

Woodland Trust to bring ancient woods back to life

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The Woodland Trust has received the green light from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for a UK-wide project which could see the restoration of 52,000 hectares of damaged ancient woodland, one of the country's rarest and most precious habitats and home to 2,561 rare or threatened species of wildlife.

The five year project, active on the ground in 2014, could see the restoration of an area of woodland one third the size of London across 10 priority areas throughout the country; from the Glens of Scotland to Exmoor. The trust plans to work with over 1,000 landowners, offering information, advice and training to help them restore conifer woods to their natural broadleaved state.

Tim Hodges, Woodland Restoration Programme manager, said: "The key to the project is the urgency. Many conifer plantations which have been planted since the Second World War are approaching maturity and due to be felled.

"By working with landowners now to begin restoring these woods there is a once in a lifetime opportunity to prevent these woods being re-stocked with a further round of conifers which could compound the damage already done to the wildlife that remains. We have a responsibility to restore our ancient woods and protect them for future generations."

Ancient woodland restoration involves the gradual removal of conifers from a plantation, to allow a greater amount of light to penetrate the woodland canopy, encouraging specialist ancient woodland species to recover and reverse years of damage. Ancient woodland covers only 2% of the UK's landmass and links back to the last Ice Age 10,000 years ago.

Vanessa Harbar, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East Midlands, said: "Our ancient woodlands are at risk of being lost forever which is why this innovative project to change the way they are maintained is so important. The Heritage Lottery Fund is pleased to be supporting the Woodland Trust and we look forward to seeing their restoration plans help bring some of our most treasured ancient woods back to life."

The total project cost is £2.9million, with £1.9million being funded directly by the HLF. The trust is appealing for public donations to make up a £530,000 funding gap, with the remaining support coming from partner organisations. A number of public volunteering opportunities will also be available during the course of the project.

Anyone wishing to donate can do so online through the [Woodland Trust website](#).

Notes to editors

The Woodland Trust is the UK's leading charity championing native woods and trees. It has 500,000 members and supporters. The trust has three key aims:

- to enable the creation of more native woods and places rich in trees
- to protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future
- to inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees

Established in 1972, the Woodland Trust now has over 1,000 sites in its care covering approximately 20,000 hectares (50,000 acres). Access to its sites is free.

Ten priority areas of the project:

- Great Glen and Three Firths
- Cairngorms and Hinterland
- South and West Yorkshire
- Clwyd
- Powys
- Western Mid Wales
- Herefordshire and West Worcestershire
- Exmoor and West Devon
- Low Weald
- Northern Ireland

Ancient woodland is land that has been continuously wooded since 1600. The unique undisturbed soils and ecosystems found in these sites form the UK's richest land habitat. It is home to a host of rare, protected and threatened wildlife - 256 species of conservation concern are associated with ancient woodland; species that are slow to react to change, find it difficult to adapt, and are not mobile enough to move to other locations to survive. Ancient woodland now accounts for just 2% of our land area, a loss fuelled by the fashion for planting fast growing conifers in an industrial age. Once destroyed, it can never be replaced.

Further information

Woodland Trust press office: Chris Hickman on 014 7658 1121, email chrishickman@woodlandtrust.org.uk.