



Broadland Tree Warden Network

Low Farm Wood, Postwick Lane, Brundall, Management Report

By

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Broadland Tree Warden for Brundall**

Low Farm Wood



September 2022

Postwick Ln

Holmesdale Rd



This report is supplemental to my previous reports to Brundall Parish Council on the progress of the management by the Broadland Tree Warden Network of Low Farm Wood, located to the north of Postwick Lane in Brundall, almost opposite the Brundall Country Park. This report should be read in conjunction with the aims and objectives set out and agreed in the “Low Farm Wood Management Plan” dated 2 May 2020.

Once again, progress during August was hampered by the exceedingly hot weather. As I said in my last report, safety workwear is very heavy and increases fatigue in the extreme temperatures we have experienced recently. In addition, the fact that the Parish Council has not actually secured insurance cover for us using chainsaws, as agreed in the Low Farm Wood Management Plan” dated 2 May 2020, meant that all thinning work has had to be carried out using hand saws, taking more time, skill and effort.



As can be seen from this picture, we did manage to reduce the tree that I highlighted as being of concern in last month’s report. It had “heaved” making it dangerous, particularly with the soil being so dry and the upper centimetres more like powder.

We had no choice but to tackle the problem with hand saws and I can testify that it took as great deal of time, skill and effort.

To reduce it to ground level, as originally intended, is just not possible with hand saws so we have left the twin stems standing as shown, but greatly reduced so that they are safe.

August was predominantly spent dealing with the huge quantity of arisings we had generated. Confusion regarding whether or not the neighbouring farmer would permit us to have the chipper delivered to the service lane adjacent to the A47 and north of the woodland, thereby saving effort in getting onto the site, should not have occurred. However, we eventually overcame the matter and managed to get the chipper on site without too much effort and with the permission of the farmer.

Due to the large quantity of arisings to be processed (the picture opposite shows only part of the total volume of material we had to process) we had to plan to work on a rota of three days on then one day resting, despite the excessive heat. Of course, on the rest days neither of us could do very much at all, resulting in some disapproval from our much suffering spouses!



That excessive heat, particularly on 11, 12 and 13 August made the task even more challenging and the two Tree Wardens involved, both aged 72 years, had to exercise particular care with hydration, fatigue and essential rest periods.

Progress was severely hampered by the chipper breaking down twice. On each occasion the stater seized.

On the first occasion, following five days of work and steady progress, Travis Perkins sent out a service engineer who could not repair the problem on site and had to take the machine back to his depot. As he had parked his truck beside the barn conversions to the south of the site, that of course meant that we had to manually haul it down through the wood to his truck ... through the torrential rain of Tuesday 16 August. Suffice to say we got a little wet!

Tavis Perkins continued their excellent service to date and returned the “repaired” chipper to site first thing on the morning of Thursday 18 August. They once again delivered it to the service lane adjacent to the A47 and north of the woodland so that it was somewhat easier to haul it up to our working position.

After two hours working we stopped for coffee, but when we went to resume our work the chipper once again would not start, having the same problem as before. A call to Travis Perkins resulted in the service engineer visiting us within four hours but, as before, he was unable to repair the machine on site. Indeed, it was obvious that the fault was for more serious than originally diagnosed. He hoped to be able to return it to us in a matter of days but we declined that offer, reluctantly accepting that we would be unable to complete all chipping before our holiday break and deciding to leave the chipping of the remaining arisings until the next time we hire the machine

It must be appreciated that once the arisings have been processed through the chipper, they have to be shovelled into a wheelbarrow, carried for up for some considerable distance and then laid and raked out along the pathways. We are extremely grateful to Graham Abbott for the hours he has given to the project hauling and spreading the fresh chippings along the pathways.

Although we were unable to complete the chipping of the arisings as planned (and we both found that most frustrating) we estimate that we are now around 65% of the way through the project.

The picture opposite illustrates just how the woodland is benefitting from the extra sunlight now penetrating the upper canopy that was so dominated by goat willow.



The yellow line on the aerial picture opposite indicates where we have reached to date. Whilst we still have much work to complete we are definitely in the 'home straight'.

As reported last month, the remaining thinning work should be far less challenging than the work tackled to date as the greater majority of the trees are no more than pole size and, indeed, many are actually dead and therefore simply have to be pulled over. Having said that, several large goat willow remain and require thinning, necessitating chainsaw work. The project cannot be completed without the use of chainsaws.

As everyone is aware, this summer's extreme temperatures have had a marked impact on our trees. Particularly those planted in the last three or four years. Many trees have undoubtedly been lost and on sites such as Low Farm Wood it simply is not possible to water trees enough. However, a great number of those that appear dead have simply shut down, shedding leaves, as in autumn. Trees are far more intelligent than we humans and they know that by shutting down they will stand a better chance of surviving.

Therefore, we have carried out a rough assessment of the trees of Low Farm Wood, particularly the younger ones, and I am delighted to report that they appear to be faring very well all things considered. Yes, we have lost some but nowhere near as many as other sites.

We will not rush to replace any that appear to have died but, instead, will see what we have next spring and then decide what re-planting (if any) is necessary. Yes, there can be an argument that we will lose a year but we believe we are taking the correct course of action.

It is also worth noting that the thinning carried out to date, allowing light to penetrate to the woodland floor, has allowed numerous self-set seedlings to 'pop-up'. Self-set seedlings give the strongest trees and shrubs and therefore future planting, particularly of an understory, may not be necessary.

August saw our two Tree Wardens give 110 man-hours to the project, comprising 80 hours on chipper work and the remainder using hand saws. That brings our total Network Tree Warden man-hours given to the project to 1,210. Using a value of £40 per man-hour, that results in the value of our work to date being £48,400.

It may be of interest to estimate the final total value of our commitment to the thinning of the project. We estimate that the completion of this 'initial' thinning of the site will result in a total of 1,997 man-hours which, at £40 per hour, equates to £79,880.

Richard Farley
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