

Malvern Hills Trust – Our work at Thirds Wood November 2017

Questions & Answers

What is Thirds Wood?

Thirds Wood is a small 6.5 ha (15 acre) parcel of woodland. It was first planted around 1860 as a commemorative planting for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. Although originally planted with just conifers (dominantly European Larch with a small number of Scots Pine and Norway Spruce) it is now a mature, mixed wood as many deciduous broadleaf trees have grown up including Beech, Sycamore, Hornbeam, Holly and Ash.

The land is owned by the Malvern Hills Trust and is covered by the 5 Malvern Hills Acts of Parliament. It is within the Malvern Hills Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

It has a special character all of its own, earning it the local name of 'Little Switzerland'. It offers shady, cool walks for people and a different habitat for wildlife that includes Goldcrests, Crossbills and several scarce fungi.

Where is Thirds Wood?

It is located on the western side of the Malvern Hills in-between Pinnacle and Perseverance Hills. The B4232 (Jubilee Drive) dissects the wood. Chase Road forms its western boundary. Grid reference: SO 767 425.



What is the long-term goal for Thirds Wood?

To maintain the site as a mixed (conifer and broadleaf) woodland that's open to the public and rich in wildlife. A mixed age structure will be better for wildlife and ensure the future of the wood's special character.

What work is planned, when and why?

Tree work will include the selective felling of roadside trees, trees within the wood and the thinning of younger areas of Larch. This will amount to work on around 4% of the trees present.

The drivers behind the planned works and the proposed actions are as follows:

1. Health and safety. Arboricultural reports state that the steep site, proximity of people, property and traffic, uniform age of the trees and the historical lack of management brings a combined health and safety risk that warrants work to bring the risk down to an acceptable level. A thinning operation will select those trees of poor form and those with structural issues for felling which will also create space for the remaining trees to grow into and create space for new planting. Clear felling is not an option we're considering.
2. Certain trees have a significant lean over the B-road (Jubilee Drive) and these are a concern for safety. Therefore a narrow line of trees will be felled to bring the tree edge in line with that present at the northernmost section adjacent to the northbound lane of Jubilee Drive.
3. Two small compartments of the wood are comprised of young larch that, without thinning, will grow into poor, drawn-up specimens. Thinning here will promote strong, healthy growth.
4. At present the majority of the conifer trees are in a later, 'over-mature' stage of their lives. There is very little in the way of young conifer trees present meaning that once those older trees have died there are no young trees to provide continuity of the coniferous character. Planting of Scots Pine and Norway Spruce is proposed in some of the clearings made to provide trees for the future.
5. To encourage a native field and shrub layer. At present Sycamore, Laurel and, to a lesser extent, Beech are proliferating in the wood. Both are heavy shade casters that suppress native species. Young trees and poor specimens will be removed. Notable trees will be retained.

The majority of works will require an accompanying road closure of part of Jubilee Drive (from the Wyche Free Church south to Gardiners car park only). This will take place from 08:00 Monday 6th November to 16:00 Friday 10th November inclusive.

Herefordshire Highways will be operating a diversion route.

Chase Road will be unaffected.

Minor tree works will continue after that time.

What will happen to the timber?

Some of the roadside timber will be removed but most of the trees that are felled will be left as deadwood on the ground. This is to provide habitat and because extracting the timber off the steep slopes would be a complex and expensive operation that would likely damage the remaining flora. The brash will be made tidy on site.

Will the wood change?

The vast majority of trees will remain undisturbed as this is a light, selective felling operation and not a clear fell. In the short-term there will be trees marked with paint and later trees stumps and felled timber will be visible. However, these will soon soften into the landscape helped by the new planting of young tree saplings that will maintain the wood's special character for the long-term.

Is the disease *Phytophthora ramorum* a factor?

This tree disease has not been recorded at this site. If it were to be found then the Forestry Commission would be serve a notice to fell all the Larch which would have a major impact on the landscape.

We are following guidance from the Forestry Commission by not planting any Larch species because of the threat from *Phytophthora*. For this reason Scots Pine and Norway Spruce will be used in the replanting scheme.

For more info see: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pramorum>



What is the process and who's involved?

A broad plan for the wood was proposed in MHT's Land Management Plan 2016-2021. Health and safety surveys have already been undertaken by a specialist arboriculturalist. Using this background information, a local forestry professional drew up a plan of works recommending the above action.

The plan of works was open for public consultation from 15 July to 31 July 2016 and a public consultation event was held on 26 July 2016. We have taken comments received on board.

A felling license has been acquired from the Forestry Commission incorporating SSSI consent from Natural England. A protected species survey has been undertaken. With many specialist contractors necessary and very little value in timber the project will be a considerable expense for MHT.

What about public access and parking?

While any tree works are underway **paths through the wood will be closed to the public** for your safety. Please regard any notices/barriers that are present.

The northern section of Gardiner's car park will be closed throughout. There will still be plenty of parking available in other areas of this car park both above and below Jubilee Drive.

How can I get further information?

If you wish to have further information then please contact MHT:

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