

Detailed guide: How to benefit species and habitats biodiversity in your woodland

Updated: Removed confusing link. Post launch additional content required.

The conservation of biodiversity is an essential part of sustainable forest management. Forests cover nearly one-third of the world's total land area and are vital in ensuring environmental functions such as climate regulation and soil conservation in addition to biodiversity. They provide habitats for a large array of plants and animals, some of which are rare or threatened. Through these important ecosystem services, biologically diverse forests and woodlands contribute to the sustainability of the wider landscape.

[Read the UK Forestry Standard \(UKFS\), the reference standard for sustainable forest management across the UK.](#)

Support priority habitats and priority species

Many habitats that are important for biodiversity in the UK have been reduced in area and fragmented and, while they are generally protected, are in need of restoration and expansion. Priority habitats have the potential to provide the richest and most varied components of biological diversity within the UK. All types of native woodlands, as well as wood pasture and parkland, are woodland priority habitats.

Priority species are those that are declining, rare, at risk of extinction, and/or have special requirements. A high proportion of priority species are associated with semi-natural woodland.

Conserve ancient and native woodland

Woods that are both ancient and semi-natural in character have the greatest value for biodiversity. Known as ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW) these are still widespread although fragmented. They serve as valuable refuges of woodland biodiversity, particularly for sedentary species that, once lost, do not readily recolonise. ASNWs also frequently retain characteristics of previous management such as coppice and other traces of cultural history.

Sites that were once ancient woodland but have been converted to planted forests are known as plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS). Many PAWS retain at least some characteristics or remnants of native woodland, which give them the potential to be restored to native woodland, contributing to policy objectives for native woodland restoration.

Good practice

Read the guide [Managing ancient and native woodland in England](#), which brings together all of the current good practice in one document. The guidance looks to the future, advising how to help woodlands adapt to climate change and the challenges it brings, and includes information on, for example, harvesting woodfuel from native woodland in ways that will enhance biodiversity and heritage.

The handbook [Managing Native Broadleaved Woodland](#), produced by Forest Research, gives more detail and underpinning evidence for the value of an ancient and native woodland. It complements the UK Forestry Standard. You can buy it at a cost of £30.

Find out if your woodland is good for wildlife

Assessing the ecological condition of native woodland will help you to get an overview of the condition of your woodland's habitats and identify any issues you may need to address to help support habitats and species. A simple straightforward assessment has been developed and tested by members of the England Woodland Biodiversity Group, including Forestry Commission, Natural England, and The Woodland Trust, which enables owners to assess woodland condition in a standardised way.

To complete an assessment, you need to do a walking survey through your woodland and use a form to record features along your route, then compare your results to a standard set of condition thresholds. You can use the completed assessment to support the development of your woodland management plan and improve the long-term resilience of your woodland.

To allow native flora and fauna to recover from damage caused by non-native species, you should manage your woodlands to counter threats from invasive plant and animal species like deer, grey squirrel and rhododendron.

[Find out more about how you can manage threats to your woodland.](#)

The rules about forest operations and land use change

You must consider wildlife species and habitats when you're creating woodland or managing woodland to comply with regulations. These include the European protected species (EPS) listed in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and protected species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

For both priority species and priority habitats the timing and equipment to be used for certain forest operations can be damaging. Use the UK Forestry Standard, European protected species good practice guidance and knowledge from your woodland survey to help plan these operations proportionately, and for an appropriate time of year.

If you're proposing a land-use change you must take into account the relative merits of existing habitats, and the potential impact of change on priority

habitats and species, both on the site and on adjacent land. So you'll need to ask for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to determine if effects due to afforestation or deforestation are likely to be significant. [Find out more about EIAs.](#)

Where there's likely to be a significant impact you'll need to get EIA consent. If you plan to [convert woodland to open habitats](#) you must also have [felling permission](#) to permanently remove woodland.

Find out what you must do to [protect woodland wildlife and habitats](#) and how you must apply for wildlife licences so you can legally operate in woodlands and forests.

Read the [operations note on the principles you must apply if you're considering planting trees on or near priority habitats](#) and guidance for [afforestation proposed on or near nationally important upland breeding wader areas.](#)

(PDF, 266KB, 4 pages)

Creating new forests and woodlands

Increasing woodland creation in England is in line with our aspiration of 12% cover by 2060: this would involve planting 180,000 hectares by end of 2042. We want to increase the long-term supply of English-grown timber, given strong current and projected demand.

We will increase tree planting by creating new forests and native woodlands, and incentivising extra planting on private and the least productive agricultural land, where appropriate.

Trees and forests provide a unique blend of social, economic and environmental benefits. However it's important to make sure that the right trees – in terms of biosecurity, value for money, air quality impact and biodiversity among other criteria – are planted in the right places, in line with the UK Forestry Standard.

Contact the Forestry Commission, England

You can [contact the Forest Commission, England](#). The Forestry Commission area offices assist with:

- grants
- licences
- advice for woodland owners and managers
- pests and diseases

Forest Research

The research agency of the Forestry Commission offers a range of services that will [help with pest and disease control](#) and also offer resources such as

Open consultation: Nuclear Safeguards Regulations

Following withdrawal from the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), the UK will be introducing new Nuclear Safeguards Regulations to enable a domestic nuclear safeguards regime to operate in the UK. This consultation seeks views on the operability and effectiveness of these draft Nuclear Safeguards Regulations.

The government has committed to establish a regime that will operate in a similar way to existing arrangements, but with changes made to the regulations to ensure they are appropriate for the domestic, legislative and operational landscape in which they operate.

If passed into law, these proposed Regulations will allow the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) to meet international obligations from day one of exit, and to build, over time, a safeguards regime equivalent in coverage and effectiveness to that currently provided by Euratom.

Guidance: Design techniques for forest management planning: practice guide

This guidance gives you a step-by-step approach to design techniques used in the forest management planning process. You can apply this guidance to the creation of new forests and woodlands – by planting or encouraging natural regeneration – and the management of existing forests and woodlands.

Although you'll find information on how to follow aspects of forest planning for small woods, this guidance mainly focuses on larger forest areas that involve more complex issues and need more time to programme woodland management activities.

The guidance is organised into sections covering:

- introduction and overview
- how to document your plans
- the process – scoping, survey, analysis, synthesis, implementation, monitoring, revision

- design techniques
 - survey information – what to collect
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Press release: Hive of activity to raise awareness of Bees' Needs

The Environment Secretary Michael Gove will attend the launch of [Bees' Needs Week](#) today on Carnaby Street, which has been renamed '[Carnabee Street](#)' to raise awareness of the campaign.

Defra has partnered with [Carnaby London](#), the leading West End shopping and dining destination to kick off the week of bee and pollinator action from government, conservation groups, industry and retailers to raise awareness of the campaign and the ways people can help save the bees.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Bees and other pollinators are vital contributors to the beauty of our landscapes, our economy and our £100 billion food industry.

It is inspiring to see such a wide range of organisations celebrating these essential creatures for this unique Bees' Needs campaign – showing us that all of us can play a part and help pollinators to thrive.

Recent actions Government has taken to protect bees include:

- The Government is developing a Nature Recovery Network in England to provide 500,000 hectares of additional wildlife habitat, more effectively linking existing protected sites and landscapes, thereby improving access to habitat for pollinating insects;
- In November 2017, the Environment Secretary announced that the Government supported further restrictions on the use of three neonicotinoids due to their harmful effects on bees and other pollinators, and the UK voted in favour of the EU Commission's proposal in April 2018;
- Since 2015, nearly half (47%) of new Countryside Stewardship agreements included the Wild Pollinator and Farm Wildlife Package. The package ensures that a minimum of 3% of the farm is converted to habitat for farm wildlife including pollinators;
- Defra has funded new research by the University of Exeter which has found a way to track the invasive Asian hornet back to the nest. The hornets prey on honeybees so tracking the predator back to the nest will enable inspectors to take swift action and destroy them;

- Defra has provided a home for the rare Black Bee to the hives on the roof of the department's London building. This particular species was on the verge of extinction a few years ago.

Two schools, St Albans School in Hampshire and Trythall in Cornwall, will receive the Pollinator Champion Award from Lord Gardiner, which recognises their invaluable work in helping pollinators thrive.

Defra Minister for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity, Lord Gardiner, said:

It is my pleasure to award the Pollinator Champion Award to St Albans Primary School in Havant and the Trythall Community Primary School from Penzance. I would like to thank these young people and their teachers for their exceptional work in helping to protect these vital pollinators and their dedication in raising awareness of bees' needs.

Bees' Needs Week is about celebrating the fact that everyone can get involved by growing more flowers, leaving patches of garden to grow wild, cutting grass less, not disturbing insect nests, and thinking carefully about using pesticides.

The campaign also celebrates the efforts of a wide-range of organisations that will be present in The Hive – a discovery center dedicated to pollinators on Carnaby Street, London:

- The Royal Horticultural Society are handing out pollinator-friendly seed: [Blooms for Bees](#);
- [The London Honey Company](#) are offering free honey tasting;
- [Reading University](#) are showcasing their leading research and a Bumblearium has been installed offering people a window into the secret lives of bees;
- Last year's Pollinator Champion, [Rebecca Twigg](#), will be in the Hive with her fascinating augmented reality bee trail;
- [Wildflower Turf](#) – the company behind creating the idyllic countryside landscape for the opening ceremony of the London Olympics – have stepped in to decorate the Hive and showcase some of the most beneficial native wildflower habitats for pollinators.

Simon Quayle, Director, Shaftesbury, said:

Shaftesbury is delighted to support the launch of Bees' Needs Week, on our very own 'Carnabee' Street, which is also being backed by many of our occupants in the area. There has been an alarming decline in the pollinators across the UK, which play a vital role and are the unsung heroes in our ecosystem.

We can all play our part in helping to boost the population, even in urban environments. If you take a closer look around our areas of London's West End you can see we've introduced pockets of

pollinator friendly plants wherever possible. With hanging baskets and window boxes, green walls and roofs, and even the introduction of rooftop beehives adorning parts of the area, it offers a much-needed oasis for our pollinating friends.

A swarm of activity is taking place in the world-famous shopping destination to raise awareness of Bees' Needs including:

- Carnaby Street has been renamed 'Carnabee Street' and the iconic arch has undergone a bee-themed makeover;
- A pop-up 'Hive' will open at 3 Carnaby Street which will host educational and fun games, installations and talks in partnership with Defra alongside charities, universities, businesses and landowners;
- Visitors to Carnaby will be able to follow an art trail around the area's 14 streets, with illustrated bees by London based artist Lizzie King on the windows of participating shops and restaurants;
- Shops and restaurants located in the world-famous shopping destination have created bespoke bee themed products, menus, cocktails and offers to raise awareness of the Bees' Needs campaign.

[Detailed guide: Use the Land Information Search](#)

Land Information Search

The Land Information Search (LIS) is a map based tool that provides information about land designations or features such as National Nature Reserves and grant schemes in any chosen area.

The information generated by this LIS is only for England – a search in each country will be required for properties that cross borders.

[Basic search](#) – allows you to create a circle of a chosen size by clicking a point on the map

[Advanced](#) – allows you to draw a more detailed shape on the map.

Both options run the search against the same list of land designations. The main difference is that the advanced search gives control over the shape that can be drawn allowing the area of interest to be more accurately represented.

Free maps

Download the map request form for help from the Forestry Commission to develop a map of your woodland site.

Contact the Forestry Commission

If you cannot access the Land Information Search, or encounter any problems while using this system, you can contact the Support team gr.support.england@forestry.gsi.gov.uk.

For more information, you can contact your nearest local Forestry Commission office or phone the Forestry Commission helpline on 0300 0674070.