

## Growing the Forest at Binton

We hope that this email finds you safe and well. We are delighted that we will be tree planting on our land at Binton this winter season, which runs from November to March. We are pleased to update you on those plans along with some other updates and opportunities.

### Community woodland design





Following the face to face session on 28<sup>th</sup> July, we are delighted to confirm the community woodland design (above), thank you for engaging with us on this and for your input and ideas.

## Tree planting at Binton

Tree planting will start in early November and will be carried out by the forestry team and volunteers.

We would love to involve as many local residents as possible. If there is sufficient support, we would gladly run a community planting day. If this is something you would like to join, please register your interest by emailing [volunteer@heartofenglandforest.org](mailto:volunteer@heartofenglandforest.org) and including the subject 'Binton Community Planting'. If we cannot find a date and critical mass to offer this, there will be opportunities for you all to join volunteering days on Saturdays in November and December. Information about these will be posted on our website at [www.heartofenglandforest.org/volunteer](http://www.heartofenglandforest.org/volunteer) and you can also learn more at our drop in information session – see below.

## Livestock fence installation

You may have noticed some mown areas on the northern area of our land. We wanted to clarify that these areas were mown in preparation for livestock fence installation rather than being walkways. Walkways are being planned in the community woodland, which will enable you all to wander through the newly planted saplings and watch the woodland grow (marked on the plan above).

## Hedgerow management in the Forest

Following discussions with some residents and the parish council, we understood the importance of the Church Bank hedge and the views beyond to people in Binton, so between 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> September a hand cut was carried out by our team. This more labour intensive option was undertaken in targeted areas for this year only as a gesture to demonstrate that we are keen to work in partnership with the village. Many thanks to those residents that stopped to chat to the team and provided very welcome refreshments, it was much appreciated.

We hope that this solution will maximise the wildlife value of the hedgerow whilst at the same time preserving views of residents affected. As a conservation charity working hard to play our part in addressing the many challenges that climate change and the continued decline in UK wildlife brings, work includes protecting and conserving all habitats within the Forest. The hedgerows are one of these important habitats.

Here in the Forest, our hedges are cut in rotation, following best practice, which means no more than a third of the hedge (one side or top) is cut each year. In fact, any farmer or other landowner who is under a Countryside Stewardship agreement on their land and has hedgerows as part of their agreement is prohibited from undertaking any additional cutting, so this practice is commonplace across many farms in the local area and beyond.



Cutting hedges in rotation allows different ages of regrowth, which affects the food, shelter, and nectar sources available for our wildlife. For example, the brown hairstreak butterfly, which is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan Species due to significant decline in numbers, is so specific in its needs that it lays its eggs on two year old blackthorn regrowth and is unable to survive if hedges are cut annually.

As many residents will be aware, it is an offence to cut farmland hedges during the bird breeding season, and any hedge cutting we undertake in the Forest is done between 1<sup>st</sup> September and the middle of February. With two very wet winters behind us, our first priority for mechanical hedge cutting this year is to cut any inside field hedge sides which are due for cutting before the arrival of the wet weather, when it is impossible to get the hedgecutter and tractor around many fields without damaging the soil structure. This is a livestock welfare issue to us and many other livestock farmers, as sheep can become entangled in overhanging bramble and thorns as their winter coats grow. Our next priority is roadside hedges where there could be danger from a reduced visibility splay.

We wanted, however, to reassure residents that we have listened to feedback and the importance of the local view and reassure you that the top of the hedge in question will be cut this coming season. This is likely to take place as early in the new year as possible.

You can read more about hedgerows in the Forest on our website - [www.heartofenglandforest.org/news/hedgerows-forest](http://www.heartofenglandforest.org/news/hedgerows-forest)

### Drop in information session on 14<sup>th</sup> October

Stop by Church Bank Farm on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> October between 4pm and 7pm to see the final planting plans, find out more about getting involved with tree planting, and to chat to members of the team about the work of the charity.

We hope to see you then. In the meantime, please do remember that you can keep up to date with our latest news via our free monthly e-newsletter that you can sign up for on our website – [www.heartofenglandforest.org](http://www.heartofenglandforest.org)

Best wishes

The Heart of England Forest Team