



Putnoe Wood.

Putnoe wood is not in a very healthy state. A significant proportion of the oak trees have diseases:

- Chronic Oak Decline
- Acute Oak Decline

There are also a significant proportion of the trees that show issues, such as:

- Wood pecker holes – Indicates a rotten core that the birds have hollowed out
- King Alfred's cakes (Fungus)
- Honey Fungus
- Ganoderma (Bracket Fungus)
- Inonotus (Bracket Fungus) – This rots out the inside of the tree and is responsible for many broken stems / limbs on the Ash trees, but also affects Oak.

Not all trees with problems need to be felled and where they can be left in situ they provide excellent habitat. Amongst the unhealthy trees there are also many healthy ones and a programme of planting trees of different varieties is ongoing.

There are also other areas which require management to reduce or prevent the spread of invasive plants:

- Small Balsam (invasive) management to reduce spread
- Reduction of bramble in areas of the wood – to protect other ground flora.

With this in mind we are aware there will be an ongoing need to manage the wood, probably more intensively in the future, to deal with fallen and dangerous trees. The two new paths, whose routes have just been cleared by the Friends of Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort (routes cleared to about 3 meters wide, but any hard surfaced path will only be 1.6 meters wide), were chosen as the route of least opposition from a tree-work perspective – only 4 trees needed to be felled – the rest was purely a scrub layer.

It is expected that the new paths will provide:

- An improved visitor experience - they will allow people to walk more 'into the woods' rather than just tour the outside edge on the northern boundary.
- Improved access for essential maintenance work - The width and profiling of the path corners will assist in allowing vehicle access into the wood for management work, such as:
 - Giving us the ability to move debris piles or chip brash to control the number of habitat piles left within the wood
 - Gain easier access to fell dangerous trees and the ability to remove the logs
 - Provide a safer route than the current path which is degrading into the brook on the northern boundary

The existing east, west and south paths will also have their edges pushed back (route widened, but the hard surface will remain at 1.6 meters) to allow vehicle access on the current outer path structure, for essential management.

It should also be noted that we are planting trees of different varieties, given the known diseases that are affecting the areas, to try and provide better security for the wood in the long term and improve on the age and height structure within the wood.



Putnoe Wood: Questions and Answers

Q1. Why are trees being cut down?

A significant proportion of the trees in the wood are diseased or are suffering from fungus. The badly affected ones are dangerous and have to be taken down. Not all trees with problems need to be felled and where they can be left in situ they can provide excellent habitat.

Q2. Why is there a lot of fallen trees in the wood?

Some of the fungus that attacks trees rots out the inside of the trunk or branches. The rotten branches often break and fall as do the trunks in heavy winds. Quite often after a rotten tree has lost a lot of branches the trunk remains standing until eventually it will fall down. It is good to have up to 5% dead standing trees for birds and other wild life to use.

Q3. Why is it necessary to create a new path in the middle of the wood?

The new path will provide an improved visitor experience and give better access for essential maintenance work and to clear dead and dangerous trees.

Q4. It feels as if the shrubbery in the wood is less dense – why?

During the winter the shrubs and trees are free of leaves and this opens up the views across the wood. In addition, winter clearance work and coppicing has opened up the interior of the wood. The leaves will soon be out again.

Q5. What is being done to ensure the wood stays healthy?

The majority of the existing trees, mainly oak and ash, are of a similar age and height. Planting of different varieties is underway to provide a gradation of age and height of trees within the wood. Active management of small balsam and bramble, both invasive plants, is necessary to protect other wild flora. These actions will help protect the long term future of the wood and encourage plants such as primroses, wood anemone and snowdrops to flourish.

Q.6.

Enjoy the wood and wildlife, act responsibly and do not leave litter or dog poop bags in the wood. If you want to do more why not join the Friends of Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort.

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If you have any concerns, questions or just want a chat relating to Putnoe Wood or Mowsbury Hillfort please do not hesitate to contact us or the Country Park Rangers by phone, email or catch up with us at one of our tasks:

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General Park enquiries (01234) 228759

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