

Toft 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

1. Site Details
2. Site Description
3. Long Term Policy
4. Key Features
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5. Work Programme

Appendix 1 : Compartment Descriptions

GLOSSARY

1. SITE DETAILS

Toft Wood

Location:	Toft	Grid	reference:	TL357564	OS	1:50,000	Sheet	No.	154
Area:	3.35 hectares (8.28 acres)								
External Designations:	Cambridgeshire Woodland Fund								
Internal Designations:	N/A								

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

Toft Community wood sits in an attractive setting alongside a small tributary stream of the Bourne Brook, at the North west edge of Toft Village. A public footpath runs along the edge of the eastern boundary next to the stream. The rest of the site is gently sloping to the south and east, making the area well drained for the most part, but with occasional flooding along the unplanted stream margin. A large open glade forms the centre piece of the wood where seating is available and well used by visitors via the public footpath which enters the site from Millers road and follows the eastern boundary leaving the site at the extreme northeastern corner. Other internal paths are flat but unsurfaced.

It was planted on 25th of November 1995 entirely by volunteers on previously arable land which had been grass seeded in the October prior to planting. The planting was a mix of broadleaved trees that occur in natural woodlands nearby and dominated by Oak and Ash. Establishment was impeded by a severe drought in the early years after planting, with many whips being replaced to achieve full stocking. Establishment has continued to be slow on the more exposed areas of the site, possibly with shallower soils. Ash dieback has affected the woodland greatly and many of the planted ash has succumbed to the disease creating open areas and abundant deadwood habitat within the current woodland.

Toft Wood lies on the boulder clay uplands of west Cambridgeshire, surrounded by arable land on three sides, with the stream and well tended gardens to the south. It is, however, less than 1km away from Hardwick wood SSSI, one of a string of ancient woodlands that remain in this area.

The key Features of the site are:

- Informal Public access
- Woodland creation

3. LONG TERM POLICY

The long term vision for Toft Wood is for the majority of the site to be managed as high forest consisting of primarily native broadleaved tree and shrub species, with an element of standing and fallen deadwood. The woods species mix will consist of primarily Oak and Field maple, supported by species such as Cherry , Willow , Small leaved lime and Silver birch. Ash will still be a component of the site, but this is most likely to be providing the important feature of, standing and fallen deadwood habitat within the wood due to Ash Dieback. The areas where the Ash have died and opened up the canopy, will provide areas for ground flora and natural regeneration to flourish, and provide an understorey layer.

Shrub species will include species such as Hawthorn, Hazel, Blackthorn, Dog Rose , Crab Apple , Dogwood and Spindle.

The wood will also be part of a much wider connected landscape linking Toft Wood to the nearby Hardwick Wood SSSI managed by the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire.

In addition to the native broadleaved woodland , the site will continue to provide an open area of grassland in the centre of the site . This area will be managed as open grassland and will be maintained annually to conserve its quality.

The woodland will be open to the public in perpetuity. Low key public access will be maintained at the site and the paths , signs and other furniture that allows safe access for the public will be maintained in good order. The wood is primarily for the use and enjoyment of the people of Toft Parish and the other immediately neighbouring parishes. 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 and will provide publicly accessible links between Toft Wood and the nearby Hardwick Wood.

4. KEY FEATURES

4.1 f1 Informal Public Access

Description
Toft Wood was planted up as part of the Trust's Cambridgeshire Woodland Fund project. Local people were pivotal in the fundraising, design, planting and early maintenance. Within easy walking distance of the village of Toft it is accessible from Millers Road and The public footpath network. There are 850m of paths throughout the site and a large amount of open grassland and an attractive natural stream. The wood is well used for quiet enjoyment by many locals
Significance
Promoting Informal public access is a key corporate objective for the Woodland Trust. Toft wood was very much a product of the local communities interest to create local accessible woodland and has proved a great success. There is natural woodland in the locality, but none of this is for open public use. The nearest semi natural woodland is 1km away to the west (Hardwick Wood).
Opportunities & Constraints
Opportunities -The wood is on the edge of the village and its paths are linked in with parish public rights of way system
Constraints -Winter flooding of the southern paths makes access difficult at this time. - limited on site parking
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 at the site and the paths , signs and other furniture that allows safe access for the public will be maintained in good order. The wood is primarily for the use and enjoyment of the people of Toft Parish and the other immediately neighbouring parishes. 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 and will provide publicly accessible links between Toft Wood and the nearby Hardwick Wood.
Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

The 850m 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.

Manage site safety through safety observations and inspections

-Inspection of Access features every five years by site manager

Access inspection - July 2026

-Tree Safety surveys

Zone A Tree Safety Inspections to be carried out every 24 months

Zone B Tree Safety Inspections to be carried out every 48 months

4.2 f2 New Native Woodland

Description

A young woodland which has begun to reach canopy closure. The use of a wide range of tree and shrub species has aided the woods development. The wood is primarily oak /ash but there were another 5 tree species and 7 shrub species planted giving a significant amount of scrub habitat on the glade margins. The current tree species within the woodland consists of Oak , Ash, Field Maple, Cherry and Willow. The Shrub species present in the wood are Hawthorn, Hazel, Blackthorn, Hazel and Dog rose. In addition there is a natural stream/scrub habitat on the wood edges with a lot of dead wood and large areas of grassland managed for wildlife. The Ash within the wood are suffering from Ash Dieback which has created some open areas within the woodland compartments.

Significance

Toft wood is situated on the west Cambridgeshire boulder clay uplands - one of the most wooded parts of the county so adds to the existing habitat mosaic. However the area is still well below the national average in terms of woodland cover, so even as a small island habitat, Toft wood is a significant woodland by local standards.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities

- Ash Dieback could provide the deadwood structure within the wood
- The stream, and hedgerows which form boundaries already act as wildlife havens for common species which could move into the new woodland
- There is scope to incorporate more trees into the surrounding arable landscape and link to other nearby woodland sites including Hardwick Wood SSSI

Constraints

<p>-It's a relatively small site, which still has intensive arable management on three sides</p>
<p>Factors Causing Change</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ash Dieback -Deer & Rabbits -surrounding land use change - Development or expansion of the village. -Agricultural run-off.
<p>Long term Objective (50 years+)</p>
<p>The long term vision for Toft Wood is for the majority of the site to be managed as high forest consisting of primarily native broadleaved tree and shrub species, with an element of standing and fallen deadwood. The woods species mix will consist of primarily Oak and Field maple, supported by species such as Cherry , Willow , Small leaved lime and Silver birch. Ash will still be a component of the site, but this is most likely to be providing the important feature of, standing and fallen deadwood habitat within the wood due to Ash Dieback. The areas where the Ash have died and opened up the canopy, will provide areas for ground flora and natural regeneration to flourish, and provide an understorey layer.</p> <p>Shrub species will include species such as Hawthorn, Hazel, Blackthorn, Dog Rose , Crab Apple , Dogwood and Spindle.</p> <p>The wood will also be part of a much wider connected landscape linking Toft Wood to the nearby Hardwick Wood SSSI managed by the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire.</p> <p>In addition to the native broadleaved woodland , the site will continue to provide an open area of grassland in the centre of the site . This area will be managed as open grassland and will be maintained annually to conserve its quality.</p>
<p>Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)</p>
<p>Undertake assessments of woodland health every five years, Works to be ordered through observation actions as required.</p> <p>Woodland Health Monitoring visit - July 2026</p> <p>In the areas most affected by Ash install 2 x 10m x 10m Deer exclusion plots to promote natural regeneration and ensure future canopy structure and diversity . Monitor the success of these plots three years after installation and then every five years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Install Exclosures - Winter 2025/26 <p>Enrichment planting will be undertaken within the woodland blocks, to ensure a future diverse canopy structure and to replace the loss of ash as a major canopy species.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plant 30 small leaved lime and 30 silver birch to diversify tree species dominance using 1.2m non plastic tree tubes. These are to be planted where the ash has failed in clusters of 10 trees –

Enrichment planting- December 2025.

Tree planting maintenance – manually strim around planting to maintain weed suppression for a minimum of 3 years –

May 2026, August 2026 - May 2027, August 2027 - May 2028, August 2028.

5. WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
2025	WC - Tree Planting / Seeding	Works associated with tree planting / tree seeding for woodland creation sites	December
2025	WC - Natural Regeneration Work	Physical Works undertaken to encourage/promote / protect natural regeneration – such as ground prep, fencing to protect natural regeneration , low intensity grazing	February
2026	WMM - General Site Management	Works associated with maintaining conservation and physical features within the sites such as boundary ditches, fences and walls, hedges,	May
2026	WMM - General Site Management	Works associated with maintaining conservation and physical features within the sites such as boundary ditches, fences and walls, hedges,	August
2027	WMM - General Site Management	Works associated with maintaining conservation and physical features within the sites such as boundary ditches, fences and walls, hedges,	May
2027	WMM - General Site Management	Works associated with maintaining conservation and physical features within the sites such as boundary ditches, fences and walls, hedges,	August
2028	WMM - General Site Management	Works associated with maintaining conservation and physical features within the sites such as boundary ditches, fences and walls, hedges,	May
2028	WMM - General Site Management	Works associated with maintaining conservation and physical features within the sites such as boundary ditches, fences and walls, hedges,	August

APPENDIX 1 : COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
1a	3.3	Ash	1995	High forest		Cambridgeshire Woodland Fund

This compartment comprises the whole of the wood. The wood was created under the Cambridgeshire woodland fund project and all 2525 trees were planted over two days in November 1995. The trees are planted at a density of 11,000 per hectare and are a mix of native broadleaved species mainly Oak and Ash but also including Field maple, Willow and Wild cherry as well as a mixture of 7 shrub species on the edges of the ride network, The trees were stressed in the first 2 or 3 years after planting by very dry summer conditions and losses have been replaced on frequent occasions. There is a large central glade with a number of paths emanating from it and connecting the public footpath that run over the site. The wood boundaries are well defined being the original field hedges (mixed thorn, elm) to the north and west. A natural stream and section of fence on the eastern boundary and a well-grown elm hedge along the road edge to the south. The compartment is gently sloping to the east and south on chalky boulder clay. The stream which has a 10m unplanted strip adjacent occasionally overtops its bank during the wet winter period, during these occurrences the lower parts of the wood are flooded.

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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