

Priory Wood

(Plan period – 2024 to 2029)



WOODLAND
TRUST

Management Plan Content Page

Introduction to the Woodland Trust Estate

Management of the Woodland Trust Estate

The Public Management Plan

Location and Access

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
 - 4.1 f1 Informal Public Access
 - 4.2 f2 Secondary Woodland
5. Work Programme

Appendix 1 : Compartment Descriptions

GLOSSARY

1. SITE DETAILS

Priory Wood

Location:	Burwell	Grid	reference:	TL582665	OS	1:50,000	Sheet	No.	154
Area:	8.73 hectares (21.57 acres)								
External Designations:	N/A								
Internal Designations:	Woods on Your Doorstep								

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

Priory Wood is an 8.97 hectare broadleaf woodland situated to the west of Burwell in Cambridgeshire. Burwell Woodland Group were involved with the purchase, design and planting of the woodland which took place in November 1998. It is one of 200 sites planted by the Woodland Trust to mark the Millennium under their Woods on Your Doorstep initiative. A pond has been created as the Millennium Feature.

The woodland has been planted using native broadleaf tree species; oak, ash, silver birch and field maple make up 80% of the trees, with willow, alder, bird cherry and woody shrubs being the remainder. Alder and willow have been planted into the wetter areas. The soil type ranges from peat based in the west to a chalkier, mineral soil nearer the village in the east. The planting is well established with trees reaching a height of around 15m.

The site includes three areas of open meadow. Two areas adjacent to the ancient hall and Parsonage Farm at the eastern edge are retained due to potential archaeological interest. The third area of open ground is where the three overhead power lines converge in the north. To prevent scrub encroachment, these areas are either grazed by a tenant with horses or mown annually.

To the east of the power lines, a natural stream with an old field boundary hedge containing large mature ash and oak trees divides the site north - south. This has been bridged in two places to allow easier public access around the wood. A further watercourse, an intensively managed IDB drain, forms the western boundary. This feeds the created pond via an underground pipe. A public footpath - Green Lane - runs along the inside of the southern boundary and is a conservation feature in its own right, having remained largely unchanged for decades. The main entrance is via Parish Council land to the east. Management access is from Weirs Drove to the west.

The name serves as a reminder of the Priory of St John that once occupied the site of Parsonage Farm, immediately NE of the wood. The wood lies on the very edge of the old Cambridgeshire Fens region, and although much of the surrounding landscape is flat arable farmland, locally there are more diverse habitats such as old hedgerows, spring fed streams and small groups of trees.

Key Features:

- Secondary Woodland
- Informal Public access

3. LONG TERM POLICY

Priory Wood will develop through natural process and good silvicultural management, into a well structured and resilient native broadleaved woodland.

The Woods dominant tree species will be Oak and Silver Birch with a supporting species mix of Ash, Field maple, Alder, Willows, Cherry, Crab Apple and Beech.

Ash will still be a component of the site, but will provide 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.

The shrub component of the site will include species such as Hazel, Hawthorn, Privet, Dog rose, Blackthorn and Guelder rose.

The open ground areas will be maintained to protect the archaeological features on the site and provide additional habitat diversity to the site . The millennium feature of the wood, the pond will form an additional diverse habitat to the site and combined with the open grassland will provide biodiversity benefits to the site and local area.

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 Burwell 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.

4. KEY FEATURES

4.1 f1 Informal Public Access

Description
The main access to the site is from Burwell village via Parish Council land to the east .There is a second access providing access to a public footpath that runs along the inside of the southern boundary. This path used to be the main path between the villages of Burwell and Reach, passing by the ancient hall. There is a 2300m network of internal permissive footpaths which link to the existing rights of way. Two bridges cross the central ditch providing access between the sub-compartments.
Significance
Locally low levels of accessible woodland, particularly within easy walking distance from a sizable populace such as Burwell.
Opportunities & Constraints
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-An opportunity exists to interpret the archaeology further, adding extra purpose to the woodland name.-No competing facilities in local vicinity. <p>Constraints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-The wet nature of the ground and the high usage of the site will mean that the paths can become very muddy in winter.-Relatively poor public transport combined with limited parking within the village and close to the wood.
Factors Causing Change
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Excessive poaching of paths due to wet ground conditions.-Scrub encroachment-tree disease- Ash Dieback- Fires/BBQ's/camping- damage from unauthorised vehicles
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 Burwell 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.

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

The 2600m 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.

Access improvements-

Some access improvements are required over the course of this plan, to reduce the impact of unauthorised vehicle access on the site and reduce the impact on boundary features of the site.

In the south eastern corner post and rail fencing and kissing gates should be installed to provide an improved access point to the site from the public footpath.

Installation of new fence and gates- south eastern corner- August/September 2026

The fencing along the eastern boundary of the site requires replacing over the course of this plan. This will be replaced with Post and rail fences and improved access points . In addition some post and rail fencing will be installed to protect boundary features along the southern boundary

Installation of new fence and access point improvements- August/September- 2026

Bench replacement

The bench located on the main east west path requires repair or replacement over the course of this plan.

Bench repair/replacement- August 2026

Manage site safety through safety observations and inspections.

-Associated signage (Site name/welcome signs) to be kept in good condition and regularly maintained as detailed in EMC Spec 1.01 , with a five yearly review of access facilities by the Site Manager.

Access inspection - August 2028

Tree Safety surveys

-Zone B Tree Safety Inspections to be carried out every 24 months

4.2 f2 Secondary Woodland

Description
The woodland incorporates a number of wayleaves, boundaries and archaeological remains within the site. Species have been selected to reflect the ground conditions, willow and alder being used in the wetter spots. Native broadleaf trees have been used throughout, which mirror the makeup of the surrounding hedgerows and copses. There is a proportionately large element of open ground within the wood (due to wayleaves and archaeology) adding to the potential habitat diversity within the wood. Various ancillary wildlife habitats are well established within the new wood including two water courses (one unmanaged and the other intensively so) old scrub and hedgerows, mature trees with standing and fallen dead wood.
Significance
The woodland constitutes a significant feature within the landscape and is contributing, ever increasingly, to local biodiversity. Cambridgeshire is the least wooded county in England and so any area of native broadleaf woodland is locally special in its own right.
Opportunities & Constraints
<p>Constraints:</p> <p>The wayleaves and archaeology restrict the planting on the site.</p> <p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Possibility to enhancement of the water habitats - both stream and pond. -opportunity to increase the diversity of the grass and introduce wild flowers to the open areas. (nutrient levels permitting?)
Factors Causing Change
Disease (Chalara dieback of ash)
Long term Objective (50 years+)
<p>Priory Wood will develop through natural process and good silvicultural management, into a well structured and resilient native broadleaved woodland.</p> <p>The Woods dominant tree species will be Oak and Silver Birch with a supporting species mix of Ash, Field maple, Alder, Willows, Cherry, Crab Apple and Beech.</p> <p>Ash will still be a component of the site, but will provide 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>The shrub component of the site will include species such as Hazel, Hawthorn, Privet, Dog rose, Blackthorn and Guelder rose.</p>

The open ground areas will be maintained to protect the archaeological features on the site and provide additional habitat diversity to the site . The millennium feature of the wood, the pond will form an additional diverse habitat to the site and combined with the open grassland will provide biodiversity benefits to the site and local area.

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

Woodland Management

To increase the species and structural diversity of the woodland a thinning operation will be undertaken. This will be done by coppicing and removal of some Ash alongside the paths in compartment 1a & 1b, to create a scalloped edge and to reduce any potential future tree safety works . Alongside this will be a 20% silvicultural thinning operation within compartments 1a and 1b which will provide structural diversity to the main woodland compartments .

Thinning & coppicing operation- . comp 1a,1b- Autumn 2027

Woodland Condition Monitoring

Undertake assessments of woodland health and structure every five years, Works to be ordered through observation actions as required.

-Woodland Health Monitoring visit - July 2027

Water management

Water within woodlands is an important habitat; the stream and pond will be kept free of encroaching vegetation and debris to allow these water systems to function correctly.

Ditch and Pond debris clearance- November 2028

Open Space Management

The open areas at Priory wood will be managed annually to ensure the underlying archaeological features are protected through the annual work programme.

5. WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
2025	NWH - Maintenance Work	Works associated with the maintenance of non-woodland habitats – mechanical management, hay cutting, fence and wall maintenance etc	September
2026	NWH - Maintenance Work	Works associated with the maintenance of non-woodland habitats – mechanical management, hay cutting, fence and wall maintenance etc	September
2026	AW - Visitor Access Infrastructure	Works associated with the construction of a new or extension to existing car parking facilities.	November
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,	November
2027	NWH - Maintenance Work	Works associated with the maintenance of non-woodland habitats – mechanical management, hay cutting, fence and wall maintenance etc	September
2027	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
2028	NWH - Maintenance Work	Works associated with the maintenance of non-woodland habitats – mechanical management, hay cutting, fence and wall maintenance etc	September
2028	WMM - General Site Management	Works associated with maintaining conservation and physical features within the sites such as boundary ditches, fences and walls, hedges,	November
2029	NWH - Maintenance Work	Works associated with the maintenance of non-woodland habitats – mechanical management, hay cutting, fence and wall maintenance etc	September

APPENDIX 1 : COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
1a	5.4	Alder species	1998	Min-intervention		
<p>The site has been divided into two sub-compartments, Cpt 1A lying west of the stream running generally north-south, dividing the site. It comprises of mainly peaty soils which are prone to becoming water-logged for much of the year. Therefore Alder and Willow are the dominant species planted here along with some Ash. Weeds have been a problem in the past, but have since been shaded out now the canopy has closed, however has resulted in the poor establishment of sown grass. A bench commemorating John Spence is located within a glade on the central ride. A natural regeneration plot has failed here and is now to be left as open ground, mainly due to the power lines above. There is also a pond which was created as a feature to celebrate the millennium and is still establishing. The southern boundary comprises of a water course managed by the IDB. There is some natural regeneration, mainly of ash, occurring within this area.</p>						
1b	3.5	Ash	1998	Min-intervention		
<p>Cpt 1B lays east of the stream running generally north-south, dividing the site. It comprises of mainly mineral, chalky soils which are more free draining than those found in Cpt 1A. More of the oak, ash and silver birch have therefore been planted here. Two areas remain unplanted where archaeological remains are thought to exist. These areas are grazed by horses belonging to a neighbour. There is also a green lane bordered by gappy hedgerows with mature trees which forms the southern boundary..</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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