

# Report on the Homeopathic Woodland Sywell Country Park in Northamptonshire 2016

Work on the Homeopathic Woodland started during December 2002 with the planting of several hundred mixed native British trees. The species used were: Oak, ash, cherry, crack willow, goat willow, guilder rose, spindle, wayfaring tree, hazel, blackthorn, hawthorn, elder, dog rose, holly, buckthorn and beech.

Planting has continued on an annual basis as donations have been forthcoming. Since the initial planting the number of trees planted each year has declined until over the last few years only a handful of trees were donated per year.

The woodland is being managed using standard wildlife friendly techniques. The trees are planted at 3 metre intervals and as they grow and start to compete with each other the weaker trees and shrub species are coppiced (cut off at the base to make the tree re-grow with multiple stems) to make space for the larger healthier trees.

In the long term the woodland will have 30% tall canopy cover with the remaining 70% shrub cover which will be re-coppiced on a 6 – 10 yr cycle depending on re-growth speed to create a mosaic of different aged trees throughout the woodland.

This "coppice with standards" is the most wildlife diverse type of woodland because it creates a varied height structure which is constantly changing.

In the areas that have been recently coppiced sun loving animals and plants will proliferate (such as butterflies and windflowers) in the first few years after cutting. Gradually shade tolerant animals and plants will benefit as the re-growth increases.

The brash (small branches and twigs) from the coppiced trees has been stacked in rows along the edges of the wood to provide 'wildlife corridors' for birds and small mammals to nest in and travel along as well as providing hibernation places and shelter for small mammals, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates.

The path through the woodland is extremely muddy during the winter months and we have done a small amount of levelling and drainage work over the last few years to remedy this which has had a small improvement.

We have recently applied for grant funding (via Sport England) to complete the all weather track around the park which will include surfacing the existing path through the wood.

The new path will be accessible to everyone including people with pushchairs and wheelchair and mobility scooter users.

If the funding bid is successful we may have to transplant some of the shrubs on the very edges of the path and move them further into the wood. Any trees which don't survive the transplanting will be replaced with new trees.

Report by Geoff Simons, Senior Ranger at Sywell Country Park