown with a species rich grass mixture after planting. Tree species include Ash,Field Maple, Wild Cherry, Birch, Willow, Alder , Beech and Oak Broadleaved Shrubs include Hazel & Blackthorn						

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.

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