

Highbury Fields

(Plan period – 2024 to 2029)



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
 - 4.1 f1 Mixed Habitat Mosaic
 - 4.2 f2 Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat
5. Work Programme

Appendix 1 : Compartment Descriptions

GLOSSARY

1. SITE DETAILS

Highbury Fields

Location:	Redbrook	Grid	reference:	SO535081	OS	1:50,000	Sheet	No.	162
Area:	23.34 hectares (57.67 acres)								
External Designations:	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty								
Internal Designations:	Tree For All Site								

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

Highbury fields is located within the county of Gloucestershire, on the eastern side of the wye valley and within the forest of Dean District. It is within the lower wye valley landscape area and close to the village of Redbrook. There is no parking provision near the site but it can be accessed on foot via a byway directly from Redbrook, about 1.5 KM, known as Coxbury lane. There are no footpaths within the site and access is limited to the byway, which connects to the Offa's dyke footpath to the north and the south of the site. From Highbury fields there are direct connections to Cadora woods and Highbury woods NNR via Coxbury lane.

Highbury Fields consists of ten former farm fields over an area of 22 hectares, now supporting unimproved, semi-improved grassland and areas of scrub, transitional woodland habitat, mature hedgerows and woody banks (lining Coxbury Lane), all of which serve to connect Cadora Woods in the west to the adjacent Highbury Wood National Nature Reserve (NNR) in the east. Highbury fields therefore creates a vital habitat corridor between the two ancient Woodlands, and this will be enhanced by allowing the northern portion of the site to naturally succeed into Woodland following the cessation of grazing. Compartments 1a,b,c,d,e,f and g saw a phased reduction in grazing between 2018 and 2023, and grazing infrastructure will gradually be removed over the next management plan period. The current habitat is a mixture of scrub, containing birch and willow, with Bracken and Woodland flora including primrose, dogs mercury, bluebell and pignut.

Compartments 2a,b,c,d and e are semi-improved grassland characteristic of MG5 and MG9 grassland as classed under the national vegetation classification. These contain a wide botanical diversity, maintained through seasonal grazing, and includes grassland species such as knapweed, cowslip, common century and sweet vernal. At present, there is no water provision in these fields but this will be installed within the next management plan period in order to ensure a sustainable management of grazing for this important habitat.

3. LONG TERM POLICY

The long-term policy for the Mixed habitat mosaic is to maintain a rich and diverse transitional habitat with an intimate mixture of open ground, scrub and scattered trees linking Codora Woods with Highbury woods. It will be maintained through periodic cycles of irregular mowing, thinning and cutting of scrub, providing a diverse and dynamic structure. This diverse structure will allow for both permanent and temporary open spaces throughout the compartment, where nectar sources can be provided by flowering plants and shrubs. cyclical scrub management will take place in order to maintain areas of open glades and transitional habitat. . Tree regeneration will occur throughout the site

and deadwood levels will be maintained above the UKWAS requirements of 20m³/ha throughout the woodland. Any non-native invasive species shall be eradicated, and any further incursions shall be controlled. Deer populations will be maintained at a low level, enabling ecological function without a detrimental effect on the habitat.

The long-term objective for the Semi-Natural grassland at Highbury fields is to maintain a rich and diverse sward, appropriate to the soil and in line with the national vegetation classification of MG5 and MG9 grassland. Coarse vegetation, such as Bracken and bramble, will be limited to the field margins and scrub will not threaten the condition of the sward. Mature hedgerows will form rich wildlife corridors between Cadora woods and Highbury woods NNR, containing veteran trees and deadwood.

Access along the byway and into Cadora Woods will be maintained and both safety and tree safety checks will be routinely carried out in line with the Woodland Trust's policies.

4. KEY FEATURES

4.1 f1 Mixed Habitat Mosaic

Description
Highbury Fields consists of ten former farm fields over an area of 22 hectares, now supporting unimproved, semi-improved grassland and areas of scrub, transitional woodland habitat, mature hedgerows and woody banks (lining Coxbury Lane), all of which serve to connect Cadora Woods in the west to the adjacent Highbury Wood National Nature Reserve (NNR) in the east. Highbury fields therefore creates a vital habitat corridor between the two ancient Woodlands, and this will be enhanced by allowing the northern portion of the site to naturally succeed into Woodland following the cessation of grazing. Compartments 1a,b,c,d,e,f and g saw a phased reduction in grazing between 2018 and 2023, and grazing infrastructure will gradually be removed over the next management plan period. The current habitat is a mixture of scrub, containing birch and willow, with Bracken and Woodland flora including primrose, dogs mercury, bluebell and pignut. Compartment 1g, historically known as Bell Charity Wood, consists of mostly hazel and birch with some ash, willow and field maple over a ground flora dominated by Bracken and bramble. Open glades are frequent throughout and the canopy is even aged, with a hazel understorey. Compartment 1e was planted with mixed broadleaves in 2004. Coxbury lane runs through the middle of compartment 1 and land slopes steeply either side, limiting access to machinery.
Significance
Ancient woodland within the Wye Valley is of national and international importance due to its SAC and SSSI designations for rare woodland habitat types and associated species the Wye Valleys Woods is considered one of the most important areas of woodland habitat in the UK. The developing secondary Woodland at Highbury fields provides a vital landscape corridor between two ancient woodlands and provides a buffer to both, allowing rare species to expand and move across the landscape.
Opportunities & Constraints
-Increase deadwood abundance; -Increase structural diversity; -Increase ground flora abundance and species diversity; -Uneven and steep topography with limited access;
Factors Causing Change
-Impact from deer, squirrels and rabbits on natural regeneration and ground flora; -Pests and diseases, notably ash dieback; -Potential impact of escaped livestock from grazed area (compartment 2). -Potential misuse of the site from off-road vehicles using Coxbury lane.

Long term Objective (50 years+)
The long-term policy is to maintain a rich and diverse transitional habitat with an intimate mixture of open ground, scrub and scattered trees linking Codora Woods with Highbury woods. It will be maintained through periodic cycles of irregular mowing, thinning and cutting of scrub, providing a diverse and dynamic structure. This diverse structure will allow for both permanent and temporary open spaces throughout the compartment, where nectar sources can be provided by flowering plants and shrubs. cyclical scrub management will take place in order to maintain areas of open glades and transitional habitat. Tree regeneration will occur throughout the site and deadwood levels will be maintained above the UKWAS requirements of 20m ³ /ha throughout. Any non-native invasive species shall be eradicated, and any further incursions shall be controlled. Deer populations will be maintained at a low level, enabling ecological function without a detrimental effect on the habitat.
Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)
-Phased removal of internal fencing. -To carry out a deer impact assessment to inform future deer management. -Management of scrub to maintain open glades and areas of transitional habitat. -An allowance for natural regeneration of native trees and shrubs to occur across all sub compartments.

4.2 f2 Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat

Description
Compartments 2a,b,c,d and e are semi-improved grassland characteristic of MG5 and MG9 grassland as classed under the national vegetation classification. These contain a wide botanical diversity, maintained through seasonal grazing, and includes grassland species such as knapweed, cowslip, common century and sweet vernal. At present, there is no water provision in these fields but this will be installed within the next management plan period in order to ensure a sustainable management of grazing for this important habitat. The fields are separated by mature hedgerows with many veteran and notable trees including species of small leaved lime, oak and ash. Cadora woods borders compartments 2a,d,c and d to the west and compartment 2e borders Highbury woods NNR to the east. The byway of Coxbury lane separates compartments 2a,b,c and d from compartment 2e. The hedgerow boundaries along Coxbury lane also contain many veteran and notable trees, including species of small leaved lime and Holly.
Significance
Species rich grassland has seen a 97% decline in the last century. There are few examples of species rich grassland remaining in the lower wye valley landscape and its presence compliments the surrounding ancient and secondary Woodland.

Opportunities & Constraints
-poor access to site with narrow steep lanes -steep and uneven terrain with limited access during winter months -difficulties associated with finding and retaining suitable graziers -no water provision for grazing -reseeding to improve species composition
Factors Causing Change
-encroachment of rank or coarse vegetation -nutrient enrichment from environmental pollution, changing soil chemistry and increasing nutrient levels -scrub/ tree growth -Climate change causing drought damage, soil desiccation, increased runoff/ wash-out during storm events or change in species composition. -Detrimental impact caused by overgrazing or poaching
Long term Objective (50 years+)
The long-term objective for the Semi-Natural grassland at Highbury fields is to maintain a rich and diverse sward, appropriate to the soil and in line with the national vegetation classification of MG5 and MG9 grassland. Coarse vegetation, such as Bracken and bramble, will be limited to the field margins and scrub will not threaten the condition of the sward. Mature hedgerows will form rich wildlife corridors between Cadora woods and Highbury woods NNR, containing veteran trees and deadwood.
Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)
-The installation of water infrastructure to facilitate grazing by cattle -Removal of scrub within the grazing area -Repair of fences and grazing infrastructure -Timely grazing by a combination of cattle and sheep to aid in the restoration and diversification of the sward. -Manage bracken and bramble to reduce its extent through cutting. -Further diversify the sward through seeding or the spreading of green hay.

5. WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
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APPENDIX 1 : COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
1a	1.66	NULL	2023	Non-wood habitat	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Grazing ceased in 2023 following an ecological assessment. This compartment will be allowed to naturally succeed into woodland.						
1b	1.34	NULL	2023	Non-wood habitat	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Grazing ceased in 2023 following an ecological assessment. This compartment will be allowed to naturally succeed into woodland.						
1c	1.44	Goat willow	2020	Non-wood habitat	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Formally rough pasture with some scrub. Cadora woods borders this compartment on two sides. Grazing of this compartment ceased in 2020 as there were no remaining remnants of open habitat and little forage for livestock. This compartment will be allowed to succeed into woodland.						
1d	0.99	Silver birch	2023	Non-wood habitat	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Grazing ceased in 2023 following an ecological assessment. This compartment will be allowed to naturally succeed into woodland.						
1e	0.46	Wild cherry/gean	2004	Non-wood habitat	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
Planted in 2004 with mixed broadleaf species on a former pasture.						
1f	2.35	Silver birch	2023	Non-wood habitat	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Grazing ceased in 2023 following an ecological assessment. This compartment will be allowed to naturally succeed into woodland.						
1g	3.22	Ash	1950	Non-wood habitat	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Formerly known as Bell Charity wood, it has been managed as a wood pasture but also contains remnants of coppice and mature trees. Most of the compartment has a closed canopy but glades occur throughout. Woodland ground flora exists and deadwood is low or absent						
2a	1.64	NULL	1800	Non-wood habitat	Management factors (eg grazing etc), Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
MG5 grassland managed by low intensity grazing and late summer topping to suppress coarse vegetation. See 2023 nvc survey for species list.						
2b	2.09	NULL	1800	Non-wood habitat	Management factors (eg grazing etc)	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
MG5 grassland managed by low intensity grazing and late summer topping to suppress coarse vegetation. See 2023 nvc survey for species list.						
2c	1.53	NULL	1800	Non-wood habitat	Management factors (eg grazing etc)	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
MG5 grassland managed by low intensity grazing and late summer topping to suppress coarse vegetation. See 2023 nvc survey for species list.						

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
2d	4.1	NULL	1800	Non-wood habitat	Management factors (eg grazing etc)	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
MG5 grassland managed by low intensity grazing and late summer topping to suppress coarse vegetation. See 2023 nvc survey for species list.						
2e	2.5	NULL	1800	Non-wood habitat	Management factors (eg grazing etc)	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
MG9 grassland managed by low intensity grazing and late summer topping to suppress coarse vegetation. See 2023 nvc survey for species list.						

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:

The Woodland Trust, Kempton Way, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 6LL.

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