

June 2023

Dear Resident,

We are writing to provide an update on the continuing closure of Vincients Wood, including the upcoming work to extract timber, which will commence from the southern edge of the wood on Monday 26th June.

This closure has been necessary while we undertake reinstatement and enhancement works following essential Ash Dieback felling. 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 throughout the wood and the public hazard from diseased trees meant that this approach was not possible. 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, the area these trees are in may need to remain permanently closed to the public.

Since the felling, we have commenced the reinstatement of entranceways and paths. As part of our planned enhancements for wildlife, we are making some habitat improvements including the creation of a glade and a pond. Some of the felled wood will be used to create deadwood habitat for invertebrates and a small amount of the remaining timber will be logged to create simple, low level 'stepping stone' trails for children and help define the new paths.

We have previously had problems with signage being vandalised. We will be erecting some new signs, which will include a site map and will be shared online in due course.

We hoped that we could have reopened the wood by now. However, the removal of the felled trees has been delayed due to ground conditions and the unique and challenging nature of the site access. We had been exploring multiple options to extract the timber, but we are pleased to say that we have now appointed a contractor and the work will start on 26th June. We have instructed the contractor to carry out the timber extraction in a way that will minimise the disruption to local residents. Our expectation is that the extraction will be completed within a week; it will require no more than 20 lorry loads. Unfortunately, **the only route into Vincients Wood for timber lorries is via the southern entrance**. To avoid the busiest times of day for vehicle movements on local roads, the contractors will aim to start work from 9am each day and be finished by 4pm.

Once the extraction has been completed, there will be final reinstatement works to be carried out. Once this is completed and the site is deemed safe, we will then be in a position to safely reopen Vincients Wood to the public.

For now, you must not enter the wood, which remains closed for everyone's safety.

We want to take this opportunity to address concerns and queries from local residents:

- We would like to assure residents that there will be no change of use of any of the land that Vincients Wood occupies and it will continue to be managed for nature and the benefit of visitors. The purpose of the work that has been carried out is to enable local people to continue to have safe access to the site.
- As well as the habitat enhancements above, most of the space created by the removal of the ash will be replanted with a diverse mix of native, broadleaf trees in the autumn and winter planting season. Thank you for the offers of help we have received. There will be an opportunity for residents to help with the tree planting by registering as volunteers on our website. Opportunities will be advertised at volunteering.wiltshirewildlife.org in the autumn.

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

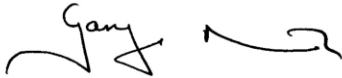
- We would also like to address questions about the costs of these works and how it is being funded. Dealing with Ash Dieback has been an exceptional and expensive cost that the Trust has had to cover. The sale of timber from Vincients Wood will only cover a very small part of the costs incurred in the felling and reinstatement works.
- In response to queries about our wider approach to Ash Dieback, we can confirm that the work needed at Vincients Wood has been exceptional. Sadly, many of the trees at Vincients Wood were ash and they had been badly affected by Ash Dieback. The site is heavily used by visitors, with a network of paths throughout the site and clear evidence of children exploring all parts of the wood. Our initial response to Ash Dieback was to deal with individual trees with clear evidence of the disease and limiting the work carried out to ensure public safety. However, we found that trees which had safety work carried out continued to degrade and required ongoing works. Even seemingly healthy looking trees were found to be infected and can deteriorate rapidly, resulting in trees collapsing or shedding limbs and branches. As the disease spread, our initial approach was no longer viable and posed an ongoing risk to the public. At our other woodland reserves where there are fewer ash trees, and where we have lower visitor numbers and/or clearly defined paths, we will not need to undertake anything like the scale of the work that was required in Vincients Wood.

Please see www.wiltshirewildlife.org/vincients-wood or www.wiltshirewildlife.org/ash-dieback for further updates.

If you have any concerns or queries, please do not hesitate to contact us at comms@wiltshirewildlife.org.

We understand the importance of accessing the woodland to residents and we are working hard to be able to reopen Vincients Wood soon.

Kind regards,



Dr Gary Mantle MBE
Chief Executive, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust