

## **Appendix 5 – Grant support to Woodland Trust for Harrison wood**

Harrison Woods is a 483 acre site of ancient woodland situated near Muckton within the Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Woodland, first recorded in the Domesday Book (1086) is one of the few surviving ancient woodlands remaining in Britain – Ancient Woodland only covers 2.5% of the country's area and most ancient woodland is in poor condition [Woodland Trust, 2025]. The site is also home to two Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs).

The case for investment is fundamentally based on the risk of the long-term loss of this ancient green space. The site has been under commercial management and was closed to the public 18 months ago due to concerns regarding safety. It is currently on the market (for offers in the region of £3 million) and there is a risk that sale to a new owner may result in ongoing commercial management and potential permanent loss of the community green space, as well as further deterioration in the condition of the site.

The Woodland Trust (Charity Number: 294344), based in Lincolnshire, is the largest woodland conservation charity in the United Kingdom. The charity maintains ownership of over 1,000 sites covering over 24,700 hectares, of which 8,070ha (33%) is ancient woodland. It ensures public access to its woodland sites. In line with the usual due diligence undertaken for UKSPF Applications, a full review of the organisation's accounts (lodged with the Charities Commission) and project delivery track record has confirmed that the organisation is an appropriate recipient for grant aid of scale.

The Woodland Trust has negotiated an option to urgently purchase the site in January 2025 and bring it under management, financing the purchase through a combination of temporary deficit financing, public donations, Landfill Community Trust and a small contribution from East Lindsey's UK Shared Prosperity Fund Programme. The amount of funds raised respectively are as follows:

- Public subscription (National Fundraising Appeal) - £721,000
- Major Donors - £500,000.
- Landfill Community Trust - £350,000
- Contribution from East Lindsey's UK Shared Prosperity Fund/Rural England Prosperity Fund - £170,000

A contribution of £1 million from the East Lindsey Investment Fund would effectively 'close the gap' and enable the Woodland Trust to undertake the purchase of the site, as well as support initial works to bring the site back into public use. This would take the total proposed contribution from East Lindsey District Council to this project of £1,170,000. This will be mediated through a single Grant Funding Agreement.

The Woodland Trust will take ownership of the site and responsibility for its ongoing operation. There will be no long-term asset ownership or liability held by the Council. However, a Joint Advisory Committee will be appointed as a condition of grant, whereby the Council will be consulted on decisions made about the site going

forward. This shall consist of two representatives appointed by the District Council and Woodland Trust respectively and shall meet at least twice a year. East Lindsey District Council will also be a consultee on five-year management plans going forward. A condition of grant shall also be applied with a clawback mechanism, set over ten years, should the site be sold, to ensure that the investment realises long-term benefit for the people of East Lindsey.

Once acquisition has been completed, the Woodland Trust will immediately commence a programme of works to remediate the site, with the aim of restoring public access to the site. This will be the second largest programme of restoration ever undertaken by the Woodland Trust in Britain. Specifically, the Woodland Trust are intending to:

- Remove Invasive Species – The Woodland Trust will also remove large areas of trees severely affected by ash dieback. Installing deer fencing will allow for natural regeneration to take hold.
- Take measures to improve biodiversity – This will include measures to re-attract species like spotted woodpecker, treecreeper and tree sparrow.
- Restore public access, including the installation of 5km of pathways, so that the public can sustainably enjoy the woodland space.

Subject to approval of this proposal, it is anticipated that the purchase can be announced immediately, with a press release for the entire package already in preparation. It is anticipated that the Woodland Trust could secure full ownership of the site by the end of the Financial Year.