

# CHILTERN WOODLANDS

**T**he Chiltern Hills were designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1965 in recognition that they are one of the finest landscapes in England and Wales. This leaflet, part of the Chilterns Landowner's Guide, is intended to provide you with some basic information to help you maintain and enhance the natural beauty of your local landscape through good woodland management. With approximately 17,500 hectares (ha) of woodland covering over 21% of the AONB, the Chiltern Hills are one of the most densely wooded regions of England. 80% of these woods, some 13,300ha, are privately owned with ownership ranging from less than 1 ha to over 400 ha.

## Why are Chiltern woods important?

Woodlands are an important part of the landscape and cultural heritage of the AONB. They are a significant landscape feature and important habitat for wildlife including bats, dormice, woodpeckers and orchids. Many contain features of archaeological and historical interest.

The Chilterns is nationally important for its beech woods, some of which are protected by European legislation.

**Ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW)** is generally the most ecologically valuable and may have many species adapted to the conditions, some are likely to be rare. These sites that have had continuous woodland cover since at least AD 1600.



*Old sawpit*



**Plantations on Ancient Woodlands Sites (PAWS)** have also maintained woodland cover since 1600 but the native trees have largely been replaced through felling and replanting often with conifer species. Beech, sycamore or conifers may have been introduced by planting into an earlier woodland. The Government has adopted a new policy of encouraging the restoration of plantations on ancient woodland sites to a more natural species composition. The Chilterns Conservation Board has its own policy for retaining conifers on certain sites where they are of value for wildlife and landscape reasons.

For more details please contact the office.

These ancient woods are part of the culture and heritage of the area. There has been a long tradition of management of the predominantly beech woodland for chair making; with 'bodgers' working in the woods using simple pole lathes for over 200 years. Old sawpits, charcoal hearths and other features such as wood banks can be identified in many of these woods.

More recent woods may either have been planted or occurred naturally, these will not be as rich in wildlife as the ancient woods as it takes many years for plants adapted to woodland conditions to spread.

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**Chilterns**



an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

## Why manage woods?

Positive management ensures that your woodland continues to thrive and delivers benefits to you and to the local landscape. Many even-aged beech woods are becoming over mature and in need of some felling in order to rejuvenate areas for the future. This can provide a small income through timber and

firewood sales or provide you with a cheap supply of heating fuel. They can also be managed for a wide variety of other benefits, including recreation or for wildlife. To get the most of these benefits they will require a certain amount of planning. For more advice contact the Chiltern Woodlands Project.

### To conserve woodland wildlife

- Retain standing and fallen dead wood where it is safe to do so. Many species depend on the decay cycle - do not be too tidy.
- Be wary of introducing invasive plants such as Rhododendron, particularly to ancient woods.
- Maintain some glades and open spaces within the wood if it is large enough to do so.
- Maintain the natural variety of trees and shrubs adapted to the local soil conditions.
- Try to develop a mix of ages of trees of different local and native species within the wood.
- Thinning and making use of natural regeneration to grow replacement trees and shrubs are the most likely operations.
- Other work to ensure the good growth and survival of young trees may also be necessary, e.g. protection from deer, rabbits, voles and grey squirrels.

*Possible bat roost protected by law*



## Getting consent

If you wish to fell trees you may need a **Felling Licence**. Please contact your local Forestry Commission office (0845 3673787) [www.forestry.gov.uk](http://www.forestry.gov.uk). There are some exemptions for dead and dangerous trees. You may also need to get consent from the District Council if the trees are covered by a **Tree Preservation Order (TPO)** or are in a **Conservation Area**.

## Grant assistance

The Forestry Commission provides grants for woodland owners and managers through the **English Woodland Grant Scheme**. There are several different grants for managing existing woodland and also a creation grant for planting of new woodlands. This grant is limited, targeted to regional priorities and is on a competitive basis. Funding may also be available through the Environmental Stewardship Scheme. [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)



*Thinning Oaks*

## The Chiltern Woodlands Project



A registered charity based in the Conservation Boards offices.

- Its aim is to promote and encourage the sensitive and sustainable management of woodland in the Chiltern Hills, for landscape, amenity and nature conservation reasons.
- The Project offers an advisory service and can help bring woods into management, working in partnership with others.
- Priority is given to unmanaged woods of high landscape, amenity or nature conservation value.
- The Project publishes News of the Woods newsletters three times a year and organises woodland training events and visits.

If you own an unmanaged woodland and would like a FREE advisory visit please contact John Morris.

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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION,  
PLEASE CONTACT**



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