



Trees, Woods and Hedgerows

Trees, woodlands and hedgerows are vital parts of our local landscape. They support wildlife, provide local products and fuel, and help to make up the character of an area. These precious resources can easily be lost. We need to take action to record and carefully manage them.

A few facts

Trees in the landscape

From ancient bluebell woods and hedge banks to the landmark pines on Colmers Hill – trees, woods and hedges are an integral part of the Dorset landscape. Ancient and veteran trees are also an important part of the landscape, often associated with historic parkland. Thousands of years ago, Dorset was covered in trees, but now just over 8% of the land is wooded. Without trees and hedges, our landscape would be very different.

Growing old

Some of our woods are very ancient and support some of the rarer plants and animals. Many of our hedgerows are also very old – these tend to be the most important for our threatened wildlife. By studying the number of shrub species and the structure of a hedge, it is possible to estimate its age. This gives us valuable clues to how our landscape has evolved over time.

Wildlife

Some of our rarest wildlife depends on trees and hedges for a home. Hedges provide important habitat and 'corridors' that help wildlife move from one place to another, linking up blocks of woodland and other habitats.

Wood products

Woods can provide fuel, charcoal, thatching spars, hurdles and construction timber. With careful, active management these products can be harvested in ways that help our landscape and wildlife.

Enjoying woods

The seasonal beauty of woodlands provides delight and enjoyment. Woods also offer opportunities for active recreation that might be less appropriate in a more open landscape. Woodlands can be great places for walking, cycling and horse riding. They are also a great environment for children to explore, climb trees, create dens and generally have fun.

Orchards

Dorset still has some old orchards, though many are no longer actively managed. In 1812, Dorset is thought to have supported about 10,000 acres of orchards, particularly for cider apples. In some parishes, local people have worked with landowners to restore old orchards or create new ones, using traditional Dorset varieties such as Bryanston Gage or Melcombe Russet.

Heritage

Trees and woods have always been part of our landscape and have developed many cultural associations. They can be important landmarks, are often reflected in local place names and may be linked to local legends and stories.

What you can do

- Record and survey your local trees, woodlands, hedgerows and orchards

Record these features on a parish map and make sure they are recorded in your parish / community plan. Undertake a survey of hedges so that really ancient ones can be given special care and more can be learned about how the landscape has evolved. Help add to the record of where 'veteran' trees are located and what cultural links and stories are associated with them.

Who can help: The Dorset Woodlink Project can advise on survey techniques and where to send your data.

Sources of funding: AONB Sustainable Development Funds and District Council Environmental Grants.

Things to be aware of: Always get permission from the landowner before conducting survey work. Also, before starting new surveys, look at historical information such as old maps or previous surveys – the Dorset History Centre and Dorset Environmental Records Centre can help.



- Gather and plant

Important trees are often very old. Gather seed and plant new trees now, so there will be old trees for future generations to enjoy.

Who can help: The Dorset Woodlink Project and Dorset Wildlife Trust can advise on which trees are right in which landscape.

Sources of funding: District Council Environmental Grants, England Woodland Grant Scheme

Things to be aware of: Before planting trees, check that the site isn't already a high quality habitat for wildlife. Pick a species that is appropriate to the natural character of the area – it will look right and be better suited to the conditions. Consider the amount of space – both above and below ground – and make sure the species is not too big or too small.



- Make hedge-laying common place

Old, gappy hedges can be brought back into management by 'laying', which makes them stock-proof and maintains an ancient rural skill.

Who can help: BTCV can help local groups with hedge laying projects, Dorset Centre for Rural Skills for training

Sources of funding: District Council Environmental Grants. Farmers and landowners can receive grants for hedge management through the Environmental Stewardship Scheme.

Things to be aware of: Hedgerow Regulations: These exist to protect important hedgerows. Contact your local authority tree officer.

- Adopt a local wood

Find out if owners need any help to manage their woodlands, or whether improvements could be made for local people to reach and enjoy them. Work with a professional adviser to draw up a management plan. In some parishes, residents have worked with woodland owners to create nature trails, wildlife zones and play areas.

Who can help: The Dorset Woodlink Project can advise on woodland management and projects.

Sources of funding: Woodland owners – England Woodland Grant Scheme for funds for management; local communities – AONB Sustainable Development Funds, Heritage Lottery Fund or District Council Environment Grants.

Things to be aware of:

- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA):** Forestry and woodland operations may be subject to EIA.

- Record climate change

Woodlands come to life in the spring, as flowers on the woodland floor hurry to set their seeds before the canopy shades them out. As our climate changes, spring is arriving earlier and local wildlife is responding accordingly. By recording spring milestones in your local woodland, such as the opening of the first bluebell, the appearance of the first butterflies and the call of the first

- Explore the cultural of your local trees

Look for stories, customs, place and field names linked to trees. Woods often contain archaeological remains that are unrecorded because they don't appear on aerial photographs. Look for old buildings, saw pits and boundary banks.

Who can help: Common Ground publications for inspiration, Dorset History Centre for old maps and records, Dorset County Council Historic Environment Record for

Land

This includes new planting & felling for change of use. Even small areas within AONBs are subject to this process.

- **Other designations:** Check whether a woodland is covered by other designations, e.g. SSSI or SNCI as this may affect what you can do there. Contact English Nature or Dorset Wildlife Trust.
- **Scheduled Monuments:** May not be visible, have very high degree of statutory protection, are often found in woodland and disturbance can constitute criminal offence. Contact Dorset County Council's Historic Environment Team.



Courtesy of Giles Nicolson

Change

cuckoo, you can help add to a national research campaign to record climate change across the country. This is a great project for schools to get involved in.

Who can help: There is lots of information on what to record and how on the Woodland Trust website or at www.phenology.org.uk

Land and historic heritage and woodlands

archaeological information from DCC Historic Environment Team.

Sources of funding: Heritage Lottery Funds.

Things to be aware of: Always get permission from the landowner before undertaking survey work. Note that archaeological sites may be protected by law.



Courtesy of Dorset

• Use local woodland products

Help support the sustainable management of local woodlands in Dorset by buying local wood products. One of the most obvious is Dorset charcoal for your summer barbecue but local firewood, hurdles and stakes for the garden can also be bought.

Who can help: Wood Products Directory is available from the Dorset Coppice Group. Direct from Dorset local accreditation scheme also lists

wood products that help support Dorset's economy and environment.

Things to be aware of: Products can be local but that doesn't always mean they have been produced sustainably – look for the accreditation schemes mentioned above, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) logo on larger scale wood products or a commitment to sustainable management.



• Create a community orchard

Restore an old orchard in your parish or create a new one. Dorset has a number of local apple varieties such as the Melcombe Russet. Try to source these old varieties to keep them alive.

Who can help: The Common Ground

book of orchards is full of inspiration.

Funding: Environmental Stewardship on private land, AONBs Sustainable Development Funds.

Things to be aware of: Don't plant on sites of existing high value e.g for wildlife / historic reasons. Permanent grassland may be subject to EIA.

• If you need to fell a tree

You should first check with your local planning authority to find out whether or not formal consent is needed.

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs): protect individual trees, groups of trees or even entire woodlands. Any works to these trees require consent from the local authority. The tree officer at your District Council will advise.

Trees in Conservation Areas: Any work must be agreed by the local planning authority, six weeks notice is required. Contact your District Council tree officer.

Felling licenses: Operated by the Forestry Commission and required for most felling of growing trees (except in orchards, gardens, churchyards or designated public open space).

Health & Safety

All privately owned trees are the responsibility of the owner. Dangerous trees along highway are the responsibility of the owner but County Tree Officer should be notified on 01305 225486.



Who can help

BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers)

Giles Aspinall
078 666 40916
www.btcv.org.uk

Direct from Dorset

Mandy Staple
m.j.staple@dorsetcc.gov.uk
01305 224213
www.directfromdorset.org.uk

Dorset Centre for Rural Skills

01747 811099
info@dorsetruralskills.co.uk
www.dorsetruralskills.co.uk

Dorset Coppice Group

info@dorsetcoppicegroup.co.uk
www.dorsetcoppicegroup.org.uk
Tel: 01258 472299

Dorset County Council

Historic Environment Team, Steve Wallis, Senior Archaeologist
01305 224222. s.p.wallis@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Dorset Environmental Records Centre

01305 225081 or enquiries@derc.org.uk
www.derc.org.uk

Dorset History Centre

01305 250550 or archives@dorsetcc.gov.uk
www.dorsetforyou.com/archives

Dorset Wildlife Trust

Brooklands Farm, Forston, Dorchester DT2 7AA
Tel: 01305 264620
www.dorsetwildlifetrust.co.uk

Dorset Woodlink Project

c/o Dorset AONB, Tom Munro
01305 756785.

East Dorset District Council

01202 886201
Tree Officer: Andy Sherlock

English Nature

01929 557450
Dorset@english-nature.org .uk

Forestry Commission

South West England Conservancy, Mamhead Castle, Mamhead, Exeter, Devon. EX6 8HD
e-mail Southwest.fce@forestry.gsi.gov.uk. or 01626 890666
or your local Woodland Officer Dick Preston on 01929 550889
richard.preston@forestry.gsi.gov.uk.
www.forestry.gov.uk

North Dorset District Council

01258 454111
Tree Officer: Jeremy Partridge

Purbeck District Council

01929 557213
Tree Officer: Paul Coombes

West Dorset District Council

01305 251010
Tree Officer – dev.serv@westdorset-dc.gov.uk
Grants Officer – local.policy@westdorset-dc.gov.uk

Weymouth & Portland Borough Council

Trees – Rick Slatter 01305 858266
Grants – David Smith 01305 208946 or davida_smith@weymouth.ac.uk

Funding

AONB Sustainable Development Funds

Contact Dorset AONB 01305 756780 or k.wright@dorsetcc.gov.uk
Cranborne Chase AONB 01725 517417 or davidblake@cranbornechase.org.uk

Chalk & Cheese

01258 474276/277 or sarah@chalkandcheese.org
www.chalkandcheese.org

Dorset Biodiversity Partnership Grant

c/o Dorset Wildlife Trust
01305 264620

Dorset Strategic Partnership

Kate Hindson 01305 224814 or k.hindson@dorsetcc.gov.uk
www.dorsetforyou.com

Environmental Stewardship Scheme

Rural Development Service (RDS)
www.defra.gov.uk

Heritage Lottery Fund

01392 223950
carolp@hlf.org.uk
www.hlf.org.uk/english/InYourArea/southwest

Local Authority Environmental Grants

For tree planting, hedge laying and orchards. Contact your tree officer or check your local council's web site.

England Woodland Grant Scheme

This new fund includes grants for woodland creation, planning, assessment, regeneration and management. Visit www.forestry.gov.uk or contact the Forestry Commission South West England Conservancy contact above.

Farm Woodland Premium Scheme

Provides annual payments to farmers converting areas of agricultural land into woodland. Details at www.defra.gov.uk. or contact the Forestry Commission South West England Conservancy contact above.

West Dorset District Council Countryside & Conservation Grants

01305 252386 or local.policy@westdorset-dc.gov.uk

Further information

Historical maps can show where woodlands used to be. Contact **Ordnance Survey's** helpline 08456 050505 or visit www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk or www.old-maps.co.uk to view online.

Common Ground

www.commonground.org.uk

The England Forestry Strategy and South West Woodland & Forestry Framework

can be downloaded from www.forestry.gov.uk or contact the South West England Conservancy as previously shown.

Forest Stewardship Council

www.fsc.org

Dorset Farming and Wildlife Group

Melinda Keeble on 01305 251742 or Dorset@fwag.org.uk
www.fwag.org.uk

International Tree Federation

www.internationaltreefoundation.org or 0870 7744269

Woodland Trust

01476 581135
www.woodland-trust.org.uk
The Woodland Trust also do the Ancient Tree Hunt on www.ancient-tree-hunt.org .uk



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Trees, woodlands and hedgerows are vital parts of our local landscape. They support wildlife, provide local products and fuel, and help to make up the character of an area. These precious resources can easily be lost. We need to take action to record and manage them carefully.

Ideas for Action

Trees from seed

Gather seed from local trees and get them ready for planting. Many of our important trees are old and we need to plant new ones for future generations to enjoy.

Make a tree map

If trees are important in your local landscape, make sure they are noted in your parish plan and make a map of where they are.

Hedgerows

Learn how to lay hedges. One of the biggest threats to our hedgerows is neglect – they soon become gappy and disappear if not layed regularly. A great way to get fit and keep this traditional rural skill alive!

Manage woodlands

Talk to local woodland owners. Only by talking will you find out if they would appreciate help to manage their woodland or if there are opportunities for local people to enjoy the woodland more.

Buy local wood products

When managed well, local woods can provide us with firewood, stakes, thatching spars, construction timber, hurdles and even charcoal. Buy local and support the good works.

Find the first bluebell

Woodlands come to life in spring but with climate change spring is arriving earlier. By recording spring milestones like the first cuckoo, butterfly or bluebell, you can help record climate change across the country.

Celebrate!

Tree dressing days, apple days... bring old traditions into the new.

If you want to take up any of these ideas, there's a lot of help available. See over for how to get started.

Case study

Acre Coppice Local Nature Reserve Friends Group, Bovington

Local people in Bovington were concerned that Acre Coppice ancient woodland was looking a bit worse for wear. This thin sliver of a woodland had been neglected for some time and become a local dumping ground. The Friends Group formed to help the landowners restore it to its former glory and make it a great place for wildlife and people to enjoy.

Rachel Palmer, Chair of the Friends Group, explained 'getting the woodland designated as a Local Nature Reserve was a big step, we got so much help from Dorset County Council to achieve this. There is so much important wildlife value in small woodlands in Dorset, so we drew up a management plan to ensure that the wildlife value was restored at the same time as making it a good place for people to walk. The landowners – MoD and the school – have been very co-operative'

Rachel has set up a club at Bovington Middle School which has regular outings to the wood – at Christmas time children made cards decorated with leaves from the wood and raised funds by selling these locally. Future plans include coppicing, improving access gates, selling local wood products locally and installing bat boxes. Dorset AONB Sustainable Development Fund will help with some of these improvements.

If you are interested in taking up any of these ideas in your local area, we have more detailed information to help you.

For each topic in this pack, you can request our additional sheets which include more actions, a guide to who can help with advice and support, sources of funding available and things to be aware of before you start. These are all free and updated regularly.

For your free copy, contact the Dorset AONB Office:

01305 756782
dorsetaonb@dorsetcc.gov.uk
www.dorsetaonb.org.uk

