

RE: Wybunbury Moss Felling Work.

Thank you for your email.

We have received a complaint from one local resident, whose main issue was the removal of mature trees although he did also mention the smoke from the burning of brash.

In case Council receives any other correspondence I will describe all of the reasons for undertaking this work here.

As you are aware, Wybunbury Moss is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Area of Conservation (under the European Habitats Directive) and is a RAMSAR site (a designation for internationally important wetlands), which collectively indicate the significant, international importance of this site. The special features of the bog are its unusual structure and the range of rare plants and animals that are found there, including invertebrate species that are found in only one or two other sites in the UK.

Since it formed some 8,000 years ago, at the end of the last Ice Age it has generally been an open landscape which was too wet for trees to grow. However, when peat cutting commenced in the 19th century a series of drains were dug across the site which caused the bog to start drying out and providing suitable conditions for trees to become established. However, RAF aerial photographs taken in the late 1940s show that the Moss was still largely devoid of trees at that time.

As owners and managers of Wybunbury Moss, Natural England has a statutory duty to manage the site to avoid a decline in the features for which it was notified. a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). In the case of Wybunbury Moss, these features include the floating peat bog, along with the associated bog-vegetation and invertebrate communities. Whilst in most places trees are valuable for wildlife, on a peat bog they have a hugely detrimental effect in drying out the bog and creating shade, so in places such as Wybunbury the value of the bog community for wildlife massively outweighs the value of medium-aged conifers.

The need to remove trees, is set out in our management plan for the site and has been conveyed to local residents on many occasions through guided walks and open evenings in the village and we feel that most residents understand why we have to undertake this work. We are conscious that tree removal has an impact on the local landscape so we have always planned to leave a fringe of trees around the edge of the Moss and prior to starting felling works we planted a compensatory strip of trees along the lower part of the bank between the Moss and Moorlands Drive, to minimise the impact for residents there.

Ideally, we would not burn the brash created by the felling operations, but the nature of this site makes it impossible to take the cut material off-site. As the Moss is downwind of the village in prevailing winds we would hope that on most days smoke blows away from houses, however for the remainder of this felling operation we will try not to burn on days when the village might be affected by smoke.

We have enjoyed very good working relations with Wybunbury Parish Council over many years and I hope this explanation will help you to respond to any additional concerns that you might receive. I would also like to use this opportunity to thank the Council for your support in protecting this very special place that you have on your doorstep.

Regards

Rupert Randall

Cheshire Reserve Manager