

Coleorton Wood

Summary

Coleorton Wood was planted in 1991

The woodland was passed to Coleorton Parish Council in 2012 from Leicestershire County Council

Thinning operations took place in 2014 bringing benefits for wildlife, access and timber value

Coleorton & New Lount Volunteers help to run the site and carry out essential maintenance operations as well as some of the forestry works.



Background

Coleorton Wood was created by Leicestershire County Council (LCC) over the winter of 1991/92 on the site of the old Coleorton (or 'Bug and Wink') Colliery with funds raised through the Royal Mail and Woody Tree Campaign. The 6 hectare woodland was planted with a mixture of more than 30 species including both broadleaves and conifers, with an area of predominately Larch and Oak planted at the far end of the site on ex-agricultural land.

In 2012 the site was officially handed over to Coleorton Parish Council to manage in perpetuity. A volunteer management group was set-up to manage and oversee the woodland. Coleorton & New Lount Volunteers help to manage the site as well as the nearby New Lount Nature Reserve on behalf of LCC.

Thinning Operations

In 2014 it was decided that the woodland was ready for its 'first thinning'. This means removing between 30%-40% of the trees to allow the remainder to develop to their full potential. Without thinning, the trees will start to compete with each other for resources such as light and nutrients. A Forestry Commission grant was sought to help offset some of the costs associated with this work. The grant also covered ride edge management including coppicing of shrubs.

The main tree felling and extraction was undertaken by a local contractor, whilst the ride edge work was carried out by the Coleorton & New Lount Volunteer Group.

The thinning operations centred on improving the site for woodland birds by creating a mixed understory of ground flora, shrubs and other vegetation, whilst maintaining much of the woodland canopy above. The thinning operation will benefit ground flora, such as the wonderful snowdrops pictured below.

Markets

A mixture of hardwood and softwood timber was produced as a result of the thinning operations. The hardwood timber was all sold into the firewood market at £40/tonne at roadside (stacked in the car park of the wood). The softwood was sold for biomass wood chip at £25/tonne at roadside. Around 100 tonnes of hardwood and 60 tonnes of softwood was produced from the thinning operation and was all sold to local markets. The income from the grant and timber will help to offset some of the costs of carrying out the works.



Forest and Woodland Management Programme: Case study

Wildlife

Coleorton Wood is a young plantation designed and managed primarily for public access and wildlife conservation.

Of particular wildlife note in the woodland are nest box recordings of: Tawny Owl, Garden Warbler, Marsh Tit, Willow Tit and Willow Warbler. These are target species for the East Midlands Woodland Bird Project.

There is also significant fungi interest with over 60 species recorded, with 10 being rare to the area and two new recordings for the county. The majority are associated with fallen deadwood.

Ride edges (as pictured opposite) will be coppiced on an eight year rotation to diversify the habitat and increase public access within the woodland. The picture above shows a ride with Hazel un-coppiced on both sides. The picture below shows the main ride from the car park with the shrubs recently coppiced and already regenerating.



Volunteers

Coleorton & New Lount Volunteer Group was set-up before the transfer of ownership to the Parish Council. The group split their time between Coleorton Wood and LCC's New Lount Nature Reserve. The group tackle all conservation tasks within the site including: ride edge management and coppicing, hedge laying, path strimming and rabbit fence removal.

In 2014 the group were awarded a grant for chainsaw training and equipment from the National Forest Company in order to help them manage these sites more effectively.

The volunteer group meet at the site twice per month to carry out these conservation tasks. The group welcome new members, to find out more please contact: coleorton11@gmail.com



To find out more about Coleorton Parish Council, please visit: www.coleorton.org.uk