

The Woodland Project



Aims

- To demonstrate that a small woodland can be managed sustainably, putting the environment and conservation first yet still support a viable rural woodland business
- To actively involve the local community, including training and volunteering opportunities, improved access and by participation in the project
- To educate and inform local people, schools and other groups about forest gardening, permaculture, organic gardening, sustainability and environmental issues.
- To provide and demonstrate resources which enable children and adults to see ideas and sustainable practices in action, which can then be incorporated into every home, garden and lifestyle

About the Woodland

At 30 acres the Woodland is a fairly small (by woodland standards). Many commercial woodlands nowadays consist almost entirely of close-packed conifers, too dense to support much wildlife, and are clear-felled for paper production. There are normally a few more attractive broadleaved trees on public view, but because of the close planting of conifers, most woodlands would be inaccessible even if their owners allowed public access.

This woodland is different in that, although it does have several acres of conifers, some natural regeneration has started to occur, resulting in an interesting range of very attractive broadleaf trees of various species and ages, mostly in very good condition. With careful management these will flourish.

Maintenance has been carried out at fairly low level over the last few years, and some trees have been left to rot where they have fallen. These trees provide an ideal habitat for many species of insect, which in turn encourages bird and other animal life.

The woodland is already home to a wide range of native wildlife including insects, numerous birds (including owls), rabbits, foxes, badgers and roe deer. There is also a very wide range of plant life. Our management will greatly increase this diversity.

We intend to carry out improvements to the existing public footpath and also to create new paths to allow more public access.

What are our plans?

Instead of being sold cheaply for firewood or paper production the majority of the timber we produce can be used to make craft products from a small workshop on site. As well as giving added value to the timber, this creates much needed local jobs and training facilities for local schools and community groups.

Using wood in this way also means there is very little waste, as the wood does not need to be processed into the usual uniform mass-produced planks. By providing training we equip more people with the skills to start their own craft business, ultimately boosting the rural economy.

Most local people would prefer to buy locally-made products if possible and there is a very receptive market for these products.

Managing the woodland in a sustainable way requires more human input than when using machinery. This creates additional training and volunteering opportunities and allows more people to experience the health and spiritual benefits of working on the land.

Demonstrating viable alternatives to clear felling

If we had not bought the woodland it would have been on schedule for the mature conifers to be clear felled over the next year or two. Large scale clear felling leaves huge desolate areas and has a devastating effect on wildlife and the environment.

Our long term plans include organic forest gardening, coppicing and permaculture —these are all entirely sustainable and they benefit both wildlife and the environment. Because of cheap imports, timber prices for conifers are very low, and there is now a real need for alternative woodland crops and information on their management, aside from the growing environmental concerns.

The coppiced wood can be used for a variety of purposes including craft industries and charcoal production, first established in this area centuries ago and now actively encouraged once more.

Forest gardens and permaculture areas produce a variety of food, herbs and edible fungi, all of which can be sold, for example to local hotels, restaurants and vegetable box schemes.

Woodlands can provide so much more than just timber!

Wild crafted herbs, berries, leaves, sap and flowers for wine making, edible fungi, garden products, educational resources, green burial grounds, “people” places and countless others.

Education and the Environment

By creating organic forest gardens in the clearings within the woodland we demonstrate not only what can be done in a woodland but what can be done in even a small garden. The methods and ideas used can be tried at home by our visitors and helpers to promote chemical-free gardening and maximise the use of existing resources.

School visits to the woodland are planned. As environmental issues now form part of the National Curriculum this is an excellent opportunity to promote a sustainable and environmentally friendly way of living to children. Information on wildlife and sustainability will be supplied and there will be active involvement in practical projects.

As the project develops we intend to run courses on related subjects such as permaculture, organic gardening, sustainable forestry, conservation, green woodworking etc., providing high quality tuition to small groups.

By gradually restoring the woodland back to native species and with careful management the woodland will be a haven for both people and wildlife.

In the longer term, it is intended to purchase further woodlands to secure their future and to expand the project.

How can you help?

Our project complements existing local resources and is evolving with input from local groups, charities, individuals, the National Park and many others.

The management of the woodland is steered by a committee made up from volunteers and supporters. A 20-year management plan is being finalised which includes Certification of the Woodland's sustainable management.

As we evolve, there are opportunities for people who have knowledge of forestry, permaculture, woodland crafts or other skills to get involved so that we can create a network of people with various skills to call upon.

We welcome people with or without previous experience to our woodland activities. This help can be anything from volunteering in practical tasks, to teaching on our courses, or helping to develop and manage the project, as well as website updating, administrative or marketing help. Just a few hours a month can be a real help.

[To learn more, to get involved, or to receive our newsletter contact:](#)

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