

## Why are we doing this?

In 1992, 150 governments including the UK agreed at the Rio Earth Summit that there was a need to stop the worldwide loss of animal and plant species and genetic resources. They each said that they would write an **action plan** to save the **biodiversity** within their borders.

## Bio... what?

Biodiversity is a word used to represent the **variety of life on earth**. It includes everything from algae to elephants, bacteria to blue whales, their genetic differences and all the habitats in which they live.



photos: Mike Roberts, Groundwork Mersey Valley

At a local level, a group of foresters, farmers and conservationists has written a **biodiversity action plan** for ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodlands.

The objective is to **identify, protect and maintain all ancient woodlands, expand the extent of broadleaved woodlands and restore degraded ancient woodland and plantations on ancient sites.**

*In order to achieve this we need your help, and in turn, we can help you look after your ancient woodland.*

## Ancient Woodlands

**Do you own or manage a wood?**

**Would you like to find out more?**

**What about producing your own timber?**

**How can you protect your woodland, or extend it?**

**What advice and grants are available?**

## Who can help?

To answer your questions and assist you with managing woodland contact the following members of the **Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland Local Biodiversity Action Plan Action Group for the Cheshire region**:

**The Forestry Commission**

tel: 01606 889912 [www.forestry.gov.uk](http://www.forestry.gov.uk)

**Cheshire FWAG (Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group)**

tel: 01270 627938 [www.fwag.org.uk](http://www.fwag.org.uk)

**The Mersey Forest**

tel: 01925 816217 [www.merseyforest.org.uk](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk)

**The Woodland Trust**

tel: 01476 581111 [www.woodland-trust.org.uk](http://www.woodland-trust.org.uk)

**LBAP coordinator (for links to other habitat and species action plans) c/o Cheshire Wildlife Trust**

tel: 01270 610180

**Countdown Website:** [www.cheshire-biodiversity.org.uk](http://www.cheshire-biodiversity.org.uk)



leaflet by Groundwork Mersey Valley

# Ancient Woodlands

in the Cheshire region



Information and advice  
from the Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland  
LBAP Action Group

## How old is 'Ancient'?

**Ancient woodland consists of sites which have been continuously wooded since at least 1600.**



photos: Tim Kirwin, Woodland Trust

## So what's good about an old wood?

**Ancient semi-natural woodlands (ASNWs) are the most important type of wood for wildlife, and cannot be replaced.** Due to the continuity of woodland cover, they have had a long time to acquire stable and diverse communities, which are often rare and localised and are unable to spread to recent woodlands in the now fragmented landscape. Ancient woodland can be even more valuable if it includes other habitats, such as ponds or heathland.

The Cheshire region has only 4% of woodland cover, **less than half the national average.**

## Is that natural, or did you plant it?

**No completely natural woodland remains in the Cheshire region.** Despite their natural appearance, all our woods have been modified by management or the effects of pollution, so we use the term 'semi-natural'.

Plantations on ancient woodland sites ('PAWs') are also of interest, especially if the ground flora is not too impoverished and the canopy may be restored to locally native broadleaves.

photo: David Potts, Groundwork Mersey Valley



## Clues to Ancient Woodlands

**Old names** - 'Dingle', 'Coppice', 'Clough', for example

**Old maps** - irregular boundaries, Parish boundaries, steep slopes and narrow valleys not so good for agriculture.



**Special plants** - some plants will only grow in ancient woodland habitats and these can be used as **indicators** that the site is indeed ancient. There may be a biological record for some sites and species.



photos: Ian Aldred, Cheshire County Council

## What threatens our Ancient Woodlands?

**Inappropriate management** or lack of management altogether - 'nature can't take its course if it's got nowhere to go!'

### Well past their fell-by date...

Veteran trees (left) and dead wood are great for wildlife, but a healthy woodland needs a mix of species and age, from seedlings to veterans.

**Take-over bids!** - Invasion by non-native or highly competitive species such as rhododendron - pretty flowers, but they don't like sharing the ground with any other plants!

**The aliens!** - Planting (including past planting) of **non-native trees** to replace native species

**Clear felling** for development, and conversion to other uses. Also encroachment by neighbours or developers



photos: Mike Roberts, Groundwork Mersey Valley

**Fly tipping** - especially harmful materials and garden waste



photos: Woodland Trust

Unsympathetic use - such as **off-road vehicles**

Damage by **inappropriate agricultural operations**

## Where are they?

We simply don't know where **all** the ancient semi-natural woodlands are, or what their quality is - that's why we need the help of owners and managers.



photo: Tim Kirwin, Woodland Trust