

February 2025

Woodland Management Update – Richmond Village Aston on Trent

Further to publishing our annual woodland management plan last year, we would like to share an update on works that have taken place in Long Walk Wood and Middle Wood.

Progress so far

As you will be aware, last year trees were removed from Long Walk Wood in order to protect people from harm and reduce risk of further spread of disease within the woodlands. Where trees were removed, we have commenced replanting of young saplings and thus far have introduced a total of 30 oak trees, 30 silver birches and 30 wild cherries into the woodlands.

This will be further supplemented with hazels and hornbeams into new glade areas and more native trees into the woodlands later this autumn/winter when the whip planting season commences again. Our plan continues to ensure that over the next 5 years of this current plan, a total of 1000 whips will be introduced into the woodlands.

Biodiversity in full bloom

We also conducted a biodiversity survey last year to inform our Woodland Management Plan, which was again reviewed this year. We are pleased to note that there remains a healthy population of bats roosting in our woodlands. The survey also showed activity from muntjac deer and we were pleased to have a broad range of butterflies and moths living in the woodlands. Amongst the more common blackbirds, pigeons and robins, the survey also noted a green woodpecker, wrens and tree creepers to have made a home in the woodlands. Having left a number of habitat piles following last year's tree works, their benefit to the flora and fauna of the woodlands have also been noted.

Richmond Villages continue to acknowledge the significance of the woodlands to our local residents and have teamed up with members of SAVE to bring to life some of the important stories and history hidden in the woods. We are looking at introducing an information board at the entrance of the Woodlands at Maple Drive highlighting key facts of Long Walk Wood and its local history. We will also look to highlight key areas within the woodlands such as the Yew Avenue, snowdrops and bluebells (contained within Richmond's part of the Woodlands). If you know of any significant information that you feel would be of interest to be included in such information, please do liaise with SAVE who are collating all such local knowledge at present.

Looking ahead

As part of our annual tree maintenance, we plan to carry out small scale work this year. This may include simple maintenance tasks such as removing dangerous deadwood from canopies to avoid dead fall from trees, or range to the felling of unstable trees near boundary lines or walkways that may pose a danger to the public. We are pleased to note that this year's tree works are not substantial and will not warrant the closure of the footpath.

As highlighted in our previous plans, there is a need to remove the invasive Rhododendrons to allow for more light to reach the woodland floor and nutrients for trees and other plants to be preserved. Removing Rhododendrons also helps with allowing for more stabilised water levels within the woodlands, avoiding drainage issues in places.

Our team have commenced the removal which is due to be completed by the end of April.

Where Rhododendrons are removed the areas will be rested to restore nutrient levels, before we will plant up small shrubs and native bulbs to create woodland glades as outlined in our Woodland Management Plan. Such planting is likely to take place in the winter of 2025.

Assessing drainage

We are aware of a few places within the permissive path that currently struggle with natural drainage, creating excessively muddy patches, and hence making it unpleasant for people to walk through. This in turn creates some divergent paths through the undergrowth. We are keen to avoid such paths, as many divergences may put at risk some of our beautiful woodland plants and would very much like to encourage local residents to stay on the permissive path.

We are planning to shortly dig a test pit to investigate the soil structure underneath the path and establish whether there is a natural reason that impacts on water drainage. Of course, with this being a natural landscape, we will never entirely remove mud from the area! However, we are looking at introducing wood chip to improve the surface structure in the worst affected areas. This work is scheduled to be completed in early March.

We hope you have found this update informative and useful as we continue to maintain this important local habitat for all to enjoy into the future.

Should you have any queries or health and safety concerns about the maintenance of our woodlands, please email our Regional Head Gardener, john.haddow@richmond-villages.com