Thompson Woodland Creation Scheme, Norfolk

Project Overview and Scope

The Thompson Woodland Creation Scheme is a 63-hectare initiative in Thompson village, Norfolk, developed in partnership between the Woodland Trust and Maydencroft. The project involves the planting of more than 115,000 trees over a three-year planting programme.

Maydencroft is responsible for the full delivery of the woodland, including project logistics, three structured planting phases, and a six-year maintenance programme. This phased approach, beginning in 2025, ensures effective coordination of materials, workforce, and site operations across the diverse landscape.

Core Objectives

✅ **Tree Cover:** To increase overall woodland cover within the Norfolk landscape.

✅ **Community:** To enhance amenity spaces for public use and wellbeing.

✅ **Carbon Sequestration:** To create and sell carbon units to support long-term environmental sustainability.

✅ **Biodiversity:** To improve local biodiversity and strengthen habitat connectivity between Thetford Forest and the local Pingos (small, crate-like depressions formed by melting underground ice (see image 1)

✅ **Resources:** To provide a sustainable timber resource in the long term.

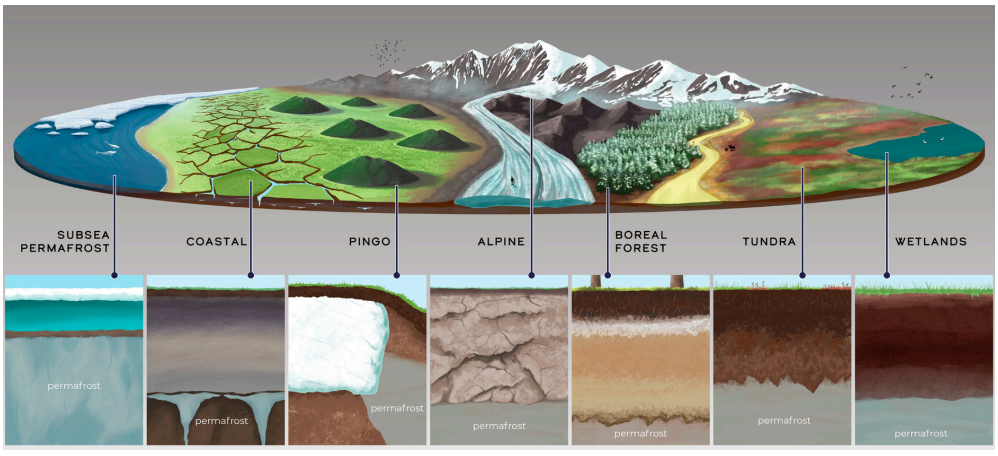

Image 1: permafrost environments, illustration

Planting Specifications and Phasing

The project is divided into two distinct typologies: **Broadleaf Woodland** and **Wood Pasture**. Total planting figures are phased as follows:

Phase / Year	Type	Area (ha)	Density (stems/ha)	Total Stems
Phase 1 (2025)	Broadleaf Woodland	11.02	2,250	24,795
	Wood Pasture	4.60	400	1,840
Phase 2 (2026)	Broadleaf Woodland	19.46	2,250	43,785
	Wood Pasture	8.28	400	3,312
Phase 3 (2027)	Broadleaf Woodland	17.50	2,250	39,375
	Wood Pasture	2.40	400	960

All stock is **UK-grown** and sourced from a **local nursery** to ensure biosecurity and local provenance. The species mix for Phase 1 includes:

Primary Species	Pedunculate Oak (20%), Silver Birch (18%), Downy Birch (8%), and Hawthorn (8%).
Diverse Mix	Hazel, Aspen, Common Alder, Rowan, Field Maple, and Goat Willow.
Minority/Shrub Species	Small Leaved Lime, White Willow, Common Beech, Crab Apple, Dog Rose, Blackthorn, and Alder Buckthorn.

The selection is tailored to local soil conditions and designed to create a multi-structured system that is resilient to future pests, diseases, and climate pressures.

Technical Specification and UKFS Compliance

The design follows the **UK Forestry Standard (UKFS)**, which seeks to avoid monocultures and promote both structural and species diversity to improve resilience to climate change and disease. Because different species grow at different rates, mixed planting can sometimes lead to a loss of diversity as faster growing species outcompete others. At Thompson, this risk has been reduced by planting trees in clusters, or “nests,” of 15 to 25 stems of the same species, helping to maintain diversity as the woodland develops.

Water and Soil Protection

Adjacent to the woodland creation site are several **pingos,** which are rare relict periglacial landforms. By transitioning the surrounding land from arable use to woodland and wood pasture, the project reduces surface water runoff which in turn protects the water quality of these rare and vulnerable habitats by lowering the risk of nutrients, chemicals and sediment depositing into them.

Tree Protection and Sustainable Establishment

To manage deer and rabbit pressure while minimising plastic use, Maydencroft implemented a tiered protection strategy:

- **Woodland Areas:** Deer fencing, with rabbit netting clipped was installed at the perimeter of the woodland creation to ensure deer and rabbits could not enter the site, while vole guards were put over the whips to ensure they are protected from voles.
- **Wood Pasture:** On website, changed to: These trees were planted in roundels of 100 trees, each protected with **1.8 m biodegradable tubes** to prevent deer browsing.

Maintenance Programme

Maydencroft is responsible for 6 years of Maintenance.

In accordance with Woodland Trust policy, **no glyphosate** is used for weed control. Instead, establishment is supported through:

- **Inter-row Mowing:** Conducted annually in May for three years post-planting for woodland phases.
- **Strimming:** Used for wood pasture areas where curved layouts preclude mechanical mowing.

Beat-up and Restocking: Beat-up surveys take place each August for a further two seasons to assess survival rates across the site. The surveys identify which species are performing well and which are struggling, and provide an informed estimate of the number of trees requiring replacement due to expected losses, including those caused by weather conditions. The associated replacement planting is then carried out following each survey.

Social Benefit and Quality Assurance

The delivery includes the creation of **5km of permissive paths** that link to the wider public rights of way network, including the **Pingo Way**. This facilitates community access for recreation and wellbeing, responding to the increased public demand for managed outdoor spaces.

Contract Management

To maintain high standards, a **Forestry Works Manager** provided consistent on-site supervision during the planting phases. This ensured precision in planting lines, spacing, and the correct specification of wood pasture roundels. Project success is measured through rigorous beat-up surveys and ongoing health monitoring to ensure the woodland achieves its long-term environmental and social objectives.