



Woodsman

The Booker Common and Woods Protection Society
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WHAT ARE THEY DOING TO OUR WOODLANDS?

Many of our members have been disturbed by the tree felling that is taking place in the Booker Common Woodland. We have pressed the Dashwood Estate for an explanation of the operations and we re-print here the reply we received from Tilhill Forestry Ltd (the contractors overseeing the woodland management) and on behalf of the Dashwood Estate (the owners of the woodland).

Booker Common Woodlands

Thinning

Thinning is a standard woodland practice that has several benefits. The essence of thinning is to reduce the numbers of trees in a given area as they grow older and larger. At ten years old there will be some 2000 trees or more per hectare, by the time of maturity this will have reduced to less than 200 trees. Over the lifetime of the trees therefore over 90% of the original number are removed through thinning or natural losses. Thinning will occur naturally if left untouched where the smaller and weaker trees are gradually shaded out and die. Thinning as a woodland management operation intervenes in and speeds up this natural process so that a choice can be made over the trees that are encouraged to grow onto maturity. Preferences given to good form and vigour of preferred species.

Ash, cherry and oak are being favoured at Booker Common, the young beech being sadly generally too damaged by squirrels that they are unlikely to grow to sound mature trees. The operation is being carried out in two distinct phases: felling of the marked trees now; and extraction of the cut timber at a later date when the ground is drier and damage from machinery is reduced. The tree cutters are paid by weight for the material cut so removal of cut material for firewood should be discouraged as this relates directly to the cutters wages. When the cut material is extracted it will be stacked on lorry trailers parked on the edge of the woodland. All small branch material will be left in the wood to rot naturally. This may appear untidy in some people's eyes but it is very beneficial to insects and fungi and will protect young seedlings from browsing and trampling. All main paths will be kept clear of branch wood although some of the minor ones will be left covered to discourage expansion of the path network. Thinning may be heavier than normal next to the paths to encourage more light, which will help them to dry out, quicker. Following completion of the operation any vehicle access points created into the woodland will be blocked with additional bollards or large logs.

Mature Beech Trees

Many of the large mature beech trees at Booker Common are at or beyond the stage of presenting a

significant hazard to the users of the woodland. The law requires owners of trees to take reasonable care to identify possible causes of foreseeable danger and take appropriate steps to remove them, as far as is reasonably possible. With this in mind an inspection of the large beech trees will be carried out with necessary actions noted. It is likely that quite a few of these trees will have to be felled to remove the hazard. Where tree surgery is an option to make a tree acceptably safe then this will be considered. No action will be taken prior to completing the survey although immediate action may be required if it is seen as imminently likely to fall or shed limbs.

Bridleway HW 106

In response to complaints from members of the society, about the state of the bridleway and the excessive use of vehicles on the bridleway, we have been in correspondence with Buckinghamshire County Council. We have requested that they find a solution to the speeding traffic on the made-up surface at the Booker Common end and to deter the excessive use of traffic along the bridleway. BCC is yet to advise us of their intentions but say they are considering options.

Dashwood Estates has shown concern at the erosion of the bridleway from Booker Common into the woodland and are considering methods of restricting the width of the bridleway to prevent incursion into the woodland. It may be possible to use some of the felled trees in an effort to protect the edges from further damage.

Smile you may be on TV

Some areas of the woodland edge are now under surveillance by CCTV in an effort to catch or deter the disposal of rubbish into the woodland by individuals and the blatant fly tipping that is occurring along the Lane End Road and Horns Lane. We hope the results will be less rubbish for the society to clear up! We would like your cooperation in keeping the woodland from becoming a tip. Discarded bottles, cans and plastic bags are a particular danger to wild animals and pets.