

The Parish council have received the following information from the Countryside and Rights of Way Department at Herts County Council regarding work that is taking place in Broxbourne & Bencroft woods over the next few weeks;

Wood pasture restoration – Broxbourne Wood (SSSI)

Felling of plantation trees in the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) will be undertaken in two small compartments to continue the restoration of wood pasture and lowland heathland in an area planted with conifers in the 1970s. This long-term project has now been running for over ten years, with the support of Natural England. The SSSI is grazed by a herd of longhorn cattle in the summer and autumn.

Woodland management – Broxbourne Wood

A forestry contractor will be thinning non-native conifer trees from part of the woodland. This will create space and light to allow native broadleaved trees to grow and ancient woodland ground flora to regenerate. This is again part of a long-term programme of work to restore an area of plantation woodland on an ancient woodland site. It continues a similar contract undertaken last winter in another part of the wood, and will deliver objectives set out in the site's Countryside Stewardship agreement.

Hornbeam coppice – Bencroft Wood (SSSI)

We will be restoring coppice management to an area of oak-hornbeam woodland at Bencroft Wood. The works will involve cutting all hornbeam to stump level in a 0.3 hectare compartment, as was the historic practice for many woodlands in this area. Coppicing often looks drastic to begin with, but soon results in fresh growth of hornbeam and woodland plants, leading to a vastly improved woodland ecosystem. The results can be seen in compartments coppiced in previous winters.

All the felling operations will progress the long-term aims of improving the biodiversity value and visitor attraction of the National Nature Reserve, as described in the management plan for the site. The plan has been approved by Natural England and the Forestry Commission, and works are funded through a Defra Countryside Stewardship grant and the sale of timber produced.

The first two pieces of work at Broxbourne Wood are currently expected to start in late September and take two to four weeks. The contract at Bencroft Wood is not yet scheduled but should be completed by December. There will be some short term disruption to public access as contractors manage and close areas of the woodland to undertake works, and signage on site will advise of temporary closures.