

Woodland Creation case study

Buckle Wood, Langley Priory

Creating a legacy woodland to benefit the landscape, wildlife, and the community



Aerial photo of Langley Priory.

Key facts

- **Site:** Buckle Wood, Langley Priory, Derbyshire / Leicestershire county border
- **Size:** 212 hectare estate, with 6.35 hectares of new woodland
- **Type and species mix:** Mixed native broadleaf including oak, small-leaved lime, sycamore, alder, hornbeam, field maple, silver birch, hazel, hawthorn, guelder rose, and dogwood
- **Date planted:** November 2022
- **Grant:** England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO)

Key objective

To create a legacy woodland that benefits wildlife and future generations.



Planting a woodland to complement the landscape

Langley Priory is a Grade II* listed manor house with over 800 years of history, set in the idyllic countryside between the Derbyshire and Leicestershire county border, just 10 miles from Nottingham city centre. It is situated on a diversified rural estate incorporating commercial and residential properties, a self-storage and caravan storage business, country sports, a solar farm, and several tenant farms.

The estate owner, Tim Wagstaff, wanted to create a woodland that could be enjoyed by future generations, that would benefit the environment and his local community. He identified several areas of land that were no longer viable for commercial farming, including areas situated in the corners of fields that were unsuitable for tractors. These areas seemed ideal for the creation of Buckle Wood – a woodland that would also help to connect existing woods to a nearby ancient woodland and establish new wildlife corridors across the estate.

Tim is no stranger to woodland creation projects, having been involved in a number of past initiatives across the estate and is keen to continue tree planting to complement the current landscape. With this woodland creation project in mind, Tim worked with his agent Robin Brett, Managing Director at [Carbon Forestry](#), to develop a plan to plant a mix of 9,000 broadleaf trees across 6.35 hectares. The mix was carefully selected to ensure resilience to pests and diseases and future climate conditions, and included many species that were already present and thriving across the estate.



75cm Vigilis tree guards supported by 90cm treated stakes installed to protect the trees and shrubs from damage by rabbits and hares.

Funding woodland creation through the England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO)

While considering the available woodland creation grants, Tim decided to transfer the scheme over to the [England Woodland Creation Offer \(EWCO\)](#) to benefit from the wider stackable payments for improving the environment. The woodland was hand-planted in November 2022 into 3 metres of winding and curving rows, which had been marked mechanically prior to planting to achieve parallel lines

and an average tree spacing of 2 metres. An initial leaf count was carried out to assess the overall health and development of the woodland while the spring herbicide was applied, and the count proved to be extremely promising. Tim and Robin continue to work together on their long-term plan to meet the estate's woodland objectives.

"There is a limit to what we can do as it's costly and takes time – but that's where the grants have come in – they have been crucial for creating this woodland." Tim Wagstaff, Owner, Langley Priory





Ventrac 4500y low ground pressure tractor adapted to scribe both straight and curving parallel lines to ensure accurate planting layouts and densities.

Creating a home for nature for the local community to enjoy

The new woodland is intended to extend the ancient semi-natural woodland, Smooth Coppice, to the north, and link with Shepherds Plantation in the east, to create vital nature networks. These wildlife corridors act as lifelines to link wildlife-rich areas together to allow the movement of species across an otherwise fragmented landscape. They also promote genetic resilience which helps species to adapt to changing environmental conditions and to reduce habitat loss. By connecting new woodlands with ancient woods, species can expand their ranges, seek new food sources, find suitable breeding grounds, and use these corridors for migration.

The woodland is accessible to the public through the Cross Britain Way and other footpaths that run through and adjacent to Buckle Wood. Tim hopes that it will bring people together, allowing them to engage with nature and promote a sense of environmental stewardship as they witness first-hand the improvements to the landscape and wildlife in the area.

While it's not a primary goal of the project, Tim hopes Buckle Wood will help to prevent flooding as it approaches 40 metres of Diseworth Brook. He would like to explore the potential for more riparian planting in the future – to directly address issues with flooding that will benefit the local community.

"We've always been planting trees here – there is nothing more rewarding and satisfying. You put a stick in the ground, and it grows and captures carbon, creates habitat, becomes a beautiful lifeform: it doesn't get better than that." Tim Wagstaff, Owner, Langley Priory



Sinuous curving rows to enable efficient maintenance whilst retaining a natural looking appearance.



Avant 750 all-terrain telehandler with bespoke dual wheels providing ultra-low ground pressure logistics around site.

Using marginal land for environmental gains

Tim specifically identified locations for new woodland that would not negatively impact farming practices, by making good use of marginal or unsuitable arable land, fallow land and grassland.

Breathing new life into these otherwise unproductive parcels of land has meant the farm has been able to reduce the use of chemicals and has seen significant environmental gains without impacting financial returns.

While the woodland wasn't created to generate income, Buckle Wood and the continued tree planting efforts will contribute towards the estate's corporate identity. They support several wildlife charities, including Leicestershire Wildlife Trust and the Butterfly Conservation, and have created habitats that are great for butterflies and bumblebees on the estate, with hopes to collaborate further to support rare and endangered species.

Top Tips

1. Explore the different grants and financial support available for woodland creation to find the right fit for you and your project.
2. Be patient. Creating woodland will take time, and it takes even longer to establish – but it can be really rewarding! Just make sure it's the right decision for you and your land.
3. Consider working with an agent. It comes with a financial cost but they will support you throughout the process.
4. Talk to your peers. It's useful to find others who have been through the process so that you can continue to learn from one another.

Find out more about how the Forestry Commission can help you create woodland. Visit:
www.gov.uk/forestry/tree-planting-overview

