

Alderney's Once and Future Woodland Project

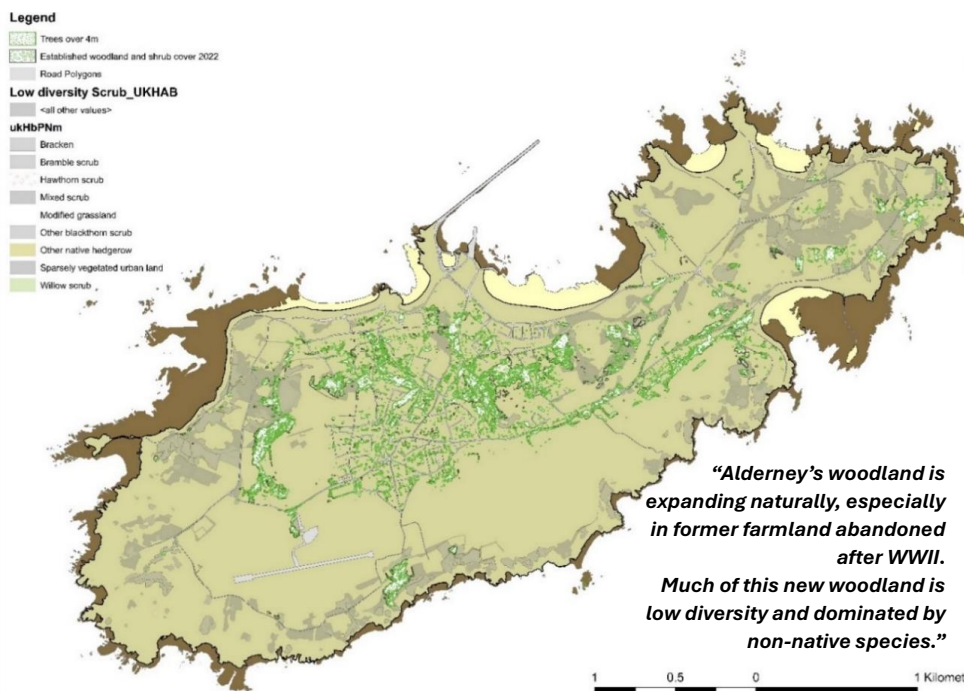
“Restoring Alderney’s Ancient Woodlands”

Why our woodland is growing — and why its future needs care

Alderney is one of the most woodland-poor places in Europe. Yet today, trees and scrub are spreading across the island.

This change did not begin recently. Much of today’s woodland expansion can be traced back to the abandonment of farmland following the Second World War, when traditional agriculture declined and large areas of land were no longer grazed or managed.

Over decades, this allowed trees and scrub to establish naturally. The result is a landscape that appears greener, with the area of scrub woodland nearly doubling in just the last 15 years — but **much of this woodland is young, uniform, and low in wildlife value.**



What the woodland map shows

Green areas: Established woodland and taller tree cover

Grey areas: Scrub and young woodland already developing. The grey areas show land where woodland is already, or likely to be, forming, often around existing woods — but mostly in an unplanned way. These areas tend to develop into woodland that is:

All roughly the **same age**

Dominated by **one or two species**

Mostly **non-native trees**

Poor in structure and wildlife diversity

Without guidance, these areas of trees will continue to expand, but they are not the best supporting people or wildlife.

Why woodland quality matters

Healthy woodland is more than just trees. A wildlife-rich woodland includes:

- A mix of **native tree species**
- Trees of **different ages**
- Shrubs, glades, deadwood, and ground plants
- Links to other habitats across the island

By contrast, many of Alderney’s newer woodlands:

- Support **fewer insects and birds**
- Are more vulnerable to **disease and storms**
- Offer limited opportunities for learning, wellbeing, or sustainable use

Most of the trees spreading naturally today are **non-native species** introduced in the last few centuries. They grow quickly, but support far less wildlife than Alderney's original woodland.



What woodland did Alderney once have?

For thousands of years, Alderney was covered by **Atlantic coastal woodland**, rich in native species such as:

- Oak
- Hazel
- Alder
- Birch

This woodland:

- Supported a wide range of wildlife
- Stabilised soils and stored carbon
- Provided fuel, timber, and food
- Shaped Alderney's landscape and history

Centuries of clearance — culminating in the upheaval of WWII — reduced this woodland to small, fragmented remnants.

The opportunity we face now

Because much of Alderney's woodland is:

- Still **young**
- Still **changing**
- Often growing on land with low biodiversity

...we have a **once-in-a-generation opportunity** to guide its future.

By acting now, we can:

- Improve woodland quality as it grows
- Introduce native species before non-native trees dominate
- Create healthier, more resilient woodland for the long term

This is the idea behind the **Once and Future Woodland**.



What is the Once and Future Woodland?

The Once and Future Woodland is a community-led approach to shaping Alderney's expanding woodland so that it becomes:

- More **diverse**
- More **wildlife-rich**
- More **resilient to climate change**
- More **valuable to people**

Rather than clearing woodland or starting again, the focus is on:

- Improving existing woodland
- Planting native trees in low-diversity areas
- Creating small pockets of high-quality woodland
- Linking woods together over time

Why this matters for people

- **Nature & wildlife:** Native woodland supports far more life
- **Climate resilience:** Trees help store carbon and stabilise land
- **Wellbeing:** Woodland is one of Alderney's most valued habitats
- **Learning & skills:** Woodland offers hands-on opportunities for all ages
- **Legacy:** Trees planted now will shape the island for centuries

We want to know what you think about this project

The Once and Future Woodland Project will build on the legacy of the Alderney Community Woodland (ACW) started in 2010. Just like the ACW it needs to be guided by the wants, needs and passions of our community.

Over the first few months of 2026 we are looking to hear from as many residents, visitors, landowners, business and politicians as we possible can to help inform what the Once and Future Woodland will become.

Please get in contact if you would:

- Like to be part of this consultation
- Have questions
- Have ideas

Contact us at Conservation@alderneywildlife.org or call 01481822935

