

Statement from Wiltshire Wildlife Trust concerning the closure of Vincients Wood for Ash Dieback woodland works

June 2023

Vincients Wood has been closed to the public for safety reasons to enable Wiltshire Wildlife Trust to fell and remove diseased ash trees from the woodland and carry out reinstatement works.

Sadly, Vincients Wood contained a large number of ash trees which were infected by Ash Dieback and were either dead or dying. Seemingly healthy-looking trees were infected and can deteriorate rapidly, resulting in trees collapsing or shedding limbs and branches.

Our normal procedure for dealing with hazardous trees is to remove individual dangerous limbs or monolith the trees, and only fell the whole tree if essential. However, at Vincients Wood the extent of the disease and the public hazard from the diseased trees throughout the wood meant that this approach was not possible if we wished to keep the woodland open to the public. Whilst most of the ash trees had to be removed, we have been able to retain around 30 ash trees that were identified as having potential for bat roosts. As a result, an area will need to remain permanently closed to the public.

Since the felling, we have commenced the reinstatement of entranceways and paths and the improvement of habitat for wildlife, which has included the creation of a glade and a pond. A small amount of the remaining timber will be logged to create simple, low level 'stepping stone' trails for children and define the new paths. A map of the new routes will be posted on site and online.

We very much wanted to have the woodland open by now. However, timber extraction has been delayed due to ground conditions and the unique and challenging nature of the site access. We have been exploring multiple options to extract the timber, to find a route that causes as little disruption to local residents as possible. We have appointed a contractor and the work is scheduled to take place in late June and early July. We are working closely with the contractor to minimise disruption to local residents whilst this work is carried out.

We have sent a letter to local residents and updated our website. Once the extraction has been completed, there will be final reinstatement works to be carried out and then we will be in a position to safely reopen Vincients Wood to the public.

Most of the space created by the felling will be replanted with a diverse mix of native, broadleaf trees in the autumn and winter planting season.

We apologise for any inconvenience that this extended closure period has caused. For now, people must not enter the wood, which remains closed for everyone's safety.

Please see: www.wiltshirewildlife.org/vincients-wood-chippenham for further updates.