

Wistow Wood - Woodland Management Tree thinning – Ash Dieback

This ancient wood (older than 400 years and possibly thousands of years old) was once much more structurally complex due to traditional management of regularly cutting down areas and harvesting woodland products – timber, firewood, poles and sticks.

Since this regular management ceased the woodland structure has become much simpler and shadier and we have seen a decline in the variety of woodland wildlife.

To restore some structural diversity and improve areas for wildlife, selected Ash trees have been felled in the centre of the wood to promote the growth of a new generation of trees by allowing more light to reach the ground and seedlings. Ash trees have been felled more extensively in certain areas to restore former open conditions, especially beside paths and on the woods sunny southern edge.



Silver Washed Fritillary butterflies have returned to the wood following opening up of the southern edge – the caterpillars feed on violets and adults make use of flowers in sunny clearings

Early purple orchids benefit from increased light following woodland management, especially regularly coppiced woodland.



The opening up of the woodland canopy and subsequent growth of new trees and shrubs will provide valuable habitat space and feeding areas for a wide range of wildlife, from light loving plants like early purple orchids to insects such as butterflies, birds and bats.

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Most of the tree stumps left after felling will send up new shoots in spring. Unfortunately, the Ash trees across the wood are showing signs of Ash Dieback Disease, which leads to decay in stems, branches and roots and eventually whole tree death. This means the majority of remaining Ash trees across the wood will continue to decline and die over the coming years. The death of the trees within a short space of time and diseased trees becoming unsafe (dropping branches and falling over) has meant that we have cleared a bigger area of trees than we would ordinarily in a wood this size. We will also need to continue to manage the remaining trees as they succumb to disease.



Ash Dieback Disease first leaves dieback then branches and finally the whole tree.

Regrowth from stumps and seedlings young Oak and Field Maple along with other shrubs and trees will grow up to fill the spaces in the canopy.



Although at first the works carried out may seem destructive, regeneration of trees and shrubs will be swift and native flora and fauna will benefit from the new range of conditions. The majority of the timber extracted from the wood has helped to pay for the management works.

If you have any questions or would like to know more become more involved in local wildlife conservation work, please contact us using the details to the left.