

Woodland Management at Oakley Wood and Kenilworth Common Nature Reserves continues to secure their long-term health.

Charity and Council develop woodland management plans to provide long-term protection and resilience for local woodland.

In 2020, in partnership with Warwick District Council, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust began implementing their newly created ten-year woodland management plans, designed to protect and support woodlands for future resilience. The plans will ensure the woodlands are sustainably managed and are in the best condition possible for both people and wildlife. These plans cover four large woodlands owned by Warwick District Council and jointly managed by both the Council and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.

Woodland management operations this winter are planned at Oakley Wood, near Leamington Spa, and Kenilworth Common. This work follows on from two successful woodland thinning operations at Oakley Wood and the installation of 3.3km of surfaced paths for visitors, and a woodland thinning at Leam Valley Local Nature Reserve.

Woodlands have been essential to people for thousands of years and play an important role in securing carbon, purifying the air we breathe, and helping to prevent flooding.

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and Warwick District Council are advocates for actively managing wildlife habitats, including woodlands, for biodiversity. Sustainable management can help secure the long-term future of a woodland, as it helps to promote trees of different ages and structures. Cyclical felling, thinning, and coppicing attracts a wider range of wildlife and creates woodlands that are more resilient to pests, diseases, and climate change.

After the Second World War, Oakley Wood was cleared and replanted with non-native conifers to remedy timber shortages. As a result, the woodland is all of the same age and therefore of limited use to wildlife, which benefits from a more diverse selection of native trees. To promote the establishment of native broadleaved trees, the Trust, working in partnership with the woodland owners Warwick District Council, are carrying out management over a ten-year period, as part of the 25-year restoration to replace the conifers with native species. This work will be supported by the local community group the 'Friends of Oakley Wood'. Like previous activities, a small proportion of the trees will be removed across specific areas, and several 30 metre clearings will be created. These openings in the tree canopy will provide light and space for native trees to grow, such as oak and birch. The natural growth of native trees will need to be supplemented by increased tree planting in the wood which will continue this winter.

The woodland at Kenilworth Common was mostly established when grazing was stopped last century and is now beginning to mature. As the trees in the woodland grew at the same time, the reserve requires management to maintain structural diversity in the age and size of the trees. A woodland lacking in variety is less valuable to wildlife. Our work at Kenilworth Common is aimed at

increasing diversity in the woodland structure, to create more homes and food sources for wildlife. This year we will be thinning out parts of the nature reserve allowing more light to reach the woodland floor to encourage the next generation of trees to grow and promote the long-term health of the woodland and its wildlife.

The extra light will also benefit a wide range of plants and insects. Space around the oldest trees will be created, to give them light and space to grow even larger and stronger. Older trees are far more valuable for wildlife than younger trees. Cut trees will be left on site to provide important dead wood habitat that benefits a multitude of woodland wildlife species including beetles and fungi.

Throughout the work, the woodland will be closely monitored, and its reactions will help longer-term plans to support the woodland for future generations.

The larger scale work will be achieved by contractors and whilst woodland management can appear destructive, cause temporary inconvenience, and hamper accessibility, the woodland soon recovers. During these works the contractors will avoid using the path network wherever possible and any areas that are disturbed will be repaired before works are completed. Work will stop in March 2026 before the bird nesting season begins.

Locals can get involved in their local woodlands by volunteering with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust. The charity aims to provide positive opportunities and continued access for local people through their woodland management plans; making the woodlands healthy and vibrant places for both people and wildlife.

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust's Woodland Officer, Nick Feledziak said:

"Warwickshire is among the least wooded counties in the UK, which makes the woodlands in this district precious not only in terms of the landscape, but also for the role they play in securing carbon, purifying the air we breathe and prevention of flooding.

"One of the biggest threats to our woodlands would be a decision not to manage them, so while this programme of work may initially appear destructive, the woodland will soon recover and gain greater biodiversity and better protection from pests, diseases and climate change."

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Warwickshire Wildlife Trust **Warwickshire Wildlife Trust**

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (WWT) is one of the 46 UK Wildlife Trusts. Established in 1970 we are a grass roots organisation governed by 14 trustees elected from a membership of 30,000 people, 99% of whom live in the county, and supported by over 800 active volunteers. We manage an estate covering 1,000 hectares in Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull.

As members of the influential network of Wildlife Trusts, we are part of a collective covering the whole of the UK with 870,000 members, 32,500 volunteers, 2,500 staff and 600 trustees, all working together through a central unit, the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (TWT). Togethewoodlandr we are on a mission to restore a third of the UK's land and seas for nature by 2030. We

believe everyone, everywhere, should have access to nature and the joy and health benefits it brings. Each Wildlife Trust is an independent charity formed by people getting together to make a positive difference for wildlife, climate and future generations. Together we care for 2,300 diverse and beautiful nature reserves and work with others to manage their land for nature, too.

WWT is embarking on an ambitious new ten-year strategy. By 2030 we want to have put wildlife into recovery by creating more space for nature with more people on nature's side. www.warwickshirewildlifewoodlandtrust.org.uk

Woodland management plans

The woodland management plans being implemented by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust in partnership with Warwick District Council have been written in agreement with and approved by the Forestry Commission; this means that the plans have met UK Forestry Standard approval criteria. All planned felling is in accordance with approved Forestry Commission felling licenses. More information on the UK forestry standard can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-forestry-standard>

How Warwickshire Wildlife Trust manages woodland habitats for people and wildlife: www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/woodlandmanagement