

Woodland Trust Management Plan

Little Foxes Copse

(Plan period – 2022 to 2027)



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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2. Site Description
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5. Work Programme

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GLOSSARY

1. SITE DETAILS

Little Foxes Copse

Location:	Hadlow Down Grid reference: TQ541260 OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 188
Area:	5.20 hectares (12.85 acres)
External Designations:	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Internal Designations:	Woods on Your Doorstep

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

Little Foxes Copse is a recent secondary woodland site comprising of two ex-sheep pastures planted with mixed native broadleaved trees and woody shrubs in two phases: 1991/1992; 2000/2001. It is situated in the East Sussex High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and National Character Area (NCA) in between the villages of Hadlow Down, Five Ashes and Rotherfield. The NCA is characterised by east-west sandstone ridges and valleys covered by a mixture of fields, small woodlands and farmsteads connected by historic routeways. Woodland accounts for 26% of the NCA with the majority being ancient (defined as existing since at least 1600AD). The site is on level ground or a south-facing slope with seasonally waterlogged soils, mainly on Wadhurst Clay.

The earlier planting (Compartment 2a, originally known as Little Foxes Field) was established on a 3m x 3m spacing in straight rows and was linked to Stonehurst Lane by a narrow strip of planting (mainly shrubs) along the public footpath that crosses the site. The site was partly funded and planted by the English Townswomen's Guild. A strip along the boundary with Broadreed Wood (ancient semi-natural woodland to the north-east) was left to naturally colonise with trees. It now contains alder, birch, oak, hazel and blackthorn.

The second phase of planting (Cpt 1a) was one of the 200 sites planted by the Woodland Trust as part of the 'Woods On Your Doorstep' (WOYD) campaign to mark the Millennium. This area was planted on a 2m x 2m spacing in sinuous curves following the line of the wide central ride. The design of the planting was done in conjunction with the local community to blend in with the landscape and retain views for neighbouring houses. The main species were oak, ash and hornbeam. The area closest to Stonehurst Lane was planted predominantly with shrubs (mainly hazel) and smaller trees (e.g. field maple, crab apple) in order not to lose the view from the lane. The remaining grassland on the main ride and also under the younger trees in Cpt 1a is of good conservation value with species such as common spotted orchid, birdsfoot trefoil, lesser stitchwort, selfheal, agrimony and fleabane.

All the major planted species except ash have been heavily damaged by grey squirrels and ash has been significantly affected by ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) since at least 2014.

There is a surfaced parking area at the entrance to the site where the public footpath leaves the lane. There are short circular walks from the entrance.

3. LONG TERM POLICY

In the long term (50 years +) Little Foxes Copse is expected to develop into a native broadleaved woodland with a high forest structure. Variation in habitat will be provided by wide, grassy rides. Some ride-side management will be necessary to maintain the open aspect of the site in the future. This will add structural diversity to the wooded element as the coppiced trees and shrubs regrow.

As the woodland develops it will provide a buffer to adjoining and nearby ancient woodlands (Broadreed and Fox Woods) and will link the two. It is expected that both tree and ground flora species from Broadreed Wood will continue to colonise parts of the site as has started to happen in both compartments already.

The impacts of deer, squirrels and tree diseases (particularly ash dieback) will change the initial species composition of the planted trees with natural regeneration filling in the gaps with species such as oak, birch, goat willow, alder, hazel and blackthorn. The felling of some dead or badly affected trees will be necessary for public safety.

Annual ride/path maintenance and periodic rideside management will maintain and improve public access but the site infrastructure and visitor numbers will remain low key due to its small size and rural location.

4. KEY FEATURES

4.1 F1 Secondary Woodland

Description
<p>Most of Compartment 1a was planted in 2001 as part of the Trust's Woods on Your Doorstep (WOYD) campaign to mark the millennium. A community planting day was attended by people from local villages. Both compartments are an extension to, and buffer zone for the neighbouring ancient semi-natural woodland, Broadreed Wood. Main planted tree species are pedunculate oak, ash, wild cherry, field maple, hazel, birch, rowan and crab apple. Woody shrubs include spindle, Guelder rose, hawthorn, blackthorn and hazel.</p> <p>Cpt 1a was planted on 2m x 2m spacing in curved lines following the edge of the wide central ride. Cpt 2a was planted with oak, ash, birch and hazel in 1992 on 3m x 3m spacing in straight rows.</p> <p>Subsequent losses and damage to planted trees from deer, squirrels and ash dieback are beginning to change the species composition of the site with natural colonisation by blackthorn, hazel, alder, birch and oak supplementing the mix.</p> <p>The site lies on Wadhurst Clay with its seasonally water-logged soils.</p>
Significance
<p>Extending and buffering ancient woodland is seen as being the best way of protecting them from threats such as climate change, intensive agricultural activities and the ecological problems caused by fragmentation and reduction of habitat.</p> <p>The site lies within the heavily wooded High Weald which has good woodland connectivity although this exacerbates the problems with grey squirrels.</p>
Opportunities & Constraints
<p>Constraints: mammal damage; clay soils; small site.</p> <p>Opportunities: to allow site to develop naturally with colonisation by native trees and plants from surrounding woods and hedges.</p>
Factors Causing Change
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Natural succession to high forest with natural regeneration of oak, ash, alder, hazel, blackthorn and goat willow.- Browsing and bark stripping damage by deer and grey squirrels.

- Loss of species such as ash to disease.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The species composition and structure of the woodland will largely be left to develop by natural process. It is likely that ash will become a very minor component, limited to a few disease-tolerant trees. Where oak is badly affected by squirrel damage and where ash dies or is felled for safety reasons, the gaps created in the canopy will allow a mix of species to arise from natural regeneration including oak, birch, alder, hazel and blackthorn. Although affected by squirrel damage, hornbeam is likely to continue to be a significant species on the site as it is more tolerant of the damage and the heavy wet soils.

Some canopy gaps further away from seed sources may become more permanent and be dominated by grassland species or bramble. The site should have a minimum of 70% tree cover.

The ride network should remain open and with good quality grassland habitat present. Shrub-dominated ride edges will grade into the surrounding high forest woodland and not encroach onto the main central ride in Cpt 1a.

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

During the plan period (2022-27) the site will be monitored for the progress of ash dieback, the impacts of mammal damage and subsequent regeneration of trees within any gaps created. Ride edges will be managed to maintain access along narrow paths and keep wide rides open.

- Periodic monitoring of tree disease, mammal damage, natural regeneration of native tree species and overall canopy cover (min 70%). Due in 2025 and as part of the formal Woodland Condition Assessment in 2027.
- Periodic ride management works based on assessments above.

4.2 F2 Connecting People with woods & trees

<p>Description</p> <p>Little Foxes Copse is situated approximately 1.25 miles north-west of Five Ashes and 1.5 miles north-east of Hadlow Down (pop: 875). The larger villages of Mayfield (pop: 3718) and Rotherfield (pop: 3208) are approx. 3 miles away. The site is used by local people, mainly for dog walking (WT access category B: 5 - 15 people using one entrance per day).</p> <p>There is a small surfaced parking area on Stonehurst Lane suitable for 4 cars. From here, via a kissing gate, a public footpath leads SE along the edge of Cpt 1a and crosses into Cpt 2a via a culvert in a steep-sided small valley. In addition both compartments have permissive paths allowing short circular walks. In Cpt 1a there is a path around the outside of the site plus a wide central ride and a narrow path through the planted trees. All paths and rides are grassy and are mowed annually. Soils are clay-based and prone to water-logging.</p>
<p>Significance</p> <p>The footpath is part of a good local path network allowing walkers access to this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The informal access within the site allows local residents a safe and easy walk for dogs and children. The site is also used by picnickers.</p>
<p>Opportunities & Constraints</p> <p>Constraints: wet ground conditions; steep slopes leading into the valley between the 2 parts of the site; sheep grazing in adjoining fields (issues with dogs).</p>
<p>Factors Causing Change</p> <p>Internal and external views will change as the trees grow.</p>
<p>Long term Objective (50 years+)</p> <p>The site will continue to have low-key public access with minimal infrastructure. The public footpath and permissive paths leading from it will be maintained to allow unhindered access as well as maintaining the grassland habitat within the site.</p> <p>The parking area will be maintained at its current size in a safe condition.</p>
<p>Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)</p> <p>Maintain public access by regular mowing/trimming and regular inspections of infrastructure and tree safety.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual path cut (July). - Zone B summer tree safety survey every 2 years (2022/2024/2026). - Annual site hazards/infrastructure inspection: culvert, gates, benches (Sept).

5. WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
2022	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
2023	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
2023	WMM - Ride Management	Works associated with the management of existing rides/open areas for biodiversity - ride edge coppicing and thinning programmes, ditch works	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
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	WMM - Ride Management	Works associated with the management of existing rides/open areas for biodiversity - ride edge coppicing and thinning programmes, ditch works	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,	July

APPENDIX 1 : COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
1a	3.25	Oak (pedunculate)	2001	High forest		Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Woodland creation site planted winter 2000/2001 with mixed native broadleaves (trees and shrubs) on a 2m x 2m spacing. Shelters removed 2011. See Key Feature description for species. Strip of P92 mixed broadleaves along public footpath running along western edge.						
2a	1.91	Oak (pedunculate)	1992	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Woodland creation site planted winter 1991/1992 with mixed native broadleaves on a 3m x 3m spacing. Heavy squirrel damage to oak and birch. See Key Feature description for species.						

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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