

Tree-felling on the Forest

When, why and why not

This brief document describes when and why trees are felled on the Forest and when and why they are not.

Background

Trees are very abundant on the Forest. They (mainly birch and oak) are the dominant plants, forming woodland, over about 40%, i.e. ca 1000 ha (ca 4 square miles), of the area. Such woodland cover is 1.5 times higher than that of the High Weald AONB as a whole, itself one of the most densely wooded parts of the UK, and five times the national average (see *Strategic Forest Plan*, p. 9).

Most trees, and woodland, on the Forest are young. According to the *Management Plan for Woodland on Ashdown Forest* (e.g. Appendix 4, ESUS Forestry and Woodlands, 2008), 73% of the woodland is 1 - 40 years old. Old (e.g. 100 years +) trees are few, known and mapped. Ancient Woodland, abundant in the High Weald as a percentage of total woodland cover, is very restricted on the Forest.

Why trees are felled

When they are:

1. dangerous (for example on roadsides);
2. on areas allocated for heathland restoration (for which felling licences are applied from the Forestry Commission);
3. for use by commoners (as statutory right) and those applying for wood permits (totalling a record 87 so far this year);
4. parts of woodland undergoing management (e.g. alder carr, hazel coppice, woodland edges, woodland thinning and 3 above);
5. a nuisance, for example if they hinder another management operation (e.g. opening an access);
6. close to notable trees (i.e. to create 'halo' effect).

Why trees are not felled

When they are:

1. old (including veteran [but unless dangerous]);
2. in woodland described by ESUS as benefitting from non- or minimal intervention;
3. of species uncommon on the Forest (e.g. whitebeam);
4. of some known local significance;
5. covered by Tree Preservation Order (e.g. beside the Forest Row Sports Pavilion);
6. may offer a visual barrier to e.g. roads.

Other points

- No tree is felled without reason!
- Some staff will not fell holly (symbolism/superstition).
- Of trees that are felled, many are used to heat the Forest Centre.