

Gault Wood

(Plan period – 2023 to 2028)



WOODLAND
TRUST

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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

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GLOSSARY

1. SITE DETAILS

Gault Wood

Location:	March	Grid	reference:	TL399945	OS	1:50,000	Sheet	No.	143
Area:	6.47 hectares (15.99 acres)								
External Designations:	Cambridgeshire Woodland Fund								
Internal Designations:	N/A								

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

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

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

The wood is connected to the public rights of way network and has a small car park to the south east of the wood. The wood has a number of desire lines running through it however visitor numbers are relatively low. The main tree species within the wood are ash, willow and field maple.

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

The key features of the site are:

- Secondary woodland
- Informal Public Access

3. LONG TERM POLICY

In 50 years, Gault wood will be an emerging high forest, with complexity of structure, diversity of a variety of tree, shrub and plant species and strong community ties. With the ash set to decline over the next 10 years, we will expect to see a change in the dominant species within the wood. Sycamore is likely to move into the wood, and the willow and field maple may dominate further. We hope to see a more diverse range of species including birch, hazel, lime, hawthorn which will in turn give the wood a more diverse and balanced age structure.

Resilient in the face of climate change, the site will continue to benefit from the practical conservation work of local people as it develops as a space for nature. But also remain a valued and regularly visited community space for quite informal recreation.

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

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

4. KEY FEATURES

4.1 f1 Secondary Woodland

Description
Young, native broadleaf plantation woodland. Closed canopy and with an average top height of over 15m. The use of a wide range of tree and shrub species has aided the woods development. The wood is primarily oak, ash and willow but there are another 5 tree species and 7 shrub species planted, giving a reasonable amount of scrub habitat on the wide ride margins. In addition there is a well-established wildlife pond, an artificial badger set and large areas of grassland managed for wildlife. A second pond was dug in 2004 as the first was prone to drying out.
Significance
The wood is the largest area of semi natural habitat in the immediate locality. This part of Cambridgeshire is one of the least wooded districts in the country.
Opportunities & Constraints
<p>Constraints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A relatively small area -Intensive arable management on three sides (significant "edge effects") -Island habitat /Isolated from other woodland -No fencing around the area putting deer pressure on the regeneration. <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The drains, and hedgerows, which form boundaries, already act as wildlife havens for common species. This could be extended and buffered in surrounding farmland to create greater permeability for wildlife through the landscape. -A possible breeding site for the endangered water vole and newts.
Factors Causing Change
<p>Climate change - new pests and diseases.</p> <p>Natural Succession open water to wetland</p> <p>Mammal damage (deer, rabbits, hare, vole, squirrel, etc.)</p>
Long term Objective (50 years+)
Broadleaved high forest with a variety of species and ages of trees, to include old and over mature, dead wood lying and fallen as well as young seedlings and saplings . The wood to include the range of other habitat types including an aquatic habitat and open space habitat in similar proportions which exist as present. The wood will be more diverse in species with sycamore, hazel, hawthorn and silver birch likely to enter the wood, giving it a healthier age structure in 50+ years' time.
Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

A lighter management touch is desirable on this small site as it still in its early stages of development. At the moment a lot of the ash is looking relatively healthy, however it may be a different story 4/5 years down the line, with only an 80% survival rate for ash trees of this age in the wood. Parts of the wood have been recently thinned to waste (using hand tools) to encourage structural diversity. This has created a substantial fallen deadwood habitat, which is good for the great crested newts thought to be on site.

There is a need now to encourage greater regeneration within the wood, hence why we will be carrying out gradual thinning. This will allow for more regeneration of both shrub and tree species and also a better age structure. The thinning should take into account the amount of ash in some places so that large gaps are not left in the canopy. Biennial inspection in summer to monitor ash decline, identify deadwood liability/ safety risks, and monitor mammal damage to natural regeneration. The thinning operation in September 2023 will involve removal of 60-70m³ comprising of mostly ash with a small amount of willow and field maple. It will be over 4ha in compartments 1a (in the centre of the wood) and 1b (in the east of the wood).

Tree Protection and/or mammal control to be considered after inspection biennially. Depending on findings fencing may be considered to limit the pressure from mammals on the natural regeneration. Small scale coppicing on the wood edges and on internal rides, however, should continue to ensure open conditions remain between 10% - 20% of the site area, and rides are no narrower than 4m full width and stay at 9-10% of the site area.

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

4.2 f2 Informal Public Access

Description

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

There extent of the path networks is approx. 1.5km, with only one entrance into the wood, at the car park. The car park is approx. 680 Sq meters and there is only one bench located near the entrance of the wood.

Significance

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

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints

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

Opportunities

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

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

Factors Causing Change**Long term Objective (50 years+)**

Public access for pedestrians only will be maintained at the site. The wood is primarily for the use and enjoyment of the people of March and other adjoining villages. The wood will continue to link to the local public footpath networks and will be part of the much wider access provision in the area.

Facilities on site will be low key and appropriate to informal recreation at this small local site. The path network will be well managed and the entrance to the wood will be well signposted. There will continue to be the small car park which may need to be closed temporarily during the winter and when harvesting works are taking place. Community involvement in the management of the site will continue to be supported and encouraged for as long as there is local interest. Regular tree inspections will ensure the site is well maintained and as safe as reasonably practicable.

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

To maintain the site as an area of public open access, with paths cut to a minimum of 2m at least 3 times during the growing season to allow unhindered access for the public on foot. Areas of open space will not allowed to scrub up with natural regeneration, with annual mowing in August (see KF1). Entrances kept in a presentable and tidy condition in line with latest WT brand / standards. Zone B Tree Safety Inspections to be carried out every 24 months to ensure safety to the public. Access facilities will be reviewed and inspected formally once every five years to ensure an adequate standard of provision is provided at this wood.

5. WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
2023	SL - Safety / Legal Obligation Work (SODS)	Works associated with specific Health and Safety legislation or associated legal requirements such as – safety fencing of quarries, safety requirements stipulated in planning consent for car parks or entrance points etc	August
2023	WMM - Secondary Silviculture	Works associated with silvicultural operations within secondary woods to meet our primary aims of conserving woodlands and encouraging public enjoyment– such as the removal of non-natives, thinning and promotion of native trees and shrubs, creating and managing view points and providing welcoming sites for visitors	November
2024	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing pot-holes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc,	July
2024	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing pot-holes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc,	August
2024	CS - Ecological Survey & Assessment	Use of external consultants to support the provision of ecological surveys, assessment and biodiversity / species monitoring	September
2025	AW - Visitor Access Infrastructure	Works associated with the construction of a new or extension to existing car parking facilities.	May
2025	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing pot-holes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc,	July
2025	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing pot-holes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc,	August
2026	AW - Visitor Access Infrastructure	Works associated with the construction of a new or extension to existing car parking facilities.	May
2026	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing	July

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
		pot-holes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc,	
2026	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing pot-holes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc,	August
2026	WMM - Secondary Silviculture	Works associated with silvicultural operations within secondary woods to meet our primary aims of conserving woodlands and encouraging public enjoyment– such as the removal of non-natives, thinning and promotion of native trees and shrubs, creating and managing view points and providing welcoming sites for visitors	February
2027	AW - Visitor Access Infrastructure	Works associated with the construction of a new or extension to existing car parking facilities.	May
2027	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing pot-holes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc,	July
2027	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing pot-holes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc,	August
2028	AW - Visitor Access Infrastructure	Works associated with the construction of a new or extension to existing car parking facilities.	May
2028	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing pot-holes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc,	July

APPENDIX 1 : COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
1a	4.36	Ash	1994	High forest		Cambridgeshire Woodland Fund
<p>New native woodland planted on arable land between December 1994 and march 1996, primarily an oak, ash, field maple woodland with alder and willow in the lower lying areas and a shrub component of hawthorn, hazel, blackthorn and dogwood. There are however a number of other species in the mix including crab apple, large and small leaved lime, Scots pine, white willow, wayfaring tree, goat willow, guelder rose, holly and spindle. In addition there is a millennium Yew and approximately 70 disease resistant Elm's. The compartment has a overhead power line cutting across it from NE to south this is a very ride grassy ride maintained under a annual hay cutting regime, a hay cut is also taken from the circular ride that runs around the centre of the wood and from the large glade in the SW of the wood centred on the pond that was created in July of 1995. The spoil from this pond was used to bank up an artificial badger sett in the wood. No badgers have ever been recorded in the wood but many other species of wildlife have been noted including the protected and declining water vole and breeding grass snake. A large car park is located in the SE corner of the wood surrounded by banks and hedges. There are several seats and benches scattered around the path network.</p>						

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.

Registered Office:

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