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# *Special Branch* handbook

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Guidelines and tools to help you  
help everyone  
be the voice trees and woods need

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## Welcome, Super Campaigner!

Within the campaigning community, a charity's most active supporters are known as 'Super Activists' or 'Super Campaigners'. At the Woodland Trust, our super campaigners are those people who consistently take action themselves and make a point of highlighting and promoting our campaigns to other sympathetic folks. They form an informal but organised network we like to call our '*Special Branch*'.

Thank you for offering your time to this. It's important to us that we can show our campaigns are not just based on what the Trust wants, but what people want for their woods and trees too. That's why our Supers have such an important role - your endorsement of our campaigns means the other like-minded people you're in touch with are more likely to get involved, as well.

### ***Together we raise a voice for trees and woods that's louder than ever.***

You've already demonstrated your passion for the UK's woods and trees and you've told us how you think you can help our campaigns reach a wide audience. This Handbook is for you, it includes details about the Trust - our history, aims and why we campaign - plus useful tips and links as well as some of the 'do's and don'ts' of being Super. There's also some handy info about woods and trees that might help when you are talking about our campaigns to others. You will receive this along with the Trust's 'Volunteering Guide'. And I'll be on the end of a phone or keyboard whenever you need me.

We're really grateful that you're willing to go that extra mile to help us make even more positive changes for the UK's vulnerable and ancient woods and trees. They really are worth it.

Thanks again for being part of *Special Branch*. Enjoy!



Kaye Brennan, Special Branch Co-ordinator



Occasionally, I dress like this  
(don't worry, you don't have to!)

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## A little bit about us...

**Woods are a vital part of the ecosystems that give us the essentials of life.**

Established in 1972, the *Woodland Trust* is the UK's leading woodland conservation charity.

### Our Vision

***We want to see a country rich in native woods and trees enjoyed and valued by everyone***

### Our aims

**Work with others to plant more native trees  
Protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future  
Inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees**

Underpinning these is our aim to see "**no further loss of ancient woodland**" - home to more rare and vulnerable species than any other habitat and which today covers less than 2% of our land mass.

### Our story

Our founder was Kenneth Watkins, a retired farmer and agricultural machinery producer. Concerned about the rapidly disappearing small broadleaved woods, spinneys and copses which had been plundered during the 2nd World War or planted with softwoods, Kenneth established the 'Woodland Trust' charity with the assistance of three friends and built up membership with his wife, Mary, from their farm in Devon.

Today the Trust estate covers 1,276 sites, covering around 23,580 hectares (ha) across England, Scotland Northern Ireland and Wales. We have more than 214,000 members and over 400,000 supporters, and more than 1,700 volunteers all of which help us achieve our aims in many ways. We employ just over 300 staff, most of whom are based in our award-winning office in Grantham, Lincolnshire, or work on-site or in regional areas.

*The Woodland Trust is a registered charity in England and Wales (294344) and in Scotland (SC038885).  
We are a non-profit making company limited by guarantee (1982873) registered in England.*

### Key People

- Chief Executive - Sue Holden
- Head of campaigning - Nikki Williams
- President - the entertainer, broadcaster, writer and barrister Clive Anderson
- Our Patron - Dame Judi Dench
- 'Trust Ambassadors' include:
  - Nicola Nicholls - Chair of Trustees
  - Will Hobhouse – retail entrepreneur and one of our trustees
  - Adam Shaw – business journalist, author and BBC broadcaster
  - Sandi Toksvig – entertainer, broadcaster and author
- Celebrity supporters include:
  - Simon King – TV wildlife presenter and cameraman
  - Jo Brand – comedienne
  - Ann Widdecombe – former politician and novelist
  - Richard Hawley - musician
  - Kate Humble – TV presenter and journalist specialising in wildlife, farming & science



Our President,  
Clive Anderson

## Campaigning at the Woodland Trust

*We campaign to defend your right to have woods and trees around you.*

The benefits of trees and woodland for people and the environment are starting to be widely recognised. Yet the UK is the least wooded country in Europe. The Trust believes that to right this imbalance **there must be at least twice as much** native woodland cover than we have today. But even while organisations like us work hard with the public and partners to plant native woods and protect and repair what already exists, the UK is still losing woods and trees. We need others to truly recognise the wide and varied benefits of woods and trees and express this through policy, strategy and action at a governmental and social level.

*Trees and woods need a voice. Without all of us they are mute - and vulnerable.*

Demonstrating mass public support for issues helps to increase awareness and boosts our influence, while connecting us with the people most motivated by our cause. We empower our supporters to play their part, offering tangible ways they can make a difference in their local community as well as nationally. And we are dedicated to challenging development applications which threaten ancient woodland, and supporting community groups to protect the woods and trees they care about.

Campaigning has been part of the Public Affairs department, along with the Government Affairs team and the Conservation team which also includes our specialist PAWS team, for over ten years. Public Affairs involves lobbying and advocacy work on behalf of woods and trees; we also work in partnership, and coalition, to present connected views across the sector and ensure our messages contribute to wider environmental topics.

*Giving people the chance to demand respect for all generations of woods and trees.*

All our campaigns are based on the Trust's aims and steered by our policy work around protecting all the UK's woods and trees and increasing native woodland cover. Each is backed by conservation evidence and research as well as our own experience, and targets what we believe to be the right agency or change-maker in order to be as effective as possible and to deliver positive, lasting change.



Trees which were home to the rare 'lemon tart' lichen were felled in order to save 3 minutes on the A470.

Image: WTPL/A.Heslop



## Being Super

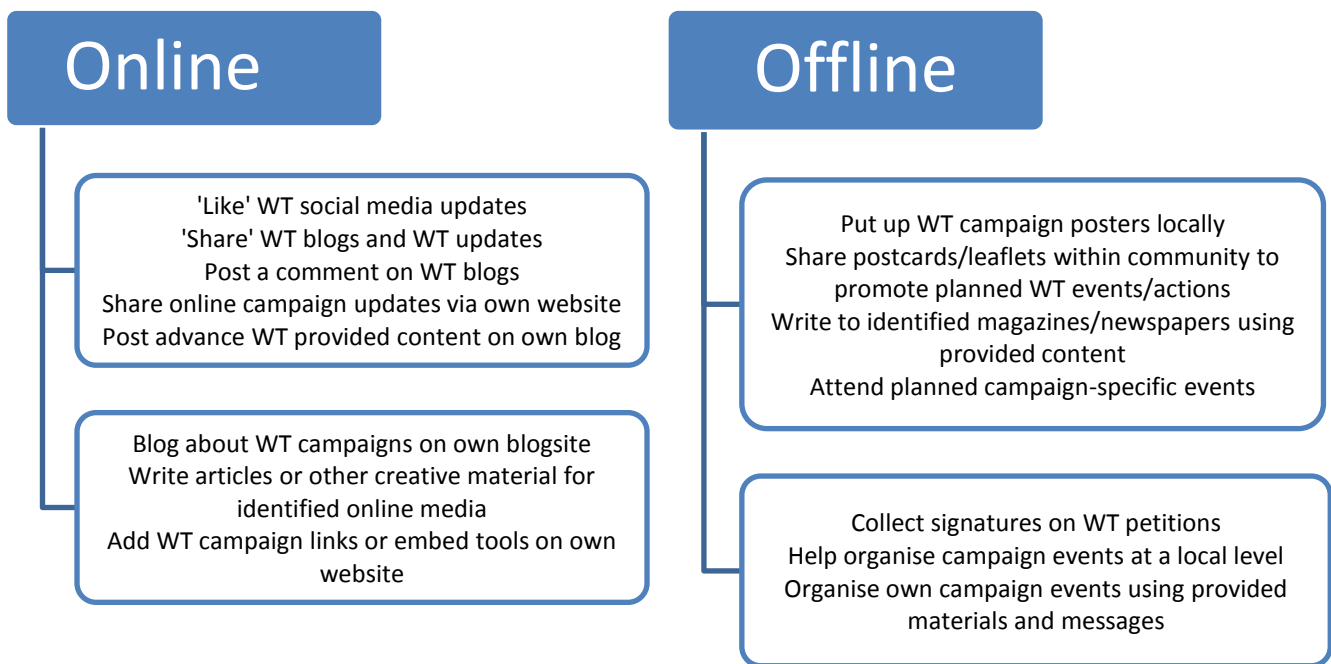
Being a Super Campaigner is all about **helping to raise the profile of the Trust's campaigns** in order to bring our actions and messages to as wide an audience as possible. Ultimately, this role is about being someone we can rely on to help promote our campaigns to others (people who are tree-minded of course, not in a spam-y way ☺). It's fair to say that agreeing to be part of *Special Branch* means you're already pretty super! Now you're also a vital part of our campaign team.

### Going Super!

We will send information about our campaign, or the issue we are working on, out to *Special Branch* and suggest some ways our Supers can help to spread the message even further.

For example - sharing a blog post online with peer networks such as LinkedIn, 'liking' a post on Facebook or Google+ so your social networks see it too, or 're-tweeting' a link to an action to your followers on Twitter. Contributing to news articles or starting conversations on a forum. Or simply forwarding on an email to a friend. We can provide content for you to share on your own blog or website too, or you can add content there in your own voice on our behalf. Plus there are lots of ways you can spread the word more creatively, both online and off-line, that we will suggest and we're always ready to hear your own ideas!

Here's a few...



You can always 'opt out' of a Super action. We appreciate you might not want to promote a campaign that doesn't resonate with you. Your views are respected as we expect our views to be.

Take a look at pages 12 & 13 for some guidance about when (not) to share if you think a campaign's not for you - there'll always be other ways to take part if you do want to.

### Super input

Supers can also be invited to help the Trust shape and test the content and style of campaigns before we make them public. Your feedback and suggestions are welcomed and very valuable, we'll invite you to contribute.

## Super volunteers

Being Super is a voluntary role - as Woodland Trust volunteers, our Supers join over 1,700 other people who willingly give their time to help the Woodland Trust right across the UK, all enable us to achieve our aims in a huge variety of ways.



Please contact the Volunteering Development Team  
to find out more about benefits and support for Trust volunteers

Tel: 01476 581111 Email: [volunteering@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@woodlandtrust.org.uk)

You will receive our Volunteering Guide with this Handbook - setting out our Volunteer's Charter, Policy and Support. You will also receive the Volunteering Newsletter, a quarterly publication with news, events, and stories from volunteering projects across the Trust. Our volunteers are also entitled to half-price Woodland Trust membership.



### Super training and development

Where we can we will provide relevant training, like how to use social media for example: it will help us to know what you think you may need to help you be as Super as you can. 'Super Campaigner' is a new role for the Trust so there is not currently a training programme in place.

Training and other events will take place either regionally near you, or at our head office in Grantham, Lincolnshire. If you can't attend events yourself we will come to you - virtually!



### Super staying in touch

The invitation-only GoogleGroup aims to act as a safe place and forum for Supers to get to know each other, chat about Super actions and share ideas. You will also receive the Trust's e-newsletter which includes the latest news about our wider work (you can unsubscribe whenever you wish). And you can contact us at any time.



### Recording volunteering activity

It can be difficult to state how much time each individual might want to put in to a Super action, depending on availability and the campaign itself. It's important that we can demonstrate the value volunteers bring to the Trust and to capture how much they do and what this represents, so we use a simple online recording form to record your time - we will go through this together.



### Super expenses

You should never be out of pocket while volunteering. We encourage you to claim any expenses: not only does this mean everyone can get involved regardless of their circumstances, but also helps us show the financial value of volunteering to our Trustees, funders, and on our accounts. Please talk to us before embarking on an activity that may incur expenses.

Even if you prefer to bear the costs of any activities, you may donate some or all of the expenses incurred back to the Woodland Trust - it's important to still claim your expenses so we can show how our charitable funds are spent and received.



### Making a claim

First time claims require a new record form to be completed as well as the claim form. This takes around 6 weeks to process and then expenses are paid. After the first claim the normal claim form is completed and takes 2-3 weeks to process. A volunteer expense claim form should be submitted with all relevant receipts. Using the claim form you can donate some or all of your expenses to the Trust if you wish.

## Using social media

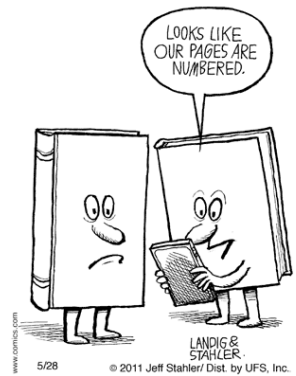
Social media is the quickest way to engage many audiences about diverse topics. But social media is more than a new set of communication tools... it's a significant shift in the ways people share, learn and collaborate.

The Woodland Trust uses social media to reach out to new and varied audiences, update and share our news and campaigns, invite people to and talk about events, hold conversations and build relationships, connect with peers, partners and friends.

There are many ways people can 'be social' nowadays. If you're not familiar with the technology, social media can seem like a minefield: difficult to map a path through and fraught with significant risk.

**Don't panic!** Here are some handy tips and some guidelines for your Super actions, including some of the language different tools use.

These are the main social tools the Trust and others are currently using (and some of the jargon that surrounds them):



Twitter

**[twitter.com/woodlandtrust](https://twitter.com/woodlandtrust) - @woodlandtrust**

- tweet 'at' (@) and 'follow' 'tweeps' (people who tweet); hashtags (#) refer to topics. Retweet (RT) / mention (MT) other tweep's tweets (in 140 characters!)



YouTube

**[www.youtube.com/woodlandtrust](https://www.youtube.com/woodlandtrust)**

- 'upload' video content; 'like', 'share' and 'comment' on films and playlists. Upload your own films as a video response, too



Facebook

**[www.facebook.com/woodlandtrustcampaigns](https://www.facebook.com/woodlandtrustcampaigns) /twitteringtree**

- 'post' content e.g. updates or photos on the 'wall'; 'like' a page to be a 'friend'. 'Comment' on, 'like', 'share' posts with others. Our wall is open for friends to post their own updates and photos



Scribd

**[www.scribd.com/woodlandtrust](https://www.scribd.com/woodlandtrust)**

- 'read' and 'upload' publications, presentations and 'collections' of documents; 'readcast' (share) with other account followers or online



Wordpress blog

**[wtcampaigns.wordpress.com](https://wtcampaigns.wordpress.com) 'Woodland Matters'**

- 'publish' blog posts; 'like', 'share', 'comment' on posts and 'reply' to comments; 'follow' the blog to get new posts via email



Google+

(No formal Woodland Trust presence currently)

- join 'circles', play games, 'share' and 'hang out' with your friends



LinkedIn

(No formal Woodland Trust presence currently)

- the "Facebook for professionals" : exchange information, ideas and opportunities; 'connect' with colleagues and networks; contribute to 'posts' and 'topic' discussions



## Super principles for sharing Trust content online through social media

Super Campaigners can share and promote our campaigns using content we provide, or (and) can create their own messages based on ours. However you choose to play a part, it's important that you convey the same positive, optimistic spirit that the Trust instils in all of its communications ☺

*Super Campaigners do not speak on behalf of the Woodland Trust.* You are sharing our campaigns as yourself. We want to encourage you to talk about our campaigns in your own voice, and we trust our Supers to do this with respect and integrity. We do request that you follow these core principles:

**1. You are responsible for your actions.**

Exercise sound judgment and common sense. And remember your online etiquette - for example don't use capital letters (feels a bit shouty). Be respectful of all individuals, races, religions and cultures, and views. See 4 also.

**2. The internet is permanent, and open.**

Online information may easily be found long after you put it out there. Bear in mind it can be seen by more than just your friends, and information originally intended just for friends and family can be forwarded on by, and to, others without you knowing.

**3. Please DO NOT disclose non-public information about the Trust** (including confidential information).

You will often be given advance notice of our campaigns and upcoming plans - if you have been asked to keep something about a campaign under your Super hat for a few days, please don't spoil the surprise.

**4. Sometimes people just don't agree with each other!**

Forestry can be a complicated subject and of course there are always two sides to a debate. The Trust can be questioned about and criticised for our views and our ways of working just as much as we can be supported and praised for the same.



*If you come across positive or negative remarks about the Trust online that you feel are important please forward them to us by email, or call for a chat.*

Our own policy is to engage with the public in an honest and transparent way and to reply to all comments as much as we can. It's up to you how - and if - you want respond to negative or critical comments.

Feel free to get involved in discussions where you wish; debate is healthy and can be really constructive! But there's no need for you to enter into an argument; in fact sometimes the best response is no response. Your Super actions will always give you the most appropriate and relevant place to find further information online - you can simply point people towards this, if you want to, rather than engage in a discussion. Talk to us if you're not sure. See 1 also.

**5. Sometimes you might not agree with us!**

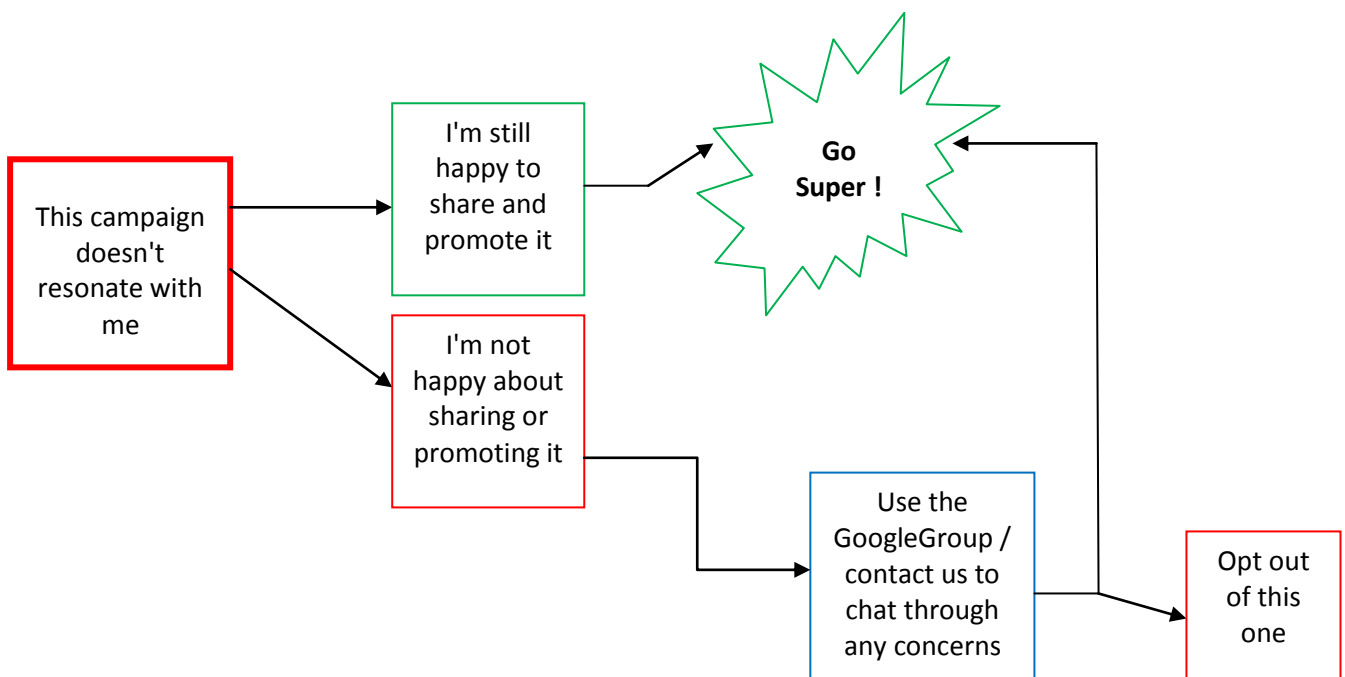
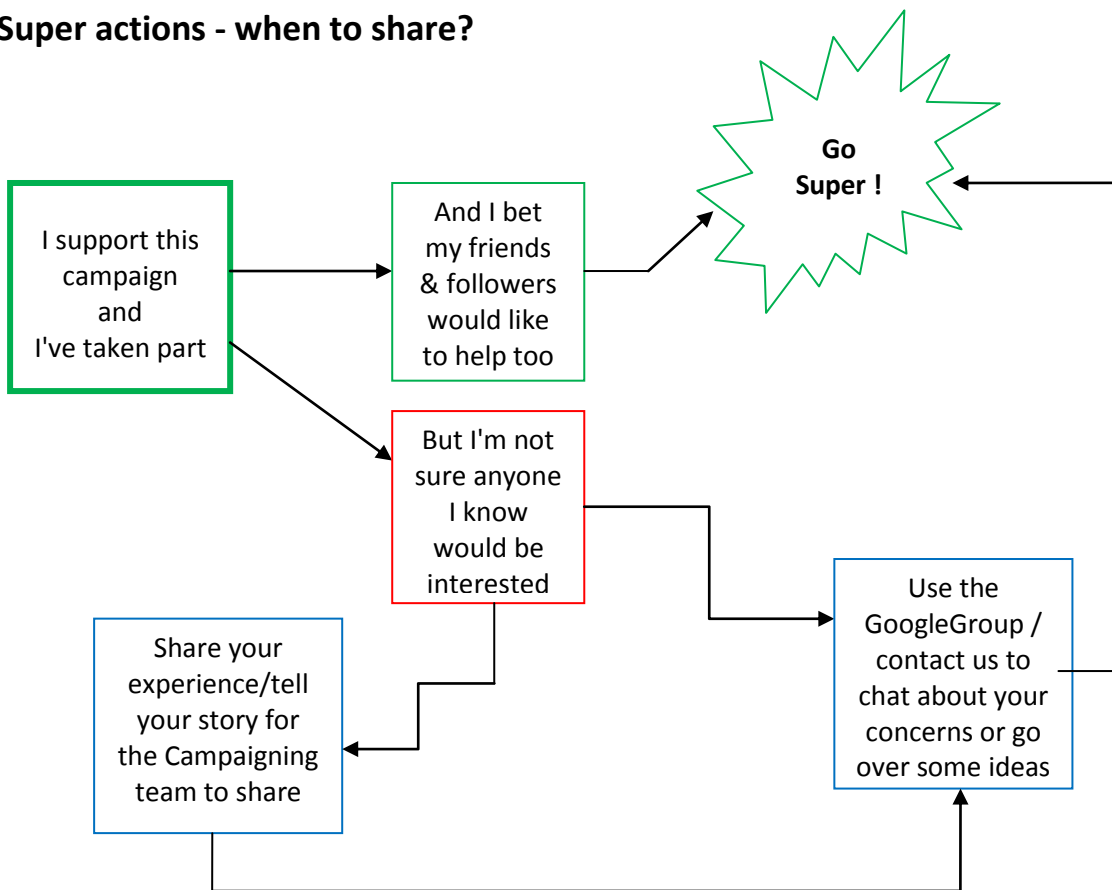
We don't expect Supers to promote a campaign they don't support. And you can always 'opt out' of Super actions. Please avoid criticising a campaign you don't support in public - talk through your views and concerns about a campaign with us, more details might help your decision; equally our messages might need to be clearer or more specific.

Defend us where you feel we need it, challenge us where you feel it's necessary.

*Thank you.*



## Super actions - when to share?



## A little bit about woods and trees...

### Useful statistics\*

- World forest cover is around 30%
- The UK is one of the least wooded areas of Europe, with 13% woodland cover compared to around 37% for European Union (EU) countries
- Within the UK Northern Ireland has the least native woodland cover, just 6.5%, followed by England with 9.9%. Wales has 14.3% woodland cover, Scotland has 17.8%
- Of the approximately 3,079,000 ha of woodland in the UK around 1 million ha is estimated to be native woodland
- 552,000 ha (around 2.3% of land area) in the UK is ancient woodland, and of this 223,000 ha is planted with non-native species (known as plantations on ancient woodland site: PAWS)
- There are estimated to be around 3,814 million trees of all types in Great Britain. The majority, 56%, are in Scotland
- There are estimated to be around 123 million trees outside woodland in the countryside in Great Britain
- 45% of the UK's woodland area is certified [FSC \(Forest Stewardship Certification\)](#) (<link). All Woodland Trust woods are certified. Around 87% of softwood (conifer) timber harvested in 2009 was certified - this included both private sector and all Forestry Commission timber
- Around 30% of UK woodland is managed by the Forestry Commission and Forest Service Northern Ireland

*\*'State of the UK's forests wood and trees - perspectives from the sector'  
A report to mark the International Year of Forests 2011 (<link).*

### Handy definitions

#### **'What is a tree? A tree is a big plant with a stick up the middle'**

*'Secret Life of Trees: How they live and why they matter.'* Colin Tudge (2005)

#### Native trees

Native trees are usually defined as trees that arrived and grew in the UK naturally after the last Ice Age, and were not introduced by humans. Most of our native trees are broadleaved (or deciduous) trees meaning they drop their leaves in winter. Examples are beech, birch, oak, ash and lime. The UK has around 50 species of native trees and shrubs, including three species of conifer.

Native trees are the main component of our native woodland. Planting native trees within the wider landscape around your community could bring a wealth of other benefits, including providing places for recreation or even production of fuel. Planting in the wider landscape provides a more joined up network of natural habitats, enabling wildlife to move around more easily – crucial in the context of climate change.

#### Introduced or 'non-native' trees

Introduced trees, also often referred to as 'non-native' trees, are ones that have been brought here by humans (as apposed to native trees which arrived here naturally after the last Ice Age). Some introduced tree species have now been growing here for hundreds and even thousands of years, and have consequently become 'naturalised'.

Weeping willows - a familiar sight along riverbanks and around ponds - are an example of an introduced tree, brought to our shores for ornamental reasons from China.

## Native woodland

Native woodland consists mainly of native trees. At one time, this native broadleaved woodland would have covered much of the UK's landscape. Most of the native woodland in the UK is broadleaved, with trees that drop their leaves in winter. In Scotland there are also some native pinewoods. However today only a small proportion, less than half, of our woodland is now native.



Bluebells, dense in patches, are scattered throughout Oldmoor Wood in Nottinghamshire along with wood anemone, wood-sorrel and creeping jenny.

*Image: WTPL*

## Ancient woodland

'Ancient woodland' is defined as land that has been continually wooded since at least 1600AD, when planting of woods became more common, so woodland that pre-dates this is more likely to have grown up naturally. In Scotland ancient woodland dates from around 1750 maps. Some ancient woods may even link back to the original wildwood that covered the UK around 10,000 years ago, after the last Ice Age.

The wildlife value of these natural heirlooms lies in the fact that their ecological communities have developed over a long period of time, with features accumulating over hundreds or thousands of years. No ploughing or other man-made disturbance means the resulting habitat is a complex and integrated system. Ancient woods are the jewel in our woodland crown, our richest sites for wildlife full of cultural heritage.



Find the ancient woods near you on the [VisitWoods](http://VisitWoods.org.uk) website (< link).

Ancient woods are also some of our prettiest - their untouched soils can produce spectacular carpets of bluebells, bursts of wood anemones and celandines in spring. Abundant fungi can point to undisturbed soils. Other ancient woodland indicator species include wild garlic, dogs mercury, yellow pimpernel, and certain grasses and sedges which can be harder to spot. If you find smaller, more delicate-looking plants flowering and growing in the spring before the trees are in full leaf, then you should take a closer look!



Ancient woodland in each country of the UK is recorded in special **Inventories**, although as these tend to incorporate woods over 2 ha in size they are not fully comprehensive.

There are 2 types of **ancient woodland**:

- *Ancient semi-natural woodland* describes a habitat which has not been ploughed or otherwise disturbed by man. The long continuity of semi-natural ancient woods and their undisturbed soils makes it our most valuable natural habitat - currently at just 2% of our land cover. It supports a huge range of wildlife (including more threatened species than any other UK habitat), many of which require stable conditions (i.e. relatively unchanging compared to land outside the woods). Often, these species are unable to move easily so do not colonise new areas successfully. If areas of ancient woodland are lost, planting around the remaining fragments can buffer them from the impacts of adjacent and nearby land use, and ensure the largest possible “core area” of woodland remains untouched by these impacts (which include noise, dust, and pollution), with benefits for the wood’s wildlife.
- *Plantations on Ancient woodland Sites* (also known as *PAWS*) are ancient woodland sites that have been planted with non-native trees (usually conifers) often for timber production. These trees stifle the fragile habitat, damaging these special woods - but they are not lost! Because remnants of ancient woodland plants and animal communities have usually survived, together with undisturbed ancient soils, with a gradual removal of the conifers these species and the habitat can recover. Careful, sensitive restoration can see the return of native species and allow natural regeneration - the best way to bring these woods back from the brink, and the only way to expand the area of ancient woodland in the UK.



Actual image of PAWS restoration in practice at Clangar Wood, Wiltshire

Image: WTPL/E.Johansson

Woods planted or growing up today will not become ancient woods in 400 years’ time because the soils on which they have developed have been modified by modern agriculture or industry, and the fragmentation of natural habitats in today’s landscape hampers species’ natural movements and interactions.

***Our remaining ancient woodland is therefore irreplaceable.*** If we lose what little we have left then it is gone forever!

### Ancient, veteran and heritage trees

Some ancient trees are instantly recognisable, others are less obvious. Like people, trees grow and age at different rates depending on where they are and what happens to them during their lifetime. Ancient trees are the trees that makes you go "wow, that tree's unlike any other tree round here!". It will be gnarly and often hollow, and fat - but probably not that tall, as trees tend to shrink down with age (like us!).

These trees are living relics of incredible age, hundreds and for some thousands of years old - and they also support wildlife that cannot live anywhere else. Over the centuries they have inspired artists, writers, poets and scientists, served as landmarks and icons and are mentioned in sacred texts.

The term 'ancient tree' encompasses trees of interest biologically, aesthetically or culturally because of their great age; trees in the ancient or third and final stage of their life and trees that are the old relative to others of the same species.

The term 'veteran tree' describes a tree usually in the second or mature stage of its life, one with important wildlife and habitat features including hollowing or associated decay fungi; holes; wounds and large dead branches. It will generally include old trees but also younger, middle aged trees where premature aging characteristics are present.

The term 'notable tree' describes a tree of local importance, or of personal significance. This includes specimen trees or those considered to be potential and next generation veteran trees.

A *British Standard Tree Hug* is the official way to measure an ancient tree. If you can't hug it, it's probably ancient...



This Beech tree at Clumber Park, Nottinghamshire is a real oldie!

*Image: WTPL/C. Mars*

Conservation is no longer just about protecting nature reserves in isolation. It is about creating whole landscapes that are more wildlife friendly, with joined up networks of wildlife habitat and healthy ecosystems at a big scale that work to continue providing everything we need.





## Health and safety

Your safety and comfort is very important to us. As the Task Outline mentions, this role will require periods of time using a VDU therefore we ask each individual to ensure they take regular breaks from the screen. Guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) suggests it's better to take shorter breaks more often than longer, and less often: e.g. a 5-10 minute break after 50-60 minutes continuous screen and/or keyboard work is likely to be better than a 15 minute break every two hours.

We ask you to ensure your work space is set up to ensure a comfortable working environment whilst carrying out your task. We suggest you use the following links for advice on [Sitting Safely](#) (< link) and/or working on [lap tops](#) (< link).

Ensure that your computer screen is at the right height – in line with your eyes. Vary your time between sitting down at the screen and working out in the field – take regular screen breaks and take the opportunity to walk around from time to time.

Further information and advice can be obtained from the Volunteering Development Team.

You will not be required to carry out any additional tasks without prior consultation with the relevant Woodland Trust staff member.

## Useful links

- Special Branch GoogleGroup (invitation only):  
<https://groups.google.com/d/forum/specialbranchnetwork> (<link)
- Woodland Trust website - campaigning pages:  
[www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/campaigning](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/campaigning) (<link)
- VisitWoods  
[www.visitwoods.org.uk](http://www.visitwoods.org.uk) (<link)
- British Trees  
[www.british-trees.org.uk](http://www.british-trees.org.uk) (<link)
- Nature's Calendar  
[www.naturescalendar.org.uk](http://www.naturescalendar.org.uk) (<link)

### *What have we missed?*

Hopefully this handbook has given you some background, guidance and a bit of tree-related info that will help you on your Super way.

Is anything missing? Do you need more detail? Questions/concerns? Suggestions? Perhaps you're now thinking that being a Super Campaigner is not for you? Just call - we'd love to hear from you and we're here to help ☺



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