

# Ancient Woodland

## What is ancient woodland?

Ancient woodland is defined as land that has been continually wooded since at least 1600AD. From 1600AD, planting of woodland became more common, so woodland that pre-dates this is more likely to have grown up naturally. 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.

Ancient woods are the jewel in our woodland crown. They are our richest sites for wildlife and are full of cultural heritage. Ancient woods are also some of our prettiest woodland - some have carpets of bluebells, wood anemones and celandines in spring.

But, not all ancient woods are the same. They vary from the native pinewoods in the Cairngorms of Scotland to the moist and lichen-rich oakwoods of the Atlantic seaboard and the flower rich coppice woodland in south-east England.

However, this is not the whole picture because there are actually two broad types of ancient woodland - Ancient Semi-Natural Ancient Woodland (ASNW) and Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS).

## Kent

### **Worst county in England for high numbers of threats to ancient woodland and overall woodland losses.**

Despite woodland cover in Kent currently recorded as slightly above the national average (13.1% compared to 10%), **an incredible 88 precious ancient woods** have come under threat from development in the last 10 years - **14** of which have already been lost or damaged.

**These threat and loss statistics are the worst in England.**

Action is needed to stop further loss and work towards the recommended woodland cover of 15%.

**9ha of ancient woodland in Kent under threat from road widening plans!**

Source: [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk)

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# Kent's big picture

## HOW MUCH OF YOUR AREA IS WOODLAND?



## HOW MUCH ACCESS IS THERE?



NATIONAL AVERAGE 14%

## WOODS UNDER THREAT IN THE LAST 10 YEARS



## **Restoring ancient woodland**

### **Why do we need to restore woods?**

Ancient woodland is one of our richest wildlife habitats. It's scarce and irreplaceable, covering less than 2 per cent of the UK.

Yet, many ancient woods have been planted with non-native conifers to supply much needed timber for industry.

Hundreds of thousands of hectares/acres of ancient woodland were converted to conifers between the 1930s and 1980s.

**Conifer plantations can produce dense, year round shade. This can cut out the light to surviving broadleaved trees and the delicate plants below, with damaging effects and lose of important habitats.**

**Although damaged, these woods are not beyond repair.**

Many of these plantations on ancient woodland still have some surviving elements of the previous ancient woodland ecosystem.

Remnants of ancient woodland features such as old native broadleaved trees, woodland specialist flora like bluebells and dog's mercury and important habitat like deadwood can be still be found.

The delicate plants have hung on underneath. They are just waiting for an opportunity (and enough light) to thrive again.

The Final Report from the Independent Panel on Forestry is out! What does it mean for restoring precious woodland?

We need to take action to save what remains and build on it - and we need this process to start as soon as possible.

Research shows that most of the conifers planted on ancient woodland sites will reach maturity in the near future. If they are felled and replaced with more conifers, the ancient woodland remnants may not survive a second.

We want to see the active conservation management of all ancient woods planted with non-native conifers as a priority.

Restoration needs to be carried out sensitively and gradually to bring these valuable woods back to life.

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