



## WOODLANDS

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Woodland is one of the most important habitat categories in the sub-region, supporting many species and a variety of benefits such as landscape, public amenity and timber production. The multi-functional value of woodlands has been increasingly acknowledged nationally and in recent years reflected regionally by the West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework (FC,2004) and the RFF Delivery Plan (FC,2005). The sub - region has relatively low woodland cover in England terms, circa.11175ha - 5% of land area (Habitat Biodiversity Audit, 1996-2002), although a mosaic of small woodlands and mature hedgerow trees gives the impression of a woodland environment.



Bunsons Wood © S Falk

The Ancient Woodland Inventories (NCC,1989) for Warwickshire and West Midlands identify woodland sites of greater than 2ha that are considered to be of an ancient origin (pre-dating 1600). A few sites, characterised by the presence of small-leaved lime and sessile oak, may be especially old. Indeed, Piles Coppice, to the east of Coventry, is considered by some researchers to be a remnant of Wildwood that formed 8000 years ago. There are many smaller woodlands which have the characteristics of Ancient Woodland that are currently unrecorded as such. From the Warwickshire Inventory about 4236ha of the woodland are listed. Of this, 2439ha are classified as ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW), our most biologically important woodland resource. The remaining 1797ha of ancient origin woodlands are recorded as plantation on ancient woodland sites (PAWS). Many of the larger PAWS sites were converted wholly or in part to conifer plantations in the twentieth century. These areas tend to retain features of the original semi-natural woodland and remain of high biodiversity value. Data from the West Midlands (Coventry & Solihull) Ancient Woodland Inventory have not been included.

The remaining woodland area (grown since 1600) is either plantation, grown mainly for timber production or is secondary semi natural woodland and scrub. Plantation woodlands are generally linked with the estate-lands parts of the Warwickshire sub-region, where as the secondary semi-natural woodlands are associated with post-industrial sites (gravel and sand extraction, etc.) and poorer quality land not cultivated for agriculture. More recently there has been significant creation of new woodland by individual landowners as part of farm diversification, game shooting, shelter and screening and by organisations such as the Woodland Trust looking at social inclusion opportunities and core habitat areas. Principally these are broad-leaved or mixed woodlands and generally are of small landscape scale (less than 10ha).

The best woodlands for biodiversity tend to be larger ones on long standing sites (AWS) with a varied and diverse structure. An abundance of different internal habitats such as standing and fallen deadwood, wide rides, clearings or open space, water, 'soft' woodland margins or scrub and field headlands are key components and can be supported by woodland management operations such as coppicing or thinning.

2. OUR OBJECTIVES & TARGETS	Target
A. Re-survey and digitally map Provisional Ancient Woodland Inventory, including those woodlands less than 2ha to confirm sub-regional semi-natural woodland area. Recalculate ASNW / AWS totals as required.	By 2010
B. To maintain the current extent of all known existing ASNW and veteran trees resources using current legislation & best practice (GIS & aerial photos). Minimise other woodland habitat loss caused by development or neglect.	2005-2015
C. All identified ASNW woodlands should be considered for SINC status. Further assess suitable candidate woods by 100ha for SSSI status annually.	2005-2015
D. To restore conifer or non-native broad-leaved plantation on ancient woodland sites to native broad-leaved plantation or semi-natural woodland. (UK Forestry Standard. Ancient & Semi Natural Woodland Policy). 500ha (average 10ha per year)	By 2050
E. To extend existing ASNW by natural regeneration or appropriate woodland creation using locally native species in accordance with FC Bulletin 112. 250ha (average 5ha per year)	2005-2050
F. Increase other plantation or farm woodland cover in the sub region in accordance with the regional spatial strategy and other policy and or legislation by 50ha annually.	2005-2015
G. Raise awareness and understanding of the multiple values of trees and woodlands, particularly ASNW & AWS amongst woodland owners, managers, contractors and the public in line with RFF Delivery Plan. . 1 Training event per year as a minimum.	2005-2015

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| H. | To establish and promote local markets for the produce from semi-natural ancient and other woodlands.  | By 2008   |
|    |  | 2005-2015 |
| I. | Increase awareness of the value of scrub naturally regenerating into low-density woodland and promote sustainable management of existing scrub areas as a habitat.   | 2005-2015 |
| J. | Use agri-environmental and forestry grant schemes and farming best practice to maintain, restore and create woodland areas. Introduce additional woodland habitats e.g. open ground, rides etc and increase social, economic and biodiversity opportunities. | 2005-2015 |
| K. | Establish, implement and maintain deer management groups covering all the main concentrations of woodland in the sub-region.   | 2005-2015 |
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**ASSOCIATED HABITAT PLANS**

- Wood-Pasture, Old Parkland & Veteran Trees
- Scrub & Carr
- Orchards
- Hedgerows

**ASSOCIATED SPECIES PLANS**

- Dormouse
- Bats
- Great Crested Newt
- Wood White Butterfly
- Argent & Sable Moth
- Black Poplar
- Song Thrush
- Farmland Birds
- Leaf-rolling Weevil
- Red Wood Ant

**3. NATIONAL BAP OBJECTIVES & TARGET**

- *The UK BAP focuses on particular woodland types that, other than wet woodland, are not present in Warwickshire. There is however general recognition that lowland woodlands are one of the most important habitats. A Broadleaved, Mixed and Yew Woodland Habitat Statement is included and a general woodland Habitat Action Plan has been proposed.*

## 4. CURRENT STATUS

Woodlands are widespread but fragmented throughout Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull. There are notable concentrations of ancient woodlands around Princethorpe, around Atherstone, and on the western side of Stratford-upon-Avon District. The eastern parts of the county are particularly sparsely wooded. The woodland community is heavily influenced by the underlying geology. Oak, birch and bracken-dominated woods are characteristic of more acidic soils (especially in the north and west), and oak-ash woods, usually with dog's mercury, are found on more lime-rich soils in the south and east. The semi-natural woodland types described above fall into two main categories of the National Vegetation Classification: W8 *Fraxinus excelsior* - *Acer campestre* - *Mercurialis perennis* woodland and W10 *Quercus robur* - *Pteridium aquilinum* - *Rubus fruticosus* woodland. Alder and willow woodland tend to form in wetter areas. The extent of wet woodland is not accurately known, in part because this habitat often forms a part of larger woodland areas. Grey poplar woodland is a relatively new type of invasive woodland that has formed along certain southern river corridors. There are also a number of significant conifer woodland blocks throughout the sub region and more recently large Poplar plantations have been created.

There are 15 woodland-dominated SSSIs in the sub-region, covering 804ha. Many other woodlands are formally designated SINCs, and it is anticipated that most other good quality ASNW will be selected as SINCs in the current review, which is being undertaken by the Wildlife Sites Project. There are eleven woodlands managed as nature reserves by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, four of which are SSSIs. A number of other woods are in some form of protective ownership through the Woodland Trust, local authorities or sympathetic private owners.

Approximately 11% of ancient woodland (530ha) was destroyed between 1925 and 1988, and a further 38% (1797ha) was converted to plantation (Warwickshire AWI 1989). Neglect, through a cessation of coppicing, has been an equally significant factor in the loss of woodland biodiversity since the mid 1900s. The HBA (1996-2002) suggests that the area of woodland has increased over the last 15 years through the creation of new plantations. Some of these new woods are being specifically targeted at achieving biodiversity gains, whilst further woods have been planted specifically for timber production, landscaping and other benefits. Examples of new woods include screen plantings around quarries and industrial or residential estates, blocks of trees within suburban countryside and a range of woodland types and size within agricultural settings.

Woodlands have reasonable legal protection through the Forestry Acts and Tree Preservation Orders, but these measures do not ensure that appropriate management is undertaken.

### 4.1 Legal and Policy Status

The Forestry Act 1967 (amended)  
Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (Forestry Projects) (FC, 2001)  
UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) (FC, 1998)  
Ancient and Semi Natural Woodland Policy  
Forest Strategy for England  
West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework (FC, 2004)

These areas of legislation and policy set the context under which the Forestry Commission regulates and supports woodland stewardship and woodland creation.

The UK Forestry Standard presents the Government's approach to sustainable forestry stewardship, including key criteria on physical, biological, human and cultural resources. Standard notes on the best practice management of existing woodlands of different types, especially the management of semi-natural ancient woodlands provide direction in the planning and implementation of woodland operations. Controls on tree felling through Felling Licences mean that the Forestry Commission can regulate most proactive woodland management operations to ensure that they conform to UKFS and industry best practice. The English Woodland Grant Scheme enables the Forestry Commission to financially support management that conforms to the standards detailed.

The UK Forestry Standard includes a Standard Note (SN3) on "Creating New Native Woodland". The English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) enables the Forestry Commission to support woodland creation, the grants are subject to applications being assessed against a scoring system which reflects the priorities in the regional values of the England Forestry Strategy. This promotes new woodlands that can be of high biodiversity value, as well as other targets.

Other legislation and protection affecting trees, woodlands and associated habitats include Town & Country Planning Act – TPOs, Hedgerow Regulations, Wildlife & Countryside Act, Register of Parks & Gardens, Countryside Rights of Way Act, Highways Act, Railways Act.

## 4.2 Current Factors Affecting the Habitat

Despite losses of woodland in the sub region, particularly ASNW, relatively little new woodland planting has been undertaken, leaving the remaining ancient woodlands recorded on the AWI fragmented and isolated. Since 1985 the loss of ASNW woodland has been substantially reduced to the extent that lack of appropriate management is now seen as a greater threat than habitat destruction. There is still, however, some small-scale ASNW loss through farming practices, illegal-felling activities and through planning approvals.

- **Fragmentation of habitat.** Isolation of woodlands leaves them unable to sustain woodland species populations. The continued and prolonged loss of hedgerows that has occurred over the last 50 years has left many small woodlands even more isolated from other areas of habitat making species less secure.
- **Neglect** or cessation of coppicing, partly due to a declining market for traditional woodland produce and the relative economic benefits of conifer timber production has resulted in a widespread loss of habitat quality in many woodlands as they became less structurally diverse and more densely shaded. Species such as the dormouse, several species of Fritillary butterfly, and the nightingale are some of the victims and woodland flowers such as violets and certain orchids have become much scarcer.
- **Unsympathetic** management of woodland margins, particularly in respect of fertiliser and herbicide drift from cropped fields will lead to loss of adjacent woodland edge habitat.

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- **A lack of mature and over mature trees** in many secondary, plantation and new woodlands, and on AWS felled during WWI and WWII, is leading to very limited deadwood habitats.
- **Health and safety concerns.** Trees are at risk of being lost due to perceptions of safety, size, subsidence etc. Issues such as 'Trees of Time and Place' and fear of litigation and misunderstanding of risks contribute to the tendency of landowners to remove dead wood from areas with public access.
- **Increasing deer population** and lack of deer management groups is leading to unsustainable browsing damage of regenerating and planted trees and is acting as a disincentive to sustainable woodland management. There are limited opportunities for venison markets and farm business or shop diversification to sell venison.
- **Damage by grey squirrels** is causing limb and crown damage on trees and occasionally reduced timber quality and increased management costs.
- **Coniferisation** was undertaken in the mid 20<sup>th</sup>C at the expense of previous ASNW. This trend is now actively being reversed by both state and private owners guided by Ancient and Semi Natural Woodland policy. The introduction of other inappropriate tree and shrub species of non-local provenance or the natural regeneration of such species including sycamore, rhododendron, and Himalayan balsam is actively deterred but cannot always be prevented.
- **Recreational and development pressure, particularly transport infrastructure and other urban development** e.g. construction of large housing estates adjacent to woodland and subsequent disturbance and erosion in and around woods. The intrusion of motorbikes, quads, 4X4's, fly-tipping and paint balling, and the increasing illegal and indiscriminate use of guns give cause for concern, especially in those woodlands on the urban fringe.
- **Woodland creation** is leading to an increase in the resource and if appropriately placed, extension of existing woodlands and defragmenting isolated woods. The incentives for the creation of new woodland play a crucial role in decisions about woodland creation but high land values restrict woodland creation.
- **Organisations and individuals.** Some organisations, such as The Woodland Trust, and occasionally wealthy individuals, are committed to creating new woodlands with social and biodiversity objectives at the forefront of their thinking.

## 5. CURRENT LOCAL ACTION

- Forest Enterprise (part of the Forestry Commission) is developing plans to restore areas of conifer plantation on ancient woodland sites to, where possible, naturally regenerated broad-leaved woodland within their own estate.
- Coppice management is being actively implemented in a number of woods, including WWT in parts of Ryton Wood SSSI, Snitterfield Bushes SSSI, Wappenbury Wood and Hampton Wood.

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- Ongoing surveying of many woods by various wildlife recorders (especially high since the 1980s) is helping to establish their biodiversity, characteristics, cultural history and relative significance.
- From 1991 to 2003 the following amounts of Warwickshire woodland have been entered into the Woodland Grant Scheme:
  - New planting - broad-leaved 1012ha and conifer 39ha
  - Restocking - broad-leaved 93ha and conifer 19ha
- The Forestry Commission and DEFRA / RDS are supporting woodland creation and stewardship through the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) and Higher Level Environmental Stewardship Scheme (HLS, DEFRA, 2005) respectively, with particular targets for creation of native species woodlands with significant open ground habitat and stewardship on Ancient Woodland Sites.
- The Warwickshire Tree Scheme, promoted by WCC, has been used to encourage new woodland planting and enlarge existing woodlands., through the use of native species. The choice of tree and shrub types has been shaped by the Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines. These identify landscape character areas [for example Arden] and direct decision making on appropriate tree or woodland location, scale, species choice etc.
- The Solihull Free Tree Scheme has been used to enlarge existing woodlands with native species trees. WCC have produced Arden Landscape Character guidelines to direct decision making on appropriate tree or woodland location, scale, species choice etc.
- Large woodland creation projects (20ha+) continue to be delivered on a fairly regular basis. Notable examples are sited around Dorsington, on Sernal Estate, Temple Balsall and Grandborough.
- Warwickshire Museum's Veteran Tree Initiative continues to collect data about location, size, age and form of notable and veteran trees within the sub region.
- Princethorpe Woodland Project is looking at co-operative woodland management on a landscape and economic scale, particularly issues such as the production of low grade low cost wood fuels for use in local communities, deer management and public access.

## 6. PROPOSED LOCAL ACTIONS

ACTION	Lead	Partners	By	Meets objective
<b>Policy &amp; Legislation</b>				
<b>PL1.</b> Ensure Regional Spatial Strategy (see policy QE8) and Local Planning Documents (see ODPM Planning Policy Statement PPS9) include policies for the protection of existing woodland and the creation of new woodland of high biodiversity potential.	LBAPSG	FC NE WM WWT LAs	2005	B, E, F
<b>PL2.</b> Review (and record) all ancient woodland sites (including those of less than 2ha) against the criteria for selection as SINCs.	WSP	NE LAs WWT	2010	A, B, C
<b>PL3.</b> Encourage the enhancement of the funding available for sustainable management of semi-natural ancient woodland and the restoration of plantations on ancient woodland sites.	FC	NE	2005	D, G, J, K
<b>PL4.</b> Review the current SSSI schedule and consider notifying as SSSIs additional large semi-natural ancient woodlands, particularly those supporting priority species such as dormice and those in large complexes.	NE	FC WSP WWT	2010	A, B, C
<b>PL5.</b> Implement appropriate management on at least 95% of SSSI woodlands in Unfavourable Condition.	NE	FC LOs	2010	A, B, G, J, K
<b>PL6.</b> Establish policies encouraging use of appropriate species for re-planting in semi-natural woods and for new woods intended for nature conservation, and encourage use of these on new developments.	FC	WWT LAs LBAPSG	2005	A, D, E, F, G, J
<b>Site / Species Safeguard &amp; Management</b>				
<b>SM1.</b> Actively work to ensure development proposals do not affect the integrity or setting of ancient woodland sites or the opportunity to extend existing woodlands or impact on other sensitive habitat sites.	WBRC	BC WWT RFF FC LAs	2005-2015	A, B, G, I
<b>SM2.</b> Actively encourage that all Felling Licence and Stewardship or Woodland Creation Grant (EWGS/HLS) applications meet the UK Forestry Standard.	FC	NE	2005-2015	D, H, J, K

<b>SM3.</b> Actively encourage that EWGS/HLS Stewardship agreements for management of woodland cover all habitat components, including rides, ponds, clearings, deadwood & woodland edge.	FC	NE	2005-2015	B, D, G, I, J, K
<b>SM4.</b> Establish, implement and maintain deer management groups covering all the main concentrations of woodland in the sub-region.	FC	WWT LAs NE DI	2007	K
<b>SM5.</b> Identify appropriate locations for new woodland to create connections between existing habitats.	FC	LAs RFF NE WM HBA BC FWAG WWT	2005-2015	A, B, C, G, I, J
<b>Advisory</b>				
<b>A1.</b> Inform landowners of all woodland SSSIs about appropriate sustainable management and grant schemes. Organise a programme of training and discussion sessions to cover all elements of sustainable woodland management.	NE	FC WWT FWAG	2006	C, G, J, K
<b>A2.</b> Inform all owners/managers of ancient semi-natural woodland and woodland SINCs about appropriate sustainable management and grant schemes.	FC	WWT FWAG WSP	2006	C, G, J, K
<b>A3.</b> Prepare and distribute lists of suppliers of native trees and/or seeds of local provenance.	LBAPSG	WWT FC LAs	2006	D, E, G
<b>Research &amp; Monitoring</b>				
<b>RM1.</b> Review and update the Provisional Warwickshire Ancient Woodland Inventory, including appropriate sites less than 2ha in size.	NE	FC WM HBA WWT	2010	A
<b>RM2.</b> Maintain the HBA record of woodland and other adjacent habitat types and seek to establish HBA record of habitat types within woodlands.	HBA	WM FC WWT	2005-2015	A

<b>RM3.</b> Establish a project to research and develop local sustainable markets for the produce of ASNW and AWS to facilitate their management	FC	WWT, LAs BC NE	2006	H, J, K
<b>RM4.</b> Continue surveying woodlands for individual taxonomic groups and ensure WBRC hold up to date information.	WBRC	WWT NE BC	2005- 2015	A, C
<b>Communication &amp; Publicity</b>				
<b>CP1.</b> Increase public awareness of the importance and diversity of woodland by promoting woodlands that are accessible to the public and by providing suitable interpretation.	FC	NE WWT FWAG FoBW LAs BC	2005- 2015	A, G, J
<b>CP2.</b> Increase awareness amongst woodland owners and managers of the importance of sustainable management and the opportunities there are with respect to grants and markets.	FC	LAs WWT NE BC	2005- 2015	G, J, K

**Abbreviations:** BC – Butterfly Conservation, DI – Deer initiative, NE – Natural England, FC – Forestry Commission, FoBW – Friends of Brandon Wood, FWAG – Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group, HBA – Habitat Biodiversity Audit, LA – Local Authority, LBAPSG – Local Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group, LO – landowner, RFF – Regional Forestry Framework, WBRC – Warwickshire Biological Record Centre, WM – Warwickshire Museum, WSP – Wildlife Sites Project, WWT – Warwickshire Wildlife Trust

## 7. REFERENCES ( also see LBAP Bibliography web page)

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Forestry Commission (1998). *The UK Forestry Standard – The Government's Approach to Sustainable Forestry*

Forestry Commission (2001). *Environmental Impact Assessment – Forestry Projects*

Nature Conservancy Council (1989). *Warwickshire Inventory of Ancient Woodland (Prov.)*

Forestry Commission (2004) *Regional Forestry Framework – Growing our Future*

Forestry Commission (2005) *Regional Forestry Framework Delivery Plan*

Natural England, Environment Agency & Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (1996-2002) *Habitat Biodiversity Audit – Phase 1*

Warwickshire County Council (1993) *Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines – 3 Part Project Report*

Warwickshire County Council *The Warwickshire Tree Scheme – updated annually*

**8. FURTHER INFORMATION** (see separate **Links** web page for links to web sites)

Natural England - Ancient Woodland Inventory  
Flora Locale – the Knowledge Zone

Forestry Commission – West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework  
Forestry Commission – English Woodland Grant Scheme  
Forestry Commission – *Recent Changes to the Control of Forest Reproductive Material* – guidance in choosing seeds and young trees for planting.

RSPB – *Woodland Management for Birds – a guide to managing for declining woodland birds in Britain.*

WWF (2005) *Deadwood – Living Forests. The importance of veteran trees and dead wood for biodiversity.*

Countryside Agency (2005) *Community Forest Programme 1990-2005.*

Natural England (2005) *Development of good practice guidelines for woodland management for bats* . Report no. 661, available from 01733 455100 or email: [enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk)

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See: [www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/rddteam/pdf/0706forestry-strategy.pdf](http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/rddteam/pdf/0706forestry-strategy.pdf)

RSPB (2008) *Woodland Management Handbook* and 9 new woodland management advice sheets. Email: [publications@rspb.org.uk](mailto:publications@rspb.org.uk)

Woodland Trust report (2008) ‘*Role of woodland for biodiversity and water management*’ . See [www.woodland-trust.org.uk/pdf/woodswater26\\_03-08.pdf](http://www.woodland-trust.org.uk/pdf/woodswater26_03-08.pdf)

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