

WOODLAND

LOCAL HABITAT ACTION PLAN FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH Updated December 2008

Lowland mixed deciduous woodland, the associated understory and ground flora contain some of the most important assemblages of animals, birds and plants of any British habitat. These woodlands have great landscape, cultural and historical importance in the county.

Of all the various types of woodland it is Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland that contains some of the most important assemblages of woodland wildlife. Some ASNW were previously coniferised, and some recent or secondary deciduous woodland can be of significant conservation importance e.g. Holme Fen.

1 DEFINITION

Ancient Woodland – Land that has had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 and may be:

Ancient Semi-natural Woodland (ASNW) – Ancient Semi-natural Sites that have retained the original native tree and shrub cover that has not been planted, although it may have been managed by coppicing or felling and allowed to regenerate naturally.

Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) – Ancient woodland sites where the original tree cover has been felled and replaced by planting, usually with conifers and during the last century.

This plan covers all lowland mixed deciduous woodland types from ancient, semi-natural to new planting but excluding wet woodland. The following table describes coverage in this plan.

Woodland Type	Coverage in this plan
Ancient, semi-natural	Fully covered
Coniferised ancient woodland site	Fully covered
Ancient, secondary	Fully covered
Mature (older than 50 years) with recognised biodiversity interest	Fully covered
Wet	Covered in separate HAP
Mature with no or unrecognised biodiversity interest.	Not systematically covered
New woodland	Not systematically covered

One woodland type may form a mosaic with other types or with other BAP habitats. Similarly woodland rides and margins may grade into other BAP habitats such as grassland and scrub.

2 CURRENT STATUS

2.1 Context

Woodlands in Britain

Britain is one of the least wooded countries in Europe with 2.743 million hectares of woodland covering 11.38% of the land area. Of this 286,000 ha are ancient semi-natural woodland.

Woodlands in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are one of the least wooded areas of the UK. The total area of woodland of 0.1ha and over is 12,325ha. This represents 3.6% of the county land area. Ancient woodland sites over 2ha cover 2,865ha of which 2006ha support ancient semi-natural woodland.

Broadleaved woodland is the dominant type representing 81.3% of all woodland. 7.6% is Conifer, 10.8% is mixed woodland and open space within woodland is 1.0%.

The main broadleaved species is Ash, which is 27.3% of all broadleaved species. There are a total of 623 woods over 2ha in Cambridgeshire with a mean area of 11.1ha. There are a total of 7,488 woods of 0.1 - < 2.0ha with a mean area of 0.75ha. There are an estimated 2.4 million live trees outside woodland in Cambridgeshire.

Habitat	Area in Cambridgeshire		% of UK total
	(ha)	(%)	
Woodland cover (>2 ha)	6,053	1.97	0.244%
Ancient woodland sites (>2ha)	2,865	0.8	?
ASNW	2,006	0.6	0.70%

Within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough woodland is not evenly spread. Woodland is now rare over much of the Fens although the frequency of trees preserved in peat soils, referred to as ‘bog Oak’, indicates previous extensive woodland cover. There are four major pockets of ancient woodland: to the west of Peterborough, to the north of Huntingdon, between St Neots and west of Cambridge and in the south east of the County. Secondary plantation woodland (mostly beech and Scot’s pine) is a feature of the chalk belt that runs from Newmarket to Royston.

The majority of ancient woods are less than 50 hectares in extent (see table below)

Habitat		2-10 ha	11-50 ha	51-100 ha	>101 ha	Total
AWS	Area (ha)	334	1530	530	471	2865
	Number	49	68	8	3	128
ASNW	Area (ha)	288	1020	278	420	2006
	Number	45	62	6	3	116

2.2 Biological Status

Woodland covered by this HAP within Cambridgeshire can very roughly be divided into two types:

Oak and ash woodland developed on heavy clay soils and mildly chalky boulder clay (mainly National Vegetation Classification W10). Other tree species can include birch, hazel, hawthorn and occasionally hornbeam or holly. The ground flora includes plants such as bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), stinking iris (*Iris foetidissima*), wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) and on ancient woodland sites, ancient woodland indicator species such as yellow archangel (*Lamium galeobdolon*) and early purple-orchid (*Orchis mascula*). Good examples of this type of woodland include Aversley Wood, Bedford Purlius and Hildersham Wood SSSIs.

Ash and field maple-dominated woodland with an understorey of hazel have developed over chalky boulder clay, chalk and limestone (mainly NVC W8). Other tree species can include dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*). The ground flora includes plants such as Bluebell, Yellow Archangel and Early Purple Orchid, as well as large amounts of Dog’s Mercury and a rich array of ancient woodland indicator plants and, more rarely, herb Paris (*Paris quadrifolia*) and lily-of-the-valley (*Colla lily majalis*). The rides also often have species-rich grassland, e.g. Gamlingay Wood and Brampton Wood SSSIs. Good examples of this type of woodland include Castor Hanglands NNR, Carlton Wood, Elsworth Wood, Park Wood, Hayley Wood, Waresley Wood and Langley Wood SSSIs, and it is some of these types of sites which are of national importance for the rare Oxlip (*Primula elatior*). Locally, west of Peterborough this type of woodland can include small-leaved lime and a good example of this is found at Collyweston Great Wood and Easton Hornstocks SSSI.

In addition to a variation in geology, the above two woodland types vary greatly from site to site in regard to age and history of management. Woodlands with abundant hazel were traditionally coppiced and this type of management is favoured by a specialist range of birds and invertebrates, particularly butterflies. In addition, both planting of broadleaves and conifers has modified many existing woodland sites.

Woodlands are formed from a mosaic of habitat niches including saproxylic habitats, streams and ponds, rides and glades. All of these should be taken into account when formulating an appropriate management plan.

2.3 Species

Ancient woodland in particular provides a rich habitat for numerous species, many of which are found principally in these woods. The species found in woodland that have specific Biodiversity Action Plans are listed in section 5.

A significant number of sites have become invaded by elm. The health of this elm is varied but there are many stands which, while having dutch elm disease present, have not succumbed to it. Within a national context this is significant.

2.4 Current factors affecting lowland mixed deciduous woodland in Cambridgeshire

- Under-management and neglect are major causes of loss and decline of woodland biodiversity.
- Overgrazing through expansion of deer populations is leading to change in woodland structure, impoverishment of ground flora and low rates of regeneration, especially in coppice. Over-grazing by rabbits and hares, and damage to trees by squirrels is also a problem in woodlands.
- Invasion by sycamore and other species that are generally not native to mixed deciduous woods, leads to changes in their composition.
- Dutch elm disease has changed the structure and composition of many woods since the early 1970s, and recurrences are still affecting them. Canopies opened by disease may be subject to higher rates of wind throw, and invasion of gaps by elder, which can form climax scrub.
- Direct and indirect losses of woodland through development, and trunk road improvements has destroyed or caused deterioration of many woods, and continues to threaten others.
- Replacement of native trees with planted conifers occurred extensively in the 1960s and 1970s. Some of these woodlands are now being restored to broadleaved trees.
- Modern agricultural practices have led to a significant decrease in the biodiversity within landscapes and ecological isolation of woods. These include, major losses of woodland in the past, removal of hedgerows, isolated trees and small patches of scrub in fields, deep drainage of adjacent arable fields, and cultivation hard up to woodland boundaries.
- Impact of air pollution and other environmental influences originating from distant sources. Locally sourced pollution from agriculture, industry and traffic – nutrient enrichment and chemical run-off or spray drift from adjoining agriculture – can impact on soil conditions and flora.
- Cessation of traditional management practices (particularly coppicing) has caused a reduction in structural and species diversity within many woods, particularly loss of temporary open space.
- Management of woodlands for pheasant rearing and other game species can conflict with the biodiversity value of woodlands. However, without financial assistance that game shooting brings, these woodlands may deteriorate.
- Climate change will result in changes to vegetation composition of woodland.

- Economic factors have caused a decline in woodland management; competition from imported woodland products, poor quality timber and lack of knowledge of local hardwood markets have all contributed.

3 CURRENT ACTION

3.1 Legal status and protection

- The policy for England's ancient and native woodland (Keepers of Time – FC / Defra 2005), has a presumption against clearance of broad-leaved woodland for conversion to other land uses.
- Felling licences from the Forestry Commission (FC) are normally required for tree felling.
- Tree Preservation Orders can be applied to individual trees, or in rare cases, cluster of trees or a woodland by the Local Authority.
- Further protection may be afforded by presence of species designated under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981). This act covers species such as Bats and Dormice. The Habitat Regulations (1994) also protect woodlands and their associated species.
- The Regional Woodland Strategy recognises the importance of semi-natural woodland and contains a number of specific actions, including targeting restoration and expansion activity to specific cluster areas. This information can be downloaded from: www.woodlandforlife.net
- 53% of ASNW in Cambridgeshire (1,061ha) is protected as SSSI or NNR .
- Some woodland receive additional protection through local policies and strategies within development plans. This includes approximately 90 woodland County Wildlife Sites in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- There is a range of national, regional and local planning policies that, along with other legislation, set out requirements for biodiversity conservation. Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9): Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (ODPM, 2005) is the key national planning policy document for biodiversity in England. It sets out the key principles that regional planning bodies and local planning authorities should adhere to in order to ensure that biodiversity is fully considered in the development of planning policy and determination of planning applications. The seven policies within the Environment chapter of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England (GO-East, May 2008) set out the requirements for proper consideration to be given to the potential effects of development on the natural, built and historic environment of the East of England. At the local level, the planning policy documents of local planning authorities should take account of BAP and HAP targets and priorities, setting overarching policies for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity. (Cambridge City suggests this to be included in every HAP)

3.2 Management, research and guidance

- Wildlife and tree management advice is available locally through the statutory conservation agencies, the Forestry Commission, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group and ADAS, plus the voluntary and commercial sectors (e.g. the Wildlife Trusts, the Woodland Trust and local woodland initiatives). The experience of woodland managers is also developed and promoted by organisations such as the Small Woods Association, the Timber Growers Association, Royal and Royal Scottish Forestry Societies, Institute of Chartered Foresters, the Association of Professional Foresters and the Coppice Association.
- There are a number of significant inventories on woodlands available, including the Forestry Commission's National Inventory of Woodland and Trees (2000, published in 2002), which provides information on the extent, distribution and composition of woodland, and Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory.

- The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre hold relevant information in Ancient Woodland Inventories as well as information from individual surveys of statutory protected sites, as do the county conservation organisations
- Other woodland information is gathered informally through Local Authority and conservation organisation's monitoring.
- Grants for woodland management, including regeneration, planting and some other operations, are available from Forestry Commission (see www.forestry.gov.uk/eastengland) and in some circumstances from other government agencies and local authorities. The Forestry Commission is identifying all PAWS on its estate. Maps and restoration plans have been produced where appropriate.
- The Defra Environmental Stewardship scheme (2005) includes options for management of small farm woodlands.
- Anglian Woodland Project promotes the expansion and/or management of deciduous woods within the Eastern Region.
- Local woodland initiatives hold regular open days and guided walks to offer support and management guidance to private woodland owners. These include events run by Anglian Woodland Project, Small Woods Association, FWAG, FC and the Deer Initiative.
- Natural England provide advice and management of Statutory Woodland Sites such as SSSI and NNRs.
- The Wildlife Trust provides advice to owners of County Wildlife Site woodlands.

3.3 Regional Strategy

'Woodland for Life' is the regional woodland strategy for the East of England, which was developed by a steering group that included Defra, EEDA, EH, FC, NE and GOER.

The strategy provides a number of initiatives for the enhancement of the benefits that trees and woodlands bring to the people who live and work in the region. It also identifies the need for more universal application of the UK Forestry Standard. This standard sets out the criteria and standards for the sustainable management of all forests and woodlands in the UK. It is the centrepiece of a system to guide and monitor forestry and woodland management. It is linked to developing international protocols for sustainable forestry.

The Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Peterborough's Green Grid Strategy both seek to enhance the landscape of trees and woodland by the creation of new woodlands and by enhancing linkages between existing ancient semi-natural woodland clusters.

4 OBJECTIVES AND LONG TERM TARGETS

4.1 Objectives

- Maintain current area of ancient woodland as identified in the Ancient Woodland Inventory (i.e. woods over 2 ha), and other published sources such as County Wildlife Site citations (for woods less than 2 ha).
- Maintain current area of species rich woodland (i.e. that which has a recognised biodiversity value, including ancient secondary woodland e.g. Overhall Grove).
- Achieve appropriate management of all species rich woodland (as defined in previous bullet).
- Create new native woodland, particularly where it links or buffers existing woodland or other habitats of biodiversity value. The planting of new deciduous woodland should be appropriate to the local landscape character, as set out in the Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines, a technical guidance document. Planting should ideally use locally native trees and shrubs and where possible natural regeneration should be promoted.
- Achieve appropriate management of all new woodland so that it delivers against species and habitat biodiversity targets.

4.2 Targets

1. Maintain the current extent of ancient semi-natural woodland, ancient woodland sites and species-rich lowland broadleaved woodland.
2. Achieve favourable condition for all lowland broadleaved woodland within SSSIs, and 50% of County Wildlife Site lowland broadleaved woodland, by 2010.
3. Restore 50% (by area) of coniferised woodland on ancient woodland sites to a locally native broadleaved type, ideally by allowing natural regeneration or if planting, using locally native stock, by 2012, and 100% by 2017.
4. Create 1,200 hectares of lowland broadleaved woodland by 2012 .
5. Assess and monitor our woodland resource

5 ACTIONS

LOWLAND MIXED DECIDUOUS WOODLAND					
Habitat management, restoration & creation					
BAP TARGET	PROGRESS TO 2006	ACTION	LEAD PARTNER/S	PRIORIT Y / DATE	RESOURCES
1. Maintain the current extent of ancient semi-natural, ancient woodland sites and species-rich lowland broadleaved woodland.	Plans published recently all have site protection policies	1.1 Ensure that all landowners and managers of SSSIs & County Wildlife Sites supporting woodland habitats are aware of their importance, through provision of site information.	NE WT LAs, CCC	High On-going	Existing staff resources (A local Wildlife Sites partnership is being formed to address the needs of County Wildlife Sites)
		1.2 Ensure all planning policy documents have strong policies protecting woodland SSSIs and County Wildlife Sites	LAs, CCC	High On-going	Existing staff resources
		1.3 Continue to assess planning applications that may affect wet woodland sites and comment on those that may have an adverse impact	LAs, CCC	Medium On-going	Existing staff resources
		1.4 Where possible promote management of buffer areas around woodland to reduce impact of negative external factors.	LAs, CCC		

<p>2. Achieve favourable condition for all lowland broadleaved woodland within SSSIs, and 50% of County Wildlife Site lowland broadleaved woodland, by 2010.</p>	<p>The Wildlife Trust has secured funding for advisory work through the Rural Enterprise Scheme until March 2009 and both PCC & the County Council have committed staff time.</p>	<p>2.1 Ensure that all landowners and managers are provided with information, advice and support regarding management of their designated sites to enable them to achieve condition.</p> <p>2.2 Support the development of a local Wildlife Sites partnership to ensure monitoring & assessment of County Wildlife Sites and to provide information, advice & support to landowners</p>	<p>NE WT FC LAs, CCC</p> <p>PCC / CCC / WT / other biodiversity partners</p>	<p>High 2007</p>	<p>A local Wildlife Sites partnership is being formed to address the needs of County Wildlife Sites</p> <p>Additional support will be required from all local authorities, including financial backing.</p>
<p>3. Restore 50% of coniferised woodland on ancient woodland sites to a locally native broadleaved base.</p>	<p>The national target for restoration has been agreed but the regional allocation is currently under review so the Cambs target is pending that allocation</p>	<p>3.1 Ensure that all landowners and managers of unmanaged woodland are provided with information, advice and support regarding management of their woodland.</p> <p>3.2 Promote the restoration of PAWS containing conifers back to native deciduous woodland.</p>	<p>NE WT FC LAs, CCC</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	

<p>4. Create 1,200ha of lowland broadleaved woodland by 2012.</p>		<p>4.1 Identify a strategy for creating new native woodland in terms of species composition, ground flora introduction, site size and location.</p> <p>4.2 Increase the connectivity of ancient, ancient semi-natural, ancient secondary and species rich woodland where appropriate, e.g. Grafham-Brampton Woodland Link.</p> <p>4.3 Where possible promote establishment of trees and/or shrubs to act as buffer areas around woodland to reduce impact of negative external factors.</p> <p>4.4 Promote new woodland planting where appropriate and according to the principles and practices of the UK Forestry Standard</p> <p>4.5 Promote deciduous woodland creation opportunities through minerals restoration plans</p> <p>4.6 Promote the use of local native tree stock for woodland planting.</p> <p>4.7 Identify sources of local, native tree stock, including an inventory of local suppliers and users of wood produce.</p>	<p>WT, PNNP LAs, CCC</p> <p>NE WT FC FWAG</p> <p>NE WT FC</p> <p>NE WT FC</p> <p>LAs, CCC</p> <p>FWAG, WT, FC, LAs, CCC</p>		
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5. Assess and monitor our woodland resource		<p>5.1 Review the woodland SSSI and County Wildlife Site list to identify if further sites should be designated.</p> <p>5.2 Review the inventory of ancient woodland sites in the county and ensure that all species rich sites are likewise recorded.</p> <p>5.3 Review the status of the Elm for the Future programme and collate existing elm records.</p>	<p>NE, CWS group</p> <p>FC, CPBRC</p> <p>CPBRC</p>		
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Abbreviations

BSG	Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Steering Group
CCC	Cambridgeshire County Council
CPBRC	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre
CWS	County Wildlife Site
FC	Forestry Commission
FWAG	Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group
LAs	Local authorities
NE	Natural England, Local Team
PCC	Peterborough City Council
PNNP	Peterborough Natural Network Partnership
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
WT	Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough

The list of all unitary, County and District authorities includes: Peterborough City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridge City Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, Fenland District Council, and Huntingdonshire District Council.

6 LINKS TO OTHER PLANS

This plan has close links to most other Trees and Woodland HAPs as it is often difficult to distinguish where trees stop and woodland begins and where woodland stops and wet woodland begins.

It is also linked to the Villages, Towns and Cities HAPs as woodland is often a feature of urban areas.

There are five woodland species of high biodiversity status which are particularly notable. These are Fly orchid (*Ophrys insectifera*), wild sevice tree (*Sorbus torminalis*), Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*), Black Hairstreak butterfly (*Satyrrium pruni*) and wood ant.

The following are the main BAP species associated with this woodland habitat action plan.

Oxlip - *Primula elatior*
Dormouse - *Muscardinus avellanarius*
Pipistrelle bat - *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*
Barbastelle bat – *Barbastella barbastellus*
Black Hairstreak butterfly - *Satyrrium pruni*
Spotted flycatcher - *Muscicapa striata*
Song thrush - *Turdus philomelos*
Bullfinch – *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*
Turtle Dove – *Streptopelia turtur*

There will be more BAP species associated with woodland. For a full list of UKBAP species occurring in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, contact the Biodiversity Partnership Coordinator.

7 REFERENCES

An **Appendix of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough site specific actions** on woodland SSSIs and CWSs is available from the Biodiversity Partnership Coordinator. This complements this Woodland Habitat Action Plan.

Buglife: *Managing priority habitats for Invertebrates*, 2nd edition. For Lowland Beech and Yew Woodlands see:

www.buglife.org.uk/conservation/adviceonmanagingbaphabitats/lowlandbeechandyewwoodland.htm

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough UKBAP species – spreadsheet prepared by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre (from October 2008) available from the Biodiversity Partnership Coordinator

Forestry Commission / Defra (2005) *Keepers of Time – A statement of policy for England's Ancient & Native Woodland*.

Planning Policy Statement 9 Biological and Geological Conservation, available on www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps9

Forestry Facts and Figures 97-98

Cambridgeshire Ancient Woodlands Inventory UK Forestry Standard

Rackham, O (1990) *Hayley Wood: its history and ecology*. Cambridgeshire Wildlife Trust Ltd.

Rodwell, JS (1991) *British Plant Communities* Volume 1 Woodlands and Scrub. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

English Nature, Ancient Woodland: Guidance for Local Authorities.

8 LIST OF INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

Anglian Water Services Ltd
Arboricultural Association
Beetle specialists
Bird specialists
Biodiversity Partnership Co-ordinator
Buglife
Butterfly Conservation Society
Cambridge City Council
Cambridge Preservation Society
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre
Cambridgeshire County Council
Countryside Restoration Trust
East Cambridgeshire District Council
Environment Agency
Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group
Fenland District Council
Flies specialists
Flowering Plant specialists
Forestry Commission
Froglife
Fungi specialists
Grafham Conservation Group
Huntingdonshire District Council
Huntingdonshire Fauna and Flora Society
Langdyke Trust
Moss specialists
Moth specialists
Natural England
Nene Park Trust
Opportunity Peterborough
Peterborough City Council
RSPB - East Anglia
South Cambridgeshire District Council
The National Trust
The Wildlife Trust
The Woodland Trust