

Polebrook & Crow

(Plan period – 2021 to 2026)



WOODLAND
TRUST

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Introduction to the Woodland Trust Estate

The Woodland Trust owns and cares for well over 1,250 sites covering almost 30,000 hectares (ha) across the UK. This includes more than 4,000ha of ancient semi-natural woodland and almost 4,000ha of non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites and we have created over 5,000ha of new native woodland. We also manage other valuable habitats such as flower-rich grasslands, heaths, ponds/lakes and moorland.

Our Vision is:

“A UK rich in native woods and trees for people and wildlife.”

To realise all the environmental, social and economic benefits woods and trees bring to society, we:

- **Create Woodland** – championing the need to hugely increase the UK’s native woodland and trees.
- **Protect Woodland** – fighting to defend native woodland, especially irreplaceable ancient woodland and veteran trees; there should be no loss of ancient woodland
- **Restore Woodland** – ensuring the sensitive restoration of all damaged ancient woodland and the re-creation of native wooded landscapes.

Management of the Woodland Trust Estate

All our sites have a management plan which is freely accessible via our website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) under licence FSC-C009406 and through independent audit.

The following principles provide an overarching framework to guide the management of all our sites but we recognise that all woods are different and that their management also needs to reflect their local landscape, history and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives.

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene in our woods when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity, safety and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.
2. We establish new native woodland for all the positive reasons set out in our Conservation Principles, preferably using natural regeneration but often by planting trees, particularly when there are opportunities for involving people.
3. We provide free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe. Where possible, we pro-actively engage with people to help them appreciate the value of woods and trees.
4. The long term vision for all our ancient woodland sites is to restore them to predominantly native species composition and semi-natural structure, a vision that equally applies to our secondary woods.
5. Existing semi-natural open ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained and new open ground habitats created where appropriate.
6. The natural and cultural heritage value of sites is taken into account in our management and in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.
7. Land and woods can generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We therefore consider the appropriateness of opportunities to generate income from our Estate to help support our aims.
8. We work with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders in developing the management of our woods. We recognise the benefits of local community woodland ownership and management. Where appropriate we encourage our woods to be used for local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.
9. We use and offer the Estate where appropriate, for the purpose of demonstration, evidence gathering and research associated with the conservation, recreational and sustainable management of woodlands. We maintain a network of sites for long-term monitoring and trials leading to reductions in plastics and pesticides.
10. Any activities we undertake are in line with our wider Conservation Principles, conform to sustainable forest management practices, are appropriate for the site and balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

The Public Management Plan

This public management plan describes the site and sets out the long term aims for our management and lists the Key Features which drive our management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site – their significance is outlined together with our long, 50 years and beyond, and our short, the next 5 years, term objectives for the management and enhancement of these features. The short term objectives are complemented by an outline Work Programme for the period of this management plan aimed at delivering our management aims.

Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and we continually monitor our sites to assess the success of our management, therefore this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme.

Please either consult The Woodland Trust website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

or contact the Woodland Trust

operations@woodlandtrust.org.uk

to confirm details of the current management programme.

A short glossary of technical terms can be found at the end of the plan.

Location and Access

Location maps and directions for how to find and access our woods, including this site, can be found by using the following link to the Woodland Trust web-site which contains information on accessible woodlands across the UK

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/find-woods/>

In Scotland access to our sites is in accordance with the Land Reform Act (of Scotland) 2003 and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

In England, Wales and NI, with the exception of designated Public Rights of Ways, all routes across our sites are permissive in nature and where we have specific access provision for horse riders and/or cyclists this will be noted in the management plan.

The Management Plan

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GLOSSARY

1. SITE DETAILS

Polebrook & Crow

Location:	Botcheston, Thornton Grid reference: SK481066 OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 140
Area:	3.68 hectares (9.09 acres)
External Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, National Forest
Internal Designations:	N/A

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

This holding is made up of two Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands both within the National Forest and the ancient Charnwood Forest - Crow Wood to the south and Polebrook to the north. They are separated by approximately 200 m of land which is owned by the Leicestershire Forest Golf Centre, with the fairways and associated woodlands of the golf course surrounding both sites to some degree. Charnwood Forest makes up the eastern edge of the National Forest and is an unexpected area of low hills and woodlands just outside of Leicester.

Polebrook Wood, which is roughly rectangular, lies immediately east of Markfield Lane. Polebrook appears to have been clear-felled in the mid 20th Century and regenerated with predominantly Oak, Ash, Silver birch and Goat willow. It had remained unmanaged until acquisition by the Trust in 1997 but since then the whole wood has been selectively thinned in three annual phases which were completed in 2002.

There is now a well-spaced open canopy of predominantly Oak with some coppice of Oak and Ash, Hazel, Malus and Holly forming an under storey. Within the new light environment bramble proliferates but there are some isolated areas of Bluebell, Honeysuckle, Dog's mercury and other ancient woodland plants. The only possible entrance into the wood is from a busy A road and along a narrow grass verge, meaning encouraging access into this property is a health and safety issue. A single permissive circular path was established with access from the busy Markfield Lane but as this appeared to be little used by the Public, maintenance of the path has been halted meaning that public access into Polebrook wood is restricted.

Crow Wood also appears to possess the characteristics of an Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland. There is considerable variation in canopy species, age class and structure and a diverse ground flora including a number of ancient woodland indicator species including Bluebell, Dog's mercury and Yellow archangel. Pole Brook runs through the centre of Crow wood. This brook has steep banks and at times of flood is a fast moving brook more characteristic of higher, wilder countryside than lowland Leicestershire.

Crow Wood straddles a well-used bridleway which is part of the Sustrans network and connects the large Trust holdings of Pear Tree and Burroughs Woods with Markfield Lane and Martinshaw Wood beyond.

The key features for the property are the ancient semi natural woodland and informal public access, although this latter is only appropriate to Crow Wood.

3. LONG TERM POLICY

The long term objective of the site is to maintain a thriving broadleaved woodland, dominated by oak and birch but with ash and cherry also making up the species diversity and exhibiting a diverse age structure, from naturally regenerating seedlings through to old growth characteristics. Standing deadwood will be retained where it is safe to do so. Diversity of wildlife will be well established, tying the site in with the other important habitats surrounding it. Woodland management will only be undertaken when woodland condition assessments show that there is a need to encourage biodiversity or improve the structure of the woodland with interventions.

The site will continue to remain open to the public to enjoy quiet, informal recreation. The wood will be made as safe as practical for visitors through regular tree safety inspections as per Woodland Trust Internal Guidance and best practice. The public bridleway will be maintained to a high standard.

4. KEY FEATURES

4.1 f1 Informal Public Access

Description
<p>Polebrook Wood had a circular path established within it after purchase by the WT. It was clearly unused by the public so the decision to stop maintaining it was taken. The only way into the Polebrook wood was via a busy A road, walking along a narrow grass verge. The risks of gaining entry to the woodland far outweigh the benefits of access so there is no plan to encourage access into this woodland.</p> <p>There is limited parking in a small layby on Markfield Road just to the north of Polebrook Wood. Access to Crow Wood is through a metal kissing gate and along the surfaced bridleway route for 450m. This bridleway, the well maintained, metalled surfaced Ratby-Thornton cycleway and sustrans route, also runs for 500m along Crow Woods eastern boundary and attracts a large number of visitors who pass through this narrow stretch of woodland via its two entrances. The southern entrance is into Burroughs wood, where the metalled surface continues until eventually it reaches a chicane entrance.</p> <p>Access is also available to Crow Wood via the Woodland Trusts adjacent site of Burroughs Wood, there is a WT car park just off Burroughs Road at the eastern end of the site, and directions to here can be found through the Burroughs Wood Management Plan. The car park at the golf club is private and for members only.</p> <p>There is no available information as regards public conveniences but it is believed that there are none within 5 miles of the woodlands. Bus stops are at the Golf Club to the south of the woodlands and at the nearby village of Botcheston. Further information on public transport can be found through the traveline website at www.traveline.org.uk.</p>
Significance
<p>The bridleway within Crow Wood forms part of an important link between Ratby and Thornton for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders. For much of its length it is within the Trust holdings of Pear Tree, Burroughs and Polebrook and Crow Woods and has links over Markfield Rd into the large PAWS woodland Martinshaw.</p>
Opportunities & Constraints
<p>Little opportunity for further access development within the woodland as it is already well served by bridleway and limited by a busy A road, although it does provide part of a much larger route along both the cycleway and through adjoining Woodland Trust properties of Burroughs Wood, Pear Tree Wood and Martinshaw Woods.</p>
Factors Causing Change

Ash Die Back needs to be monitored in the large ash trees that overhang Crow wood along the route of the bridleway. It is easy to imagine that some safety work will have to happen here during this plan period and this will be monitored with regular tree safety inspections, with the reports being saved to file.
Long term Objective (50 years+)
Maintain the current levels of public access across the Woodland Trust ownership, whilst ensuring that all measures to keep visitors safe are in place.
Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)
Sustrans should undertake maintenance of the Bridleway surface but vegetation from the sides of the bridleway will need to be kept in check. The mature trees which line the bridleway are inspected annually to ensure public safety. Access provision to the site will be low key. Basic welcome signage at the two entrances will be maintained.

4.2 f2 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Description
Two separate woodland areas - Polebrook Wood was apparently clear-felled in the mid 20th Century and regenerated with Oak, Ash, Silver birch and some Goat willow, there is an understorey of Oak and Ash coppice, Hazel, Holly, Hawthorn and Malus. The ground layer is dominated by bramble but there are areas of Bluebell, Dog's mercury and other ancient woodland species. Crow Wood has two basic elements: A triangular northern section where mature Oaks dominate the open canopy with an understorey of Hawthorn, Holly, Hazel and Elder, creating a dense understorey in some areas whilst in the more open areas there is some regeneration of Ash; and a narrow southern section which accommodates the newly surfaced bridleway, a deeply incised ditch/stream, ancient banks and little more than two parallel lines of ancient boundary trees. Here the species include Oak, Ash and Field maple with an understorey of Holly, Hazel, Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Malus.
Significance
Both these small woods provide a semi-natural ancient woodland nucleus to the newly created woodland of the National Forest and provide the potential for the colonisation of the new woodland and surrounding golf course, by ancient woodland communities of plants and animals. They also contribute significantly on a landscape scale to the mosaic of farmland, woodland, both newly created and established, and leisure facilities in the form of golf courses.
Opportunities & Constraints
There is little opportunity available with the woodland given its position within an active golf course, there are, however sufficient emerging recruits and pockets of natural regeneration for the species distribution to be maintained in perpetuity. The woodland may require a more active approach to tree safety work given the level of public usage along the bridleway and given that it is bounded on three sides by a well-used golf course.
Factors Causing Change

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long term objective of the site is to maintain a thriving broadleaved woodland, comprised of a variety of native species and exhibiting a diverse age structure, from naturally regenerating seedlings through to old growth characteristics. Standing deadwood will be retained where it is safe to do so. Diversity of wildlife will be well established, tying the site in with the other important habitats surrounding it. Woodland management will only be undertaken when woodland condition assessments show that there is a need to encourage biodiversity or improve the structure of the woodland with interventions.

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

Minimum intervention within this current plan period should see the retention of broadleaved high forest, with no other works envisaged other than required tree safety. A Woodland Condition Assessment will be undertaken prior to the next management plan review.

5. WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
2021	SL - Tree Safety Works - Zone B	Work associated with planned tree safety works alongside routes such as paths and rides within the woodland	October
2023	SL - Tree Safety Emergency Work	Work associated with unplanned emergency tree safety works – such as clearance of fallen trees/branches and associated repairs	August
2023	SL - Tree Safety Works - Zone B	Work associated with planned tree safety works alongside routes such as paths and rides within the woodland	October
2024	SL - Tree Safety Works - Zone B	Work associated with planned tree safety works alongside routes such as paths and rides within the woodland	December
2025	SL - Tree Safety Works - Zone B	Work associated with planned tree safety works alongside routes such as paths and rides within the woodland	December

APPENDIX 1 : COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
1a	1.96	Oak (pedunculate)	1950	High forest		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, National Forest
<p>Polebrook Wood, roughly rectangular in shape lies immediately east of Markfield Lane. Ancient Semi Natural Woodland that was apparently clear-felled in the mid 20th Century and has regenerated with predominantly Oak, Ash, Silver birch and some Goat willow . A considerable amount of thinning was completed by the Woodland Trust in 2002. Well-spaced Oak now dominates the open canopy and there is an understorey of Oak and Ash coppice, Hazel, Holly, Hawthorn and Malus. The ground layer is dominated by bramble but there are areas of Bluebell and Dog's mercury in those locations where the canopy is closed and lower light levels discourage the proliferation of bramble.</p>						
2a	1.67	Oak (pedunculate)	1880	High forest		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, National Forest
<p>Crow Wood - Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, has two basic elements. A triangular northern section where mature Oaks dominate the open canopy and a narrow southern section which accommodates the newly surfaced bridleway, a deeply incised ditch/stream, ancient banks and little more than two parallel lines of ancient boundary trees. Here the species include Oak, Ash and Field maple.</p> <p>In the northern section Hawthorn, Holly, Hazel and Elder create a dense understorey in some areas whilst in the more open areas there is the regeneration of Ash. In the narrow southern section the understorey of Holly, Hazel, Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Crab apple is almost continuous.</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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