Broadsheet

The Magazine for Broadland Tree Wardens

Issue 244 - July 2025

Don’t bulldoze our precious environment

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Inside this issue

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It is circulated free of charge to Broadland Tree Wardens parish and town councils, parish meetings and other interested parties.

Any views expressed are not necessarily those of the Broadland Tree Warden Network.

Don't bulldoze our precious environment

THE Government's Planning and Infrastructure Bill has made green groups angry. The Government risks 'bulldozing' Britain's ancient woods and trees in a housing blitz reported Steph Spyro, Express Deputy Political Editor.

Labour is set to "bulldoze" vital environmental protections which could put Britain's ancient woods and trees in line for the chopping block, experts have warned. Nature groups, such as the Woodland Trust, have slammed the Government's Planning and Infrastructure Bill which is making its way through Parliament.

The bill allows housebuilders to pay into a nature restoration fund to improve habitats on another site, which could be anywhere in the country, rather than avoiding disturbance to nature where they are building.

Darren Moorcroft, CEO of the Woodland Trust, said: "As it stands, the government's Planning and Infrastructure Bill is set to bulldoze most of the existing environmental protections the public have fought for over the past fifty years and put our nation's irreplaceable ancient woods and trees in line for the chopping block.

"Instead of requiring developers to avoid destroying important habitats, like ancient trees and woodlands, incorporating them into their designs or working around them wherever possible.

"The new Bill would move us to a system where any developer with deep enough pockets could be given a free pass to destroy a 500-year-old tree, as long as they pay into a fund that helps nature elsewhere. Most school children could tell you that nature doesn't work that way."

Labour's planning bill threatens protected habitats, warned green watchdog the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP). It called for the bill to be strengthened and for safeguards of protected nature sites to be included.

Dame Glenys Stacey, the chair of the OEP, said: "There are fewer protections for nature written into the bill than under existing law. Creating new flexibility without sufficient legal safeguards could see environmental outcomes lessened over time.

"Aiming to improve environmental outcomes overall, whilst laudable, is not the same as maintaining in law high levels of protection for specific habitats and species. In our considered view, the bill would have the effect of reducing the level of environmental protection provided for by existing environ-mental law. As drafted, the provisions are a regression."

The Wildlife Trusts and RSPB are among the groups demanding a rethink of the bill.

Angela Rayner last month rejected accusations Labour will be "bulldozing over the greenbelt" or compromising on protections for nature to build homes faster.

The Deputy Prime Minister said that proposals to give a boost to smaller developers, which will ease the requirements for them to pay to boost nature habitats, were "pragmatism" and that the Government will be able to "protect nature at the same time".

The Government has set out proposals to cut red tape and for planning decisions to be shifted away from councillors and towards expert officers as part of efforts to meet Labour's pledge to build 1.5 million homes by 2029-30.

A government spokesman said: "This Government inherited a failed system that blocks homes, infrastructure, economic growth and does nothing for nature's recovery.

"The Nature Restoration Fund will secure lasting improvements for nature and help fix the failed status quo. We note the support of the Office for Environmental Protection for the intentions behind our reforms and will carefully consider their advice."

DARREN MOORCROFT, CEO of the Woodland Trust said "Bird song. Leaves rustling in the breeze. These sounds survive in our towns and cities because, as a fiercely nature-loving nation, we have ensured we have laws to protect them. Right now, they are under serious threat.

"As it stands, the government's Planning and Infrastructure Bill is set to bulldoze most of the existing environmental protections the public have fought for over the past fifty years and put our nation's irreplaceable ancient woods and trees in line for the chopping block.

"Instead of requiring developers to avoid destroying important habitats, like ancient trees and woodlands, incorporating them into their designs or working around them wherever possible.

"The new Bill would move us to a system where any developer with deep enough pockets could be given a free pass to destroy a 500-year-old tree, as long as they pay into a fund that helps nature elsewhere. Most school children could tell you that nature doesn't work that way. An ancient tree provides habitats for many hundreds of species and once it's gone, they, too, are gone forever.

"New housing is not the problem here. Our children and their children need places to live and we must help provide that. The problem is if we allow housing to be built in a way that strips our country of all its rich, green spaces we will force our communities to be stuck living in grey, nature-poor places, which science has shown is terrible for our health and wellbeing.

"The national outcry over the felling of the Whitewebbs Oak and Sycamore Gap trees show how much our old trees and historic woodlands are part of our national identity. The government must listen to the British public and change its Bill to protect our priceless trees and woodlands, before irreversible damage is done to our towns, cities and landscapes."

A Surrey council has warned that developers and landowners could face "serious financial and legal consequences" for cutting down trees on sites being considered for new homes, reported Jack Fiehn, BBC Surrey political reporter.

Environmental laws, which mean builders

must compensate for the loss of any nature on housing developments, came into force last year.

Tandridge District Council (TDC) said there had been a number of recent incidents where trees were felled to clear areas for planning applications.

A spokesperson for the Home Builders Federation said it can be "necessary to remove trees to allow a development to take place."

The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements mean that sites now have to be assessed before bulldozers can enter and developers have to commit to delivering a 10% net improvement in biodiversity that lasts over a 30-year period.

The leader of TDC, Catherine Sayer, said: "We have had incidents where 300 year-old oak trees have been cut down because they are in the way of development. In one instance, the developer withdrew the planning application when they realised the cost of replacing the lost biodiversity would be tens of thousands of pounds."

Sayer said the council wanted to raise awareness that this "environmental vandalism has serious financial and legal consequences and [we] hope it acts as a deterrent".

Resident Terry Morgan, who lives near land where a tree was cut down ahead of a development taking place, told BBC Radio Surrey he was "angry."

He said "It's not a single tree, it is part of a long line of trees marking ancient boundaries, home to wildlife and so on. To simply, for convenience, cut that tree down rather than make a planning application which is more appropriate to the site. That's the key thing I'm angry and annoyed about."

Sayer said she thought it was a "great shame" that ministers were looking at changing environmental rules to make it easier to build homes on smaller sites. Housing Secretary and Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner said the changes would "simplify" the planning process.

She denied environmental protections were being compromised.

A spokesperson for the Homebuilders Federation said: "Clearly in some instances it is necessary to remove trees to allow a development to take place. In those cases developers are required to abide by all the relevant rules and regulations in place."

Separately, TDC said it was investigating the felling of woodland on land near Lingfield a few weeks ago as alleged criminal activity.

IN an article for The Guardian, titled "Ten jewels of English nature at risk from development and Labour's planning bill", Patrick Barkham, Sandra Laville and Helena Horton reported that across the country, irreplaceable and often internationally important natural sites could be lost as a result of cuts to habitat protections.

More than 5,000 of the rarest and most precious natural habitats in England are at risk of being destroyed under Labour's new planning bill, according to legal analysis of the legislation.

Here are just 10 irreplaceable wild places currently or recently imperilled by development that are likely to face renewed threats if the current wildlife protections are torn up by the government's bill.

1. Lodge Hill, Kent. The best place for nightingales in Britain.

The best site in Britain for the endangered nightingale, Lodge Hill was made a site of special scientific interest (SSSI) in 2013, but the following year it was earmarked for 5,000 new homes. The biggest attempt to build on an SSSI in England since the wildlife laws of 1981 came into force.

After widespread protests from ecologists and nature charities, Homes England withdrew its plans and said it would develop just 500 houses on the former MoD land, outside the SSSI.

The scrubby, song-filled paradise of dense woodland and grassland is renowned for its bat roosts, exceptional reptile population, rare butterflies, flowers and three species of owl. But in an area under huge housing pressure, the site that was once used for bomb disposal training and is classified as "brownfield" is likely to be targeted for development once more.

2. Tipner West, Portsmouth. An internationally important tidal wetland.

The mudflats and coastal meadows of Tipner West are an internationally important place for waders such as black-tailed godwit and dunlin, as well as a wealth of intertidal marine life. As part of Portsmouth harbour and the wider Solent, it is home to 30% of Britain's overwintering population of brent geese. The area is protected not only as a SSSI but also a special protection area (SPA) and Ramsar site. The highest tier of protection.

However, in 2019, Portsmouth city council proposed a "super peninsula" on the site. A large-scale land reclamation project for housing that would have destroyed vast swathes of habitat. After 24,000 people objected, the council withdrew that plan but has continued to push for land reclamation and housebuilding that jeopardises vital intertidal habitats.

Under current laws, SPAs and Ramsar sites can be built on only if there are "imperative reasons of overriding public interest" and no feasible alternatives. If building went ahead, the council would also have to create new mudflats and coastal meadows on a significantly greater scale than the area damaged. Such a high bar has never been hurdled by mere housing, and this spring the government rejected the council's request. The council is now exploring how it can continue its development plans.

Sources say housing minister Matthew Pennycook is interested in Tipner West being one of the first developments to happen if the planning bill goes through, when the council will be able to pay into a nature restoration fund and no longer obliged to provide alternative habitats nearby.

3. Humber estuary, Yorkshire. A vast home to nine internationally important bird species.

The Humber estuary has almost every conservation protection going. - SPA, SAC, SSSI - while also being a major shipping channel. Remarkably, it's also responsible for 20% of all surface drainage in the UK. The habitats regulations have helped protect its natural functioning for decades, ensuring that docks expansions and sea defence projects don't destroy vital mudflats, sand flats and salt marsh for overwintering birds and declining breeding species such as little terns. Spurn Point, Yorkshire's own Land's End, is a hugely popular national nature reserve whose visitors contribute to the local economy.

Planning reforms could disrupt the partnership between port, business and housing interests that has enabled economic development alongside wildlife protection. Further south, the similarly important Wash estuary is threatened by a tidal barrage proposal which says it has funding to pursue a development consent order.

4. Thetford, Norfolk. A unique heathland, rich in birds, flowers and invertebrates.

Thetford, a rapidly growing town of 25,000 with a 5,000-home urban extension under way, is surrounded by SSSIs, special areas of conservation (SACs) and the Brecks SPA. This unique region of sandy heaths and dry grassland is home to 72 species found nowhere else in Britain. It is of European-wide importance for rare plants, invertebrates and birds including curlew, nightjar, woodlark and stone curlew. Rare and declining species here include turtle dove, goshawk, long-eared owl and lesser spotted woodpecker.

Thetford Forest, Norfolk at dawn. Photograph: Chris Herring/Alamy

Birds such as nightjar and woodlark occur at lower densities in areas surrounded by housing, while heaths close to urban areas suffer from increased fire risk, trampling, disturbance by dog walkers, water pollution from dog fouling, and air pollution from road traffic. At the moment, there are protection zones for the stone curlews with no development permitted within 1,500m of a nesting site. Thanks partly to this protection, populations have increased.

Under the new planning bill, however, developers can disregard such protections if they pay into a new nature restoration fund. An ecological assessment of Thetford's local plan said "the proximity of the Breckland European site's boundary to the edge of the town in most directions remains a fundamental issue to overcome" before further homes can be built.

5. Wolborough Fen, Devon. An ancient wetland and urban oasis.

A vulnerable wetland SSSI, the Wolborough Fen nature reserve is home to emperor dragonfly, sphagnum moss and 30 species of bird. It sits beside a major development of 1,200 new homes on the edge of Newton Abbot, which is earmarked to take a huge chunk of new homes planned for the region. Devon Wildlife Trust has warned a new road could jeopardise the wetland. A tranche of the development, for 150 homes, was rejected by planners in December because of concerns about damage to the wetland.

Police were called in April when residents accused developer Vistry Homes of breaching the restrictions on its planning approvals. Local people blocked the bulldozers digging close to the nature reserve and the council issued a stop notice to halt the work. Kate Van Dike of Wolborough Residents Association and campaign group Newton Says No said: "There was no feeling of trespass, just a united sense of [people] having the courage of their convictions.

"The residents will continue to highlight unlawful acts by developers and call out any abdication of responsibility from the local planning authority who have a fundamental duty to protect an ancient and precious woodland, a hidden gem that is rare in the UK, with some species that can be found in only a few other sites in Europe."

6. Sittingbourne, Kent. Irreplaceable ancient woodlands.

Just 2.5% of Britain's ancient woodland survives. It represents an irreplaceable combination of veteran trees, undisturbed soils, fungal networks and rare flora. Two separate

applications by Quinn Estates for 8,400 new homes, a hotel, rubbish tip, relief road and primary and secondary schools are subject to a planning hearing after Angela Rayner, the deputy prime minister, "called in" proposals hours before they were set to be rejected by Swale borough council last November.

According to Kent Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust, the plans entail the direct loss of ancient woodland, local wildlife sites and priority habitats including species rich hedgrows and traditional Kentish orchards. The developments will also place indirect pressure, from pollution and people, on nearby Cromers Wood and Tonge Mill country park.

Vulnerable species that would be directly affected include water vole, otter, yellowhammer, corn bunting, grey partridge and the critically endangered turtle dove. More than 700 local people have objected to the plans, which could sail through under the new legislation.

7. Surrey Heaths. Home to rare ground-nesting birds.

Vast swathes of nature-rich heathland have been lost to housing over recent decades, because it is relatively cheap land and easy to build on. The surviving fragments of the Surrey Heaths, including Colony Bog and Bagshot Heath, Ash to Brookwood Heaths and Chobham Common, have historically been protected as SSSIs. They are part of the Thames Basin SPA, protected by the habitats regulations, which seeks to maintain internationally important bird populations of nightjar, woodlark and Dartford warbler. All of these species nest on or close to the ground and so are highly vulnerable to people-pressure, especially from dog – walkers.

Under current planning laws, new homes close to vulnerable wildlife sites must provide suitable natural green space nearby so new residents don't disturb those sites. Under the new bill, developers will be able to pay to create such green spaces further away, potentially in other counties. Even if wildlife sites are not built on, this risks creating more disturbance leading to local extinctions of vulnerable species.

Becky Pullinger, head of land use planning at the Wildlife Trusts, said: "Places like the New Forest and the Surrey Heaths could be threatened by development that no longer has to avoid harm to those specific sites. On the Surrey Heaths, the clear impact the development can have is more people walking their dogs which can impact on birds in the area.

8. Dibden Bay, Hampshire. Important wetland for wildfowl and invertebrates.

Plans to hugely expand Southampton's container port and reclaim land on the New Forest side of Southampton Water were first rejected back in 2004. Doubling the capacity of the port would destroy grazing marshes and mudflats that provide nesting for lapwing and winter homes for 50,000 birds such as wigeon and pintail.

Horseriders on the fenced off site with the giant cranes of the container port in Southampton Docks in the background

The area is an SPA and contains several SSSIs, with Dibden Bay designated for its nationally important collection of invertebrates including 21 nationally rare species. The plans for a 1.85km-long deep quay would have destroyed 76 hectares (188 acres) of tidal foreshore designated as of international importance for birds. Associated roads would also threaten the New Forest national park.

After being called in by the government, the then transport minister, Tony McNulty, accepted the planning inspector's recommendation to reject the proposals after a 13-month inquiry. In 2023, owners Associated British Ports refused to rule out another attempt to develop the 500-acre site but said any new planning application was "many years away". Under the new bill, mitigating for irreparable damage to protected sites caused by major infrastructure would become much simpler, making schemes such as Dibden Bay much more viable.

9. Wensum Woodlands, Norfolk. Site of a super-colony of barbastelle bats.

A mosaic of woodlands that is home to a super-colony of rare barbastelle bats, the Wensum Woodlands has long been threatened by a 3.8-mile dual carriageway that would complete a third ring-road around Norwich. A series of connected colonies, including one of more than 105 barbastelles, live either on the route or close to the proposed road. The area is being considered for designation as a SSSI by Natural England, which has previously designated sites with just 20 or 30 colonies.

In 2023, the government committed to paying for 80% of the road scheme, but cash-strapped Norfolk county council announced this year that Natural England's advice on the wildlife impacts meant it could not proceed with the £274m road, and withdrew its application. Landowners and developers have strongly pushed for the road, which they say will "unlock" land for businesses and housing. The planning and infrastructure bill is likely to revive many such "zombie" road projects.

10. Swanscombe Peninsula, Kent. A globally important place for rare invertebrates

Earlier this year, Keir Starmer claimed that plans for 15,000 new homes in Ebbsfleet had been stymied by the discovery of the rare distinguished jumping spider, and blocked by Natural England. "It's nonsense, and we'll stop it," said the prime minister. In fact, the prime minister was talking nonsense: the vast majority of the 15,000 homes are being built, but 1,300 homes planned for Swanscombe Peninsula have been blocked. The peninsula – a portion of land on the fringe of the Ebbsfleet garden city project – was designated a SSSI by Natural England in 2021 because of its globally important collection of rare invertebrates.

NEW research from The Guardian has revealed that 5,000 of England's sensitive, rare and protected natural landscapes could be under threat of being destroyed by the government's"spatial development strategies reported Emily Davison for yahoo!news.

Among the areas, which have been described as "jewels in the crown" of England, are nine locations across the London boroughs of Greenwich, Bexley and Bromley.

In Greenwich, one of the areas that could be at risk is Oxleas Woodlands, an ancient woodland dating back 8,000 years and home to a Green Chain Walk.

In Greenwich, one of the areas that could be at risk is Oxleas Woodlands. (Image: Friends of

Oxleas Woodlands)

Another Greenwich natural habitat highlighted in the research was Gilbert's Pit in Charlton, a 13-acre geological conservation review site that is part of the ancient Hanging Wood.

Two SSSIs in Bexley could also be at risk, including Abbey Wood, a 16-acre ancient woodland surrounding the remains of Lesnes Abbey. The site is also well known as a hotspot for fossil digging, with a fossil bed that locals can dig in with permission of the ranger.

Bordering Bexley and Dartford is Wansunt Pit, a geological site measuring 4.7 acres that has also been named on the list of sties being at risk. The site is of both geological and archaeological importance, exposing the Dartford Heath Gravel and with artefacts dating back over 420,000 years.

The borough of Bromley had the highest number of natural spaces at risk, with a total of five identified.

Ruxley Gravel Pit was among them and is known for being a natural habitat for waterbirds on account of its lakes and pools. Today the site is owned by the Environment Agency and makes up part of the flood defence system, being in close proximity to the River Cray.

Crofton Woods and Keston and Hayes Common were also identified, both of them boasting acres of ancient woodland with diverse species of trees.

Verging into Kent, Downe Bank is managed by the Kent Wildlife Trust, and could also be at potential risk. The site is within close proximity to the former home of Charles Darwin, Down House, and measures at 5 hectares.

High Elms Country Park in Farnborough is the largest all the identified sites, measuring at 250 acres, and neighbours Downe Bank with history dating back to Norman times.

Saltbox Hill, which makes up part of the Metropolitan Green Belt and is a rare part of the remaining downland in Biggin Hilll, was also identified as being at risk. The site is particularly significant on account of a large amount of the capital's downlands being destroyed over the last few decades.

SO, at our AGM in January there was a unanimous request for the Network to arrange visits. Rreferably mid-week evening visits.

As a result two of our Excecutive Committee members, Joanne Collins (Thorpe St Andrew) and Anna Rodriguez (Acle) arranged a mid-week evening vist to Burligham Woods for Wednesday 18 June.

It was a great opportunity, not only to enjoy the trees and general environment of

Burlingham Woods but also to see, first hand, the work of our Sentinel Treescapes Project Team.

Well ten people attended. As two of us were not Tree Wardens that meant that just eiight of our Network's Tree Wardens attended. Just 23%.

Three of you sent apoligies for absence so one must assume that 69% couldn't be bothered. So you will excuse me for not telling you what a great eveing you missed.

Jo Collins led the walk around, explaining what our team does for the Sentinel Treescapes Project and showing the tree sensors.

What Jo didn't say was just what a key part of the national Sentinel Treescapes Project she and Anna have become. It is down to those two ladies that the project has become so successful and has attracted national aclaim.

It is down to those two ladies that the national project team has been able to develop the software on which the observatiobal inspection are recorded.

Oh yes. Let's not forget that it is down to those two ladies that the sensor batteries and changed and re-charged … despite inclement weather.

Yes ladies, the Network, the Tree Council, Newcastle University, Defra, the nation … oh yes, and our trees of course … all owe you a great debt of gratitude.

Perhaps our Executve Committee should introduce a "Tree Warden of the Year" award and you have no competion.

Indeed, I'll go further. Having read through the King's Birthday Honours list I have decided to start a campaign for Joanne Collins and Anna Rodriguez to be awarded MBEs in the New Year's Honours list.

On behalf of us all ladies, thank you so very much.

SO, that's more than enough from me for this month. I hope that you've found this edition of Broadsheet to be of interest as well as informative.

Please remember that I always welcome feedback and comment … good or bad! It is, after all, youe magazine.

So have a great July and keep those trees, shrubs and hedging plants you planted last season well watered and never forget that TLC … trees love care.

All the best,

John Fleetwood

Wildlife declining in UK woods despite more tree cover

THE UK needs to dramatically improve the condition and scale of its woodlands to tackle wildlife loss, according to a major report into the state of the UK's woods and trees. This is due to the deteriorating ecological condition within UK woodlands, the Woodland Trust said in a paper published last month. The Trust found the quantity and variety of wildlife is plummeting despite a marginal rise in tree cover.

Abigail Bunker, director of conservation and external affairs at the Woodland Trust, said findings show the UK's "once rich, complex woodlands have become simpler and less biodiverse over time".

While woodland cover has increased from 13.2% of UK land area in 2020 to 13.5% in 2024, just 45% of the Government's woodland creation targets have been met by the UK over those years, the report said.

To hit the UK's net zero targets, the authors cited the Climate Change Committee's assessment that current tree planting rates need to double by the end of this decade.

Pulling together a range of different scientific studies, the report outlines findings that point towards a significant loss in woodland wildlife in recent decades. These include a 47% decline in butterflies between 1990 and 2022, as well as a 37% reduction in the number of woodland birds in the past 50 years, and 15% in the past five.

The population of dormice in surveyed woodland fell by 70% between 2000 and 2022, and the richness of different plant species has reduced by 22% over the past 50 years, more research found.

Furthermore, only one in 50 native woodlands were found to have more than one veteran tree per 200,000m^2. Between 2010 and 2020, 393 veteran trees were reported to be "lost" in the ancient tree inventory, meaning they had fallen, been felled or destroyed. While approximately one quarter of all forest species depend on deadwood for their life-cycles, almost half (46%) have no deadwood at all, it was also found.

Ms Bunker said: "UK woodlands lack open spaces, such as glades, which allow light to

reach the forest floor and young trees to grow. There are also fewer older trees, which, along with their soils, lock in carbon from the atmosphere. Alarmingly, many British wood-lands have very few, if any, ancient and veteran trees left."

Other threats identified in the paper include 121 different species of pests which have been introduced to UK native trees, many from the international plant trade.

The report predicts that climate change will allow these, and potentially other pest species to further thrive, to the detriment of British trees, with the UK spending an estimated £919.9 million per year managing only six of these pests.

The Woodland Trust also warned that healthy woodlands are key to UK plans for tackling and mitigating the effects of climate change, such as flooding and sequestering carbon. Sensitive management of woodlands can help to make them more resilient to the escalating suite of threats, it added.

Elsewhere, the report focused on the impact woodlands have on wellbeing and communities. It highlighted poll findings that suggest nine in 10 people agree woodland biodiversity has a positive impact through features such birdsong or the sound of rustling leaves.

The richest woodlands for wellbeing were also found to be very unevenly distributed across the UK, with lower value woodlands found in more deprived areas

Laura Chow, head of charities at People's Postcode Lottery, whose players supported the report, said: "Trees and woodlands are a huge part of our nation's wellbeing and heritage, so it's fantastic our players were able to support this important report, which uses such a breadth of scientific evidence to reveal what we need to do to ensure UK woodlands survive and thrive for people and nature."

Ms Bunker said: "We are calling on the Government and others to invest in the management of our woodlands, so that people and wildlife can experience the benefits of these precious ecosystems, particularly in mitigating the effects of climate change.

"It's also vital that the government start hitting their tree-planting targets, so that there is time to grow the veteran trees of the future and help shape woodlands to better withstand challenges like new diseases, or rising temperatures."

A Defra spokesperson said: "Trees are at the forefront of our plans to reduce emissions and help reverse biodiversity loss. "This Government is investing up to £400 million in tree planting and peatland restoration over the next two years, and have announced the Western Forest as the first new National Forest in 30 years.

"We're also taking action to bring more existing woodlands into sustainable management, helping to restore nature-rich habitats and support wildlife."

‘New hope’: ash trees rapidly evolving resistance to dieback, study reveals

By Damian Carrington, Environment Editor for The Guardian

NEW generations of wild ash trees are rapidly evolving resistance to the fungus devastating their numbers, scientists have discovered. The discovery gives hope and shows that allowing the natural regeneration of woodlands is vital to enabling this evolution to take place. However, it remains too early to say if the development of resistance in the ash trees can outpace the destruction being caused by the ash dieback fungus.

The genetic analysis is also a scientific breakthrough. It is the first convincing proof of a prediction made by Charles Darwin that significant changes in organisms can result from natural selection driving very many small changes, not just from one or two obvious ones.

Ash dieback is caused by the invasive *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* fungus, which was first identified in the UK in 2012 and is also killing trees across Europe. It has killed millions in the UK and is expected to wipe out up to 85% of the older, non-resistant ash trees, incurring costs of £15bn.

Previous studies found apparent resistance in some ash saplings but the new study gives in-depth genetic information that could help breeding programmes to support the natural recovery of ash trees.

“Our new findings give us new hope,” said Prof Richard Buggs, at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and Queen Mary University of London (QMUL): “Elm trees have struggled to evolve to Dutch elm disease, but ash produce an abundance of seedlings upon which natural selection can act when they are still young. Through the death of millions of ash trees, a more resistant population of ash is appearing.”

Prof Richard Nichols, also at QMUL, said: “We have to be cautious. We can’t say the ash is saved, but we are in a position to say it’s looking promising. We are watching evolution happen and what’s remarkable is that it’s happening so quickly, in a single generation.” One ash tree can produce 10,000 genetically distinct seeds in one season, leading to scores of saplings.

The study, published in the journal Science, compared the DNA of trees that were already growing before ash dieback’s arrival with younger trees that were established after.

The new trees have to grow up through the leaf mould where the fungus replicates and the researchers found that about 30% of these were killed by ash dieback, providing a strong driving force for evolution. “Only the fittest survive. Those that made it through that intense early episode of selection,” said Nichols.

Previous genetic work had identified thousands of locations in ash DNA that appeared to either protect the trees from dieback, or make them more vulnerable. The scientists recorded subtle changes at these locations, showing the younger generation

possessed greater resistance than their predecessors.

This showed that the DNA changes predicted whether saplings were more likely to flourish or die and therefore demonstrated that Darwinian evolution by natural selection was taking place.

Ash dieback kills trees slowly and Nichols said the research showed the best strategy was to keep as many trees alive as possible to allow their offspring to evolve. Felling and destroying infected trees would mean important genetic variability was lost.

Rebecca Gosling, of the Woodland Trust, which owns Marden Park woods in Surrey, where the study took place, said: “The findings highlight how vital it is to support natural regeneration in woodlands, furthering our understanding of how to best manage our ash woodlands.”

“However, natural selection alone may not be enough to produce fully resistant trees,” said Dr Carey Metheringham, at QMUL. “The existing genetic variation in the ash population may be too low, and as the trees become scarcer, the rate of selection could slow.”

Therefore, human interventions may also be required to support ash tree recovery, the researchers said. This could include selective breeding for resistant varieties, cross-breeding with Asian ash trees, which evolved with the fungus and are therefore highly resistant, or even gene editing.

EDITOR’S COMMENT. As we learned after Dutch elm disease ravage our countryside, it is essential that we retain as many ash trees as possible.

Yes, safety must come first. There can be no argument against that. However, many infected trees in the countryside, parks and public gardens could be cordoned off for safety and retained in order that their offspring may evolve, growing up through the leaf mould where the fungus replicates.

We are in danger of allowing ash dieback to become an excuse for felling trees. We must not allow that. If we do what would be next? Removing all trees within 50m of a road in case someone crashes their car into one of them?

No. It’s time for some radical (sensible!) thinking. To the revolution people!

Oak processionary moth spotted in Norfolk

By Dan Grimmer for Eastern Daily Press

THE invasive oak processionary moth (OPM) which poses a health risk to people and pets when in caterpillar form has been spotted in Norfolk. Officials at Norfolk County Council are monitoring trees in the county, after sightings of individual oak processionary moths. While breeding populations have not been found in Norfolk yet, public health chiefs at County Hall fear it is just a matter of time before they are, because climate change is creating the ideal conditions for the pest.

As reported in last month's Broadsheet, experts are concerned because the caterpillars of the moth and their nests of white, silken, webbing contain hairs which can trigger severe allergic reactions including skin rashes, eye irritation, and respiratory issues.

June to August is the greatest risk period, when the caterpillars emerge to feed before turning into adult moths.

The Forestry Commission says people should not touch the caterpillars or their webs, or try to dispose of nests themselves.

OPM *Thaumetopoea processionea*, is native to southern Europe, but was accidentally introduced to London in 2006. Since then, populations of the moth have been gradually migrating north-wards.

At a meeting of County Hall's Conservative-controlled cabinet on 2 June councillors discussed a report about the impacts of climate change, which included a section about the worrying spread of the moth.

The report stated: "As temperatures rise, Norfolk's climate is becoming more hospitable for the species. Given their current northward migration, the team estimates that there will be breeding populations in Norfolk in the next two to five years."

Council leader Kay Mason Billig said: "I am slightly concerned when I see this report about the oak processionary moth. I know we see it on the continent. I have certainly seen it in places like Portugal. Everyone there knows how to deal with them and knows what it means. We're told not to touch them, not to go near them.

"They might look nice and furry and sort of strokable, but their hairs can irritate the skin quite intensely. I know it doesn't necessarily affect everyone, but I would suggest, if you see these things, don't let your children or your dogs anywhere near them, because it can have quite detrimental effects."

The Forestry Commission urges people to to report any sightings via the TreeAlert portal or by email to opm@forestrycommission.gov.uk

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5,000-year-old tree found in the Fens

By Chris Bishop for yahoo!news

AN ancient oak older than Seahenge has been found buried in a bog in the Fens. The 5,000-year-old specimen was unearthed during restoration work at the National Trust's Wicken Fen nature reserve, near Mildenhall.

Areas of peatland have been re-wetted to preserve their unique habitats, improve flood defence and prevent carbon stored in the soil from leaching into the atmosphere.

While work was in progress, the bog oak was found at an area known as Spinney Bank, on Burwell Fen. Experts from the Cambridge Archaeological Unit used tree-ring analysis to date the tree. They said it began growing in 2894BC, lived for 222 years, pre-dating the start of peat formation, linking the site to a dry Late Neolithic woodland.

The find is older than Seahenge, the ancient timber circle found at Holme, near Hunstanton in 1998, whose oak stump and ring of posts were felled in 2049BC.

Mark Knight, from Cambridge Archaeological Unit, said: "This discovery exemplifies that wonderful relationship between depth and time, which comes with exploring the peat fen. Traces of past landscapes abound beneath its surface, and what's more, they come beautifully preserved and in clear chronological order."

Ellis Selway, peatland restoration manager with the National Trust, said: "Peat holds more than just carbon, it holds stories. Discovering a tree that took root nearly 5,000 years ago is a humbling reminder of how much history is preserved in these ancient landscapes. This kind of insight deepens our appreciation of what peatlands can teach us about the past, even as we look to restore them for the future."

Rising water levels after the last ice age gradually killed off the trees, which then fell into what became a peat bog, preserving them for thousands of years. Preserved by the acidic peat, their trunks became stained black.

After the 17th century, when the Fens were drained the peat began shrinking as the land dried out, bringing them closer to the surface.

‘I feel as if we could be in Scandinavia’: exploring the Norfolk that time forgot

By Patrick Barkham for The Guardian

BRECKLAND is a little-known part of England that sings with peace and rare wildlife. It would undoubtedly be a national park if so much of it hadn’t been commandeered by the military, but there is a place to stay on its borders. The small white signs with red lettering are dotted through the landscape: “Military training area – keep out”. It adds to the eerie feel of unusually quiet roads and twisted Scots pines, which gather the long summer dusk around them.

However, when we arrive at our accommodation on an old farm bordering a forbidden area where the British army conduct secretive manoeuvres, the whole place sings with peace.

A red kite cavorts in the breeze over handsome parkland, a cuckoo calls and, down by the Wissey, a gin-clear chalk stream, reed warblers chunter from deep within the rushes.

If ever a region deserved to be its own county, it’s Breckland. This is a unique swath of south Norfolk and north Suffolk dominated by sandy heathland. It has an unusually dry climate more typical of central Europe and is notable for its rare plants and birds.

Once an area dominated by inland sand dunes and commercial rabbit warrens, since the 20th century it’s been planted with the pines and conifers of Thetford forest. These woods offer a wealth of walks but there is also the vast Stanta army training area, 30,000 acres in size, where people cannot go and other species thrive.

Breckland is a stronghold for charismatic endangered birds such as the goggle-eyed stone-curlew, dashing forest-dwelling goshawks and enigmatic, nocturnal nightjars. It’s home to ultra-rare and fantastically named plants and invertebrates, from the prostrate perennial knawel to the wormwood moonshiner beetle. It has every conservation designation going and would undoubtedly be a national park if so much of it hadn’t been commandeered by the military.

This land is usually overlooked by visitors whizzing through en route to the Norfolk coast or Norwich. It’s perhaps not helped by an absence of pretty towns and fancy restaurants (although well-heeled Bury St Edmunds on its southern edge boasts the Michelin-starred Pea Porridge). I live 30 miles away and I’ve never brought my family for a holiday here, until now.

My children immediately take to Bodney Hall Farm, where we are staying in a beautifully renovated cottage, the smaller of two high-end self-catering options. Guests are given the run of the 40-acre grounds and gardens which roll down to the River Wissey and feature a magical mix of interesting trees, formal planting, wildflowers and wildlife.

We stroll the banks of this private stretch of the Wissey. Since relocating from London in 2016, owners Henry and Anna Sands have been restoring the river, encouraging natural wiggles and bringing back the natural clarity of the water as it races over shingle, providing homes for dashing inhabitants including wild trout and kingfishers.

It’s possible to swim in the river but there’s also a jetty for easy access into a large Wissey-fed pond enveloped by rushes and willows. We

savour a long evening swim to the soundtrack of cuckoos and reed warblers and, to my amazement, even a booming bittern. The water is sweet and fresh and I feel as if we could be in Scandinavia, especially when we warm ourselves in our private woodfired hot tub as the first stars emerge. I’m hoping for a strange drone or red flare from the military training area, but all is quiet.

I rise early for a 5.45am swim and just miss an otter. Henry Sands, who is up even earlier, spots it and there’s just enough time for a morning hot tub before we head to nearby Grime’s Graves, the largest known and best excavated flint mine in the country.

Here, 4,500 years ago, late Neolithic people dug up to 1,000 mines up to 13 metres below ground and used antler picks to extract flints embedded in the chalk. The flint was particularly high quality and exported across the country, making specialist tools and weapons. The site is a large grassy clearing filled with the strange lumps and pits that are old, long-filled-in mineshafts. The air is filled with the song of dozens of skylarks.

The English Heritage visitor centre is pleasingly low-key and quiet, naturally, with “please touch” signs so we can feel the weight of flints and the sharp edges of knapped stone. My kids enjoy brandishing replica axes before we move to the real highlight: descending into a nine-metre mineshaft excavated by archeologists in 1914. They found the remains of antler picks, pottery, animal bones and neolithic bats – and Daubenton’s bats still roost in the excavated shafts where it is a constant 8°C.

“It smells nice down here,” says my son Ted as we descend the steel staircase. The scent is cool, damp stone. At the bottom, we can crawl on the chalk a short way into some of the horizontal excavations. It’s a vivid experience, a portal into another time.

Dark holes is a theme of our day because we next head to Oxburgh Hall, a stately home that has a priest’s hole which I remember from childhood was a thrilling portal into Tudor terror.

On our way, we drop in on Foulden Common, one of a plethora of tranquil but rare wildlife-packed nature reserves including Weeting Heath and Lakenheath Fen. Thetford forest boasts several good country parks and there’s a multitude of cycle rides, swims (the Little Ouse is another gorgeous small river) and walks, including the long-distance Peddars Way on the old Roman road leading from Thetford to the north-west Norfolk coast.

Oxburgh is a red-brick Tudor palace surrounded by a fine moat which must be one of the most picturesque National Trust properties. The hall was built by Sir Edmund Bedingfeld around 1476 and the 10th baronet still lives in a wing of the house. The rest of his ancestral home is open to the public, and the rooms are filled with vast oil portraits, ornate furniture,

ancient books and even leather wallpaper, which was amusingly purchased secondhand from Spain by thrifty Victorian aristocrats.

The priest's hole was built up a tiny staircase, below a brick-topped iron hatch, so the Bedingfield family's Catholic priest could be safely concealed during the persecution of the Catholics that saw the family fall from favour when they refused to renounce their faith. It is not known how much action the hole saw, but this tiny claustrophobic stone cell may have saved the life of a priest or three.

Unfortunately, after a visitor became stuck in the hole (it's oddly much harder to get out than in) we're no longer allowed inside and have to make do with peering down the hatch and watching a video of a stressed (actor) priest fretting inside.

After a late lunch at the Bedingfeld Arms, with swifts screaming as they circle the 1783 pub, I take an evening excursion to another unique nature reserve: Thompson Common. The map reveals this to be another place of strange indentations in the land: a profusion of nearly 500 pingos, small ponds formed when subterranean mounds of ice thawed and the soil slumped down at the end of the last ice age.

It's a bewitchingly unusual place, home to rare dragonflies and the very rare pool frog, which became extinct in the 1990s but has been successfully reintroduced from Sweden. The males can be heard "singing" in late spring, via a pair of white inflatable sacs like airbags either side of their head.

There's an eight-mile circular pingo walking trail for a full day out but I took a shorter potter through the reserve. The frogs are doing well thanks to restoration work by Norfolk Wildlife Trust which has seen the excavation and revival of a dozen "ghost" pingoes, with many ponds filled in during a century of agricultural "improvement" and intensification.

I'd like to say we enjoyed a fine evening of the frog chorus but there's nothing melodic about the groaning croak which sounds like a duck with laryngitis. They don't call on my visit; instead I hear the bugling song of a crane from somewhere in the undergrowth. It's another notable experience in this fascinating land, which is much the finer for its all-enveloping strangeness.

Accommodation was provided by Bodney Hall Farm,which has a cottage (sleeps 4) from £300 a night and lodge (sleeps 12). Grimes Graves (English Heritage) is open daily 10am-5pm (family up to five from £20.70). Oxburgh Hall (National Trust) open 10.30am–3pm; gardens 9.30am–5pm (family up to five from £32.50). Foulden Common and Thompson Common (Norfolk Wildlife Trust) are free to enter.

Warning over 'dirty secret' of toxic chemicals on farmers' fields

By Jonah Fisher, BBC Environment Correspondent

SUCCESSIVE governments have failed to deal with the threat posed by spreading sewage sludge containing toxic chemicals on farmers' fields, a former chair of the Environment Agency has told the BBC. About 3.5 million tonnes of sludge - the solid waste produced from human sewage at treatment plants - is put on fields every year as cheap fertiliser.

However, campaigners have long warned about a lack of regulation and that sludge could be contaminated with cancer-linked chemicals, microplastics, and other industrial pollutants.

Emma Howard Boyd, who led the EA from 2016 to 2022, says the agency had been aware since 2017 that the sludge can be contaminated with substances, including 'forever chemicals'.

"Forever chemicals" or PFAS are a group of synthetic chemicals which come from things like non-stick saucepans. They don't degrade quickly in nature and have been linked to cancer.

Documents seen by BBC News suggest the water industry is now increasingly concerned that farmers could stop accepting the sludge to spread and that water firms have been lobbying regulators and making contingency plans in case rules change.

Ms Howard Boyd says efforts to update rules, which date back to 1989, to include new contaminants were "continually frustrated by the lack of ministerial appetite to deal with this issue." In a public letter signed by more than 20 others, external she called on the current Environment Minister Steve Reed, to act now.

The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) told the BBC regulations around sludge spreading are being looked at. The water companies trade body Water UK told the BBC they were aware of the concerns but that no legal standards for contaminants had been set by the government.

Unlike the cleaned water that is discharged from wastewater treatment plants, the sewage sludge, or biosolid as the industry calls it, is considered "exempted waste". That means the

treatment focuses mainly on killing bacteria and testing for heavy metals in the sludge.

There is no routine testing for chemicals, including "forever chemicals", which have been developed over the last three decades and are getting into the sewage network from both from domestic and industrial users.

"I think the big concern is because these substances (forever chemicals) are so persistent they'll stay around in the soil for hundreds, if not thousands of years," says Alistair Boxall, professor of environmental science at York University.

"It may be in 10 years' time that we start understanding that these molecules are causing harm," he said. "Then we're going to be in a bit of a mess, because we'll be in a situation where we'll have soils in the UK that will have residues of these molecules in them, and at the moment we have no way of cleaning that up."

In 2022, the US state of Maine became the first state to ban the spreading of sludge contaminated with "forever chemicals" after high levels were found in water, soil and crops.

Reports and emails shown to the BBC by Greenpeace's Unearthed investigation unit, external and obtained using Freedom of Information Act requests, reveal the water industry is acutely aware that attitudes are changing and is both lobbying government and making contingency plans.

The companies are concerned on two fronts: that general rules regarding the spreading of sludge on land (so called Farming Rules for Water) may soon be tightened due to fears that it's polluting watercourses and that farmers' concerns about the chemicals in the sludge might make them unwilling to put it on their fields.

The water industry has already commissioned reports looking at what might happen if the spreading is restricted. One of them predicts that the "most likely" scenario is a shortfall of about three million hectares in land needed to spread the sludge. The water industry says that would lead to them either incinerating it or putting it into landfill. Both options would bring extra costs that would be passed on to billpayers.

Reshima Sharma from Greenpeace said "This investigation is yet more proof that we can't trust the privatised water companies to deal with waste responsibly. So long as they can get away with it, they will just pass any problems on to our countryside and pocket the money they should be investing in solutions."

In 2017 a report commissioned by the Environment Agency found that sludge contained potentially harmful substances, including microplastics and "forever chemicals", at levels that "may present a risk to human health" and may create soil that is "unsuitable for agriculture".

It said that "perhaps the biggest risk to the landbank" is from the spreading of physical contaminants such as microplastics into agricultural soil. The report also said it had heard evidence from EA staff indicating that some

companies may be using wastewater treatment plants to "mask disposal of individual high risk waste streams not suitable for land spreading".

"EA colleagues were continually frustrated by the lack of ministerial appetite to deal with this issue," Ms Howard Boyd, who was chair of the regulator at the time, told the BBC in an email.

"EA proposals since 2020 to reform the regulations were treated with a lack of urgency, hampered by delays in passing requests up to the relevant ministers for decision-making, and a consistent failure by successive secretaries of state to take the matter seriously."

The letter Ms Howard Boyd has signed jointly signed was organised by campaign group Fighting Dirty. It calls the contents of the sewage sludge a "dirty secret" and demands that Environment Secretary Steve Reed take action.

Sewage sludge is cheaper than other fertilisers, and can sometimes be free, though farmers may have to spread it themselves.

Julie Lewis-Thompson tells me it has "the smell of death".

"It lingers in the air for somewhere around two to three weeks," she tells me when I go to visit in her home on Dartmoor in the south-west of England.

She's gathered together a group of neighbours who've all had direct experience of sewage sludge being spread near their properties. Before we start recording there's a long discussion about whether they should speak out for fear of upsetting nearby farmers and the contractors who spread the sludge, who are often local.

Many of their concerns are about the smell and about potential contamination of their water sources. One young woman leaves in tears saying it had made her sick.

"The fact it's spread for free ought to raise a few eyebrows," Richard Smallwood, a local beef and sheep farmer who doesn't use sewage sludge, tells me.

"If we're starting to produce food on grassland and arable land which is filled up to the ear holes with PFAS compounds and nano and micro-plastics that find their way into the food chain I think my job's over before I begin."

With the alternatives to sewage sludge disposal costly, there's broad agreement that the recycling of sludge into fertiliser has to be made to work.

"In principle, I think using properly treated human sewage to spread on the land, put it back into the ground for growing food in the UK, that's the right thing to do," Cook, writer and broadcaster, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, tells me at his small farm and café in east Devon. He's also signed the protest letter to the environment minister.

Mr Fearnley-Whittingstall says "We know it's happening. Our farmers are rightly worried. We've got to take action. Government's got to take action. That means regulations are not voluntary regulations or guidelines, [they should be] legally enforceable regulations that stop these pollutants getting into the sewage and onto our land."

Despite the concerns there are still plenty of farmers who see the sludge as a cheap way to fertilise their fields.

Will Oliver is on the National Farmers Union Crops Board. He says he applies about 800 tonnes of sewage sludge every year to fields where he grows maize destined for animal feed.

The water company provides the sludge for free and Mr Oliver says he's careful how much he uses and trusts the company to make sure it doesn't have chemical contamination.

"If we can be sensible with how it's used and spread on the land, it can be positive for farmers and for the water companies," he says. "I'm doing it because it's adding value. It's improving our organic matter. It's benefitting the crop that I'm growing, and it's reducing my spend on bagged fertilisers."

The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs did not contest anything the former chair of the EA Ms Howard Boyd told the BBC.

A spokesperson said "We need to see the safe and sustainable use of sludge in agriculture to help clean up our waterways. The Independent Water Commission will explore a range of issues, including the regulatory framework for sludge spreading, and we continue to work closely with the Environment Agency, water companies and farmers in this area."

Water UK represents the water companies of England and Wales, and a spokesperson said: "Although there are some concerns that some bioresources may contain contaminants, such as microplastics and forever chemicals (PFAS), there are no legal standards for them and, in some cases, no agreed assessment techniques."

"Any standards and techniques are a matter for the government and the regulator and need to be based on firm evidence and detailed scientific research."

The Wollemi pine, a 200-million-year-old survivor from the Jurassic period, is now the most protected tree on Earth

By Jordan Joseph, Earth.com staff writer

BENEATH the sandstone cliffs of Wollemi National Park, an unassuming evergreen has stirred curiosity among plant lovers and conservationists alike. It looks like any other conifer from a distance, but it carries a backstory that stretches to the age of dinosaurs. Scientists only realized its significance in 1994, when a group trekking along a narrow canyon stumbled upon it. Among them was David Noble, a field officer from the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The Araucariaceae family, which includes the Wollemi pine, traces its lineage to roughly 200 million years ago. The tree's thick, textured bark and distinctive foliage link directly to fossils from the Jurassic era.

Botanists were surprised to see this tree thriving in a sheltered gorge after so many centuries. A then-Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens remarked that the Wollemi pine was the "botanical equivalent of finding a small dinosaur still alive on Earth."

This species remains critically endangered according to the International Union for

Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Fewer than 100 mature individuals exist in the wild, and they are at high risk from events like wildfires and invasive pathogens.

Strict biosecurity steps are in place to keep these precious trees safe. Any person granted access is required to undergo decontamination to guard against *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, a soil-borne menace known for devastating vulnerable plant populations.

Conservation organizations recognized early on that establishing the Wollemi pine outside its habitat was essential.

These efforts spurred research on growing seedlings in botanic gardens and even in private homes, reducing the urge for poaching and building global awareness.

The Wollemi pine's rarity has made it a target for illegal collectors. Authorities have reported attempted thefts and unauthorized visits, prompting tighter surveillance and enforcement in the protected area.

To reduce black-market demand, officials expanded legal propagation through licensed nurseries in the early 2000s. This strategy gave collectors a legal way to obtain the tree while protecting the wild population from being raided.

Its wild population remains under tight surveillance. Rangers keep watch for any sign of shifting climate patterns that might harm these old-growth survivors, with particular attention to droughts and fires.

In January 2020, a heroic firefighting effort spared a cluster of Wollemi pines from an intense blaze, underscoring the dedication of those who safeguard it.

Despite the challenges, young trees continue to be distributed to botanical institutions worldwide. Some specialists estimate that a few could live for nearly 1,000 years, adding another layer of fascination to this enduring story.

The Wollemi pine's survival strategy may offer clues for climate change adaptation in other species. Its ability to persist through massive shifts in Earth's environment makes it a valuable subject for studying long-term ecological resilience.

Researchers are exploring how the pine's physiology handles temperature extremes and water stress. Insights from its ancient genome could guide future efforts to protect modern forests facing worsening climate instability.

Scientists at Kew's Millennium Seed Bank are storing seeds from mature Wollemi pines to secure a genetic backup. These seeds are preserved under carefully controlled conditions to ensure they remain viable for decades.

In addition to seed banking, tissue culture and cloning efforts are underway to maintain genetic diversity. By using multiple propagation techniques, researchers aim to prevent a genetic bottleneck that could leave the species vulnerable to future disease or environmental change.

The Wollemi pine's unexpected reappearance has challenged long-held beliefs about extinction. Scientists now recognize that some species thought lost may still survive in remote or unexplored regions.

This discovery has encouraged new exploration strategies in biodiversity hotspots. Conservationists are investing in advanced surveying tools like remote sensing and environmental DNA to uncover other hidden survivors.

Vigilance urged as warm and dry spring increases tree pest risk

Forestry Commission press release dated 5 June 2025

WOODLAND managers, landowners and the forestry sector are on Thursday 5 June being encouraged to increase their vigilance against the tree pest *Ips typographus*. The warning comes following a record dry spring, and the heavy rain and waterlogging of last year, which has left lowland spruce, particularly those on clay soils, at heightened risk of stress, potentially increasing their susceptibility to beetle infestation.

***Ips typographus*, also known as the eight-toothed spruce bark beetle, is a serious pest of spruce trees in Europe which was first identified in the UK in 2018. It prefers stressed or dying trees but under the right conditions it can attack healthy trees and has the potential to cause significant damage to Great Britain's forestry and timber industries.**

We are now entering a heightened risk period as it is the beginning of the annual season of blow over of beetles from mainland Europe.

The Forestry Commission, including Forest Research, lead a robust and comprehensive management programme to manage the pest which, if left unmanaged, could leave an estimated 725,000 hectares of spruce at risk of infestation with an estimated total value of £2.9 billion.

Defra Chief Plant Health Officer Professor Nicola Spence said "I am urging foresters and landowners to really be on their guard as we enter the heightened risk period for *Ips typographus.*

"We need maximum vigilance from all landowners and land managers as temperatures rise. The dry spring following last year's wet summer has created ideal conditions for the beetle. The co-operation of the forestry sector has been vital in our efforts to keep the pest at bay and we need that to continue."

Dr Anna Brown, Director of Forest Services at the Forestry Commission, said "Continued vigilance to the threat posed by *Ips typograp*hus is needed following the recent rise in temperatures and we're urging landowners and land managers to report any sightings immediately via Tree Alert to help reduce the risk of the pest spreading. The beetle prefers stressed or dying trees but it can attack healthy trees if the conditions are right.

"The help of the sector is vital in the successful management of this pest. Landowners, agents and timber processors should continue to comply with ongoing restrictions for movement of spruce material and methods of forest operations in the Demarcated Area."

A grant is available within the Proactive Spruce Removal Area as part of the Tree Health Pilot and the Forestry Commission plans to provide a new offer to further support removal of spruce later this year.

Defra will host a workshop later this year, in collaboration with UK Agri-Tech Centre, to continue to exchange knowledge with the international plant health community on innovative and technological solutions for managing bark beetle pests.

The risk is highest within the 'Demarcated Area' currently in place in parts of the South East and East of England. This area is designated by the Forestry Commission to manage outbreaks of the beetle, with restrictions in place.

All outbreak sites are subject to robust eradication action in line with our Ips typographus contingency plan and a Demarcated Area is in place restricting the planting, movement and felling of susceptible material. Action includes destroying infested material as soon as possible to disrupt the lifecycle of the pest, preventing it from developing, emerging and dispersing. This is alongside ongoing wider environment surveillance to identify new outbreak sites.

Material susceptible to infestation by the pest - that is, with weakened defences, like windthrow and harvesting residues - is prioritised for removal, to prevent further infestation by any beetles remaining on the site.

Lastly, healthy spruce is also felled and removed from the area immediately surrounding the original infestation as a precautionary measure (on varying timescales, depending on the initial density of beetles in the infested area).

Following the removal of spruce, pheromone traps are placed on the site for three years during the insect flight period, to capture any beetles concealed in the leaf litter.

A map indicating the 'Proactive Spruce Removal area' is available via this link.

Click here to read a blog outlining research taking place into the susceptibility of different spruce trees.

An updated Outbreak Sites Summary Map is available via this link

Updated guidance is available via this link on movement restrictions for spruce within the *Ips typographus* Demarcated Area and guidance is also available on the process of being issued with a Statutory Plant Health Notice if you have an Ips infestation.

Trees of Britain and Ireland by Jon Stokes

An author interview by Jo Graeser for the NHBS Conservation Hub

THIS comprehensive guide to tree identification features over 3,000 photos and illustrations of more than 300 native and common non-native species. It includes detailed keys, distribution maps and seasonal charts, alongside ecological insights, habitat information and conservation advice on each species, making it an invaluable resource for those interested in British and Irish tree species.

Jon Stokes is one of Britain's leading tree conservationists and has been studying the world of trees for over thirty years. He is the Director of Trees, Science and Research at a UK based charity The Tree Council, which aims to bring everyone together for the love of trees, and has authored or co-author ten books focusing on trees.

We recently spoke to Jon about Trees of Britain and Ireland, where he told us how he decided which species to include in this book, what his hopes are for the future conservation of our native trees and more.

How did you first become interested in tree biology and ecology, and why did you decide to write the latest WILDGuides identification book?

I have always been fascinated by trees. I love their huge size, their great age and their amazing ability to live for centuries in one spot, coping with everything the world throws at them. To truly understand trees, however, I believe it is vital to understand the other species that depend on them. Oaks, for example, support more than 2,000 other species.

When the opportunity arose to write the WILDGuides tree book, it felt like an amazing opportunity to produce something new. A book that not only allowed the identification of all our diverse and varied native trees and shrubs, but one which also described the ecology of the trees and some of the species which live within them.

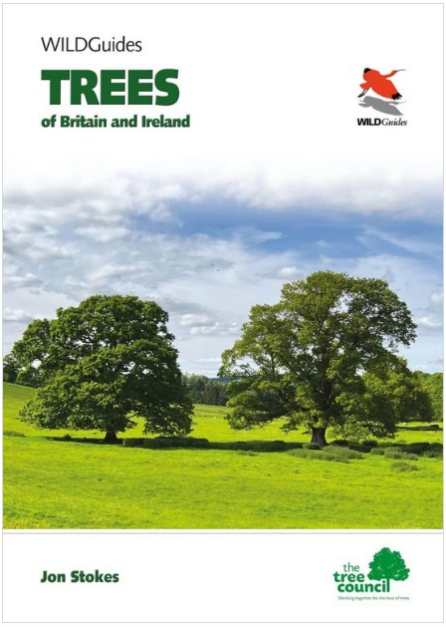
What was the greatest challenge you faced when writing this guide, and did you have any specific issues in relation to seasonality?

One of the many challenges in producing this book was our desire to photograph flowers, leaves, fruit and winter twigs to show how to identify trees all year round. This obviously meant returning to each species a number of times, in all seasons, in all weathers, across the length and breadth of the country.

We also wanted to show trees in their natural environments. All of which just made the project a little more complex! Despite the challenges, it was a joyful journey of discovery which took me from the top of Ben Lawers in Scotland; to sea level in Cornwall and Ireland; from sand dunes to heathland; from dense woodland to ancient wood pasture, and occasionally to some very scary cliff edges, looking for Whitebeams.

Trees of Britain and Ireland provides a comprehensive overview of the interdependent relationships between trees and a variety of plant, animal, fungal, and lichen species. Why did you think it was so important to highlight these relationships, and how did you decide which additional species to include?

The web of life that surrounds our trees is



truly astonishing, from tiny wasps to bats, from fungi to Ospreys. They all live in and on trees. Selecting the range of species to illustrate was difficult and, of course, there was also a bit of personal preference in the final choices! In some cases, the selection process was very difficult. To my surprise, the biodiversity of some species, like Wild Cherry, doesn't appear to be well studied, Something I hadn't realised until working on this book.

It was evident throughout the book that this is a clear, easily digestible guide suitable for readers of all abilities. How important do you think nature accessibility and education is for future generations?

I have had the pleasure of spending my working life engaging people with nature. From guided walks, to lectures and talks, I love showing people new aspects of the world around us. Life is fascinating and every day is a school day. For example: Why are leaves green? How do trees grow? Why is that tree, that shape? These are the questions that enthral me daily.

I guess this is a long-winded way of saying that I believe learning about nature is vital to all of us, all the time, and at any age. I hope this book sparks an interest in learning more about my beloved trees. I hope it sparks a desire to go out and explore other aspects of our beautiful islands and the wealth of wildlife we have here.

What patterns did you notice whilst researching conservation status in the UK, and what are your hopes for the future conservation and protection of our native trees and plants?

This is a really interesting question. I now realise that, before researching this book, I hadn't really thought about the conservation status of many of our trees and shrubs. Yet, Britain and Ireland actually have many rare and globally endangered species growing exclusively here, like many of the endemic Whitebeams and the Wild Cotoneaster. Our knowledge of our rare trees is sometimes scant. In the last twelve months, new information has emerged about our elm trees, suggesting there may be new and rare elm species hiding in plain sight.

So, what are my hopes for the future of these rare species? Well, if nothing else, the development of the book allowed me to clearly articulate the importance of these rare trees in my work. More importantly, I hope a better understanding of the importance of these rare trees will allow better protection to be developed for these globally rare species growing in these islands.

What's taking up your time at the moment? Are you working on any other books or projects that we can hear about?

In terms of projects, there is one current Tree Council project that is very important to me. This project draws on work undertaken twenty years ago when, with my fellow authors and photographers, we had the privilege of writing a number of books on our 'Heritage Trees'. Trees that are as important to the nation as some of our great stately homes and castles. From 2000-year-old yews, to astonishing old broadleaved trees like the Bowthorpe Oak, we featured a range of these iconic trees to show the amazing living heritage we have in Britain and Ireland.

Now 20 years on, we are revisiting the trees to see how they have fared over the last two decades and the results of this will be published later in the summer. It's already clear that while some of the trees have thrived over this time, others have not done so well. Our aim is for this project to lead to the development of new guidance on how to better protect our most important trees, to ensure that we can marvel at these 'Green Monuments' and hear their stories for many decades to come.

Follow this link to purchaseTrees of Britain and Ireland at the price of £19.99.

Double record breaker: Spring 2025 is warmest and sunniest on UK record

Met Office press release

THE UK, and all four nations, have all recorded their warmest spring for mean temperature since the series began in 1884, surpassing the previous record from 2024. This season also outshone the rest, claiming the title of sunniest spring on record for the UK, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, with England recording its second sunniest spring since sunshine records began in 1910.

To put this into context, Spring 2025 is now the fourth sunniest season overall for the UK, with only three summers sunnier since 1910.

The remarkable season unfolded month by month, beginning with a record-breaking sunny March that set the tone, with above-average temperatures and significantly reduced rainfall. April 2025 continued the trend as the UK's sunniest April on record, maintaining the warm and dry pattern. May rounded off the season as the second sunniest May on record for the UK, with temperatures again exceeding the average.

This spring's mean temperature of 9.5°C surpassed the long-term climatological average by 1.4°C, making it the warmest spring since the series began in 1884. It's worth noting that eight of the ten warmest UK springs have occurred since the year 2000, and the three warmest springs have all occurred since 2017, a sign of our changing climate.

All four nations also recorded their highest spring mean temperature, with Northern Ireland and Scotland recording notably high temperat-ures, up 1.6°C on average. For N Ireland, this meant surpassing the previous long-standing warmest average spring temperature, set back in 1893.

Daytime temperatures were also particularly remarkable. The UK surpassed its previous maximum daytime temperature record by a substantial margin, recording 14.6°C this year compared to the previous record of 14°C set in 1893. Now that this has been surpassed, there is only one temperature record for the UK for minimum, mean or maximum temperatures that was set in the 19th Century - the joint-highest maximum temperature for September at 19.4° C, which was recorded in both 1895 and 2023.

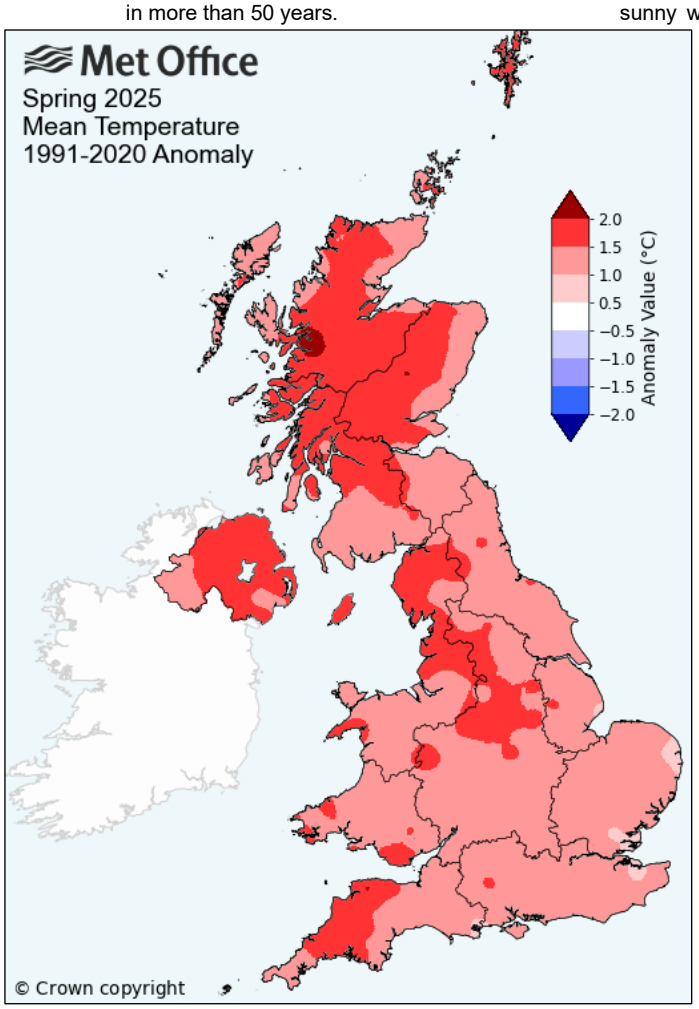
The unusual warmth hasn't been limited to land. Waters around the UK have experienced a marine heat-wave, with sea surface temper-atures reaching record highs for April and May. Some areas have been as much as 4°C warmer than usual, creating unprecedented conditions in our coastal waters.

With 653.3 hours of sunshine - 43% above average - Spring 2025 has outshone all previous springs since the series in 1910. This exceptional season exceeded the previous record (from 2020) by over 27 hours. This has been the fourth sunniest overall season for the UK (and the sunniest since 1995), and the sunniest overall season for Northern Ireland.

Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales all recorded their sunniest springs on record before the month was out, beating their 2020 records. England recorded its second sunniest spring on record, with only 2020 sunnier. Now, seven of the UK's ten sunniest springs having occurred since 2000.

This combination of heat and sunshine, coupled with very low rainfall, has created challenging conditions across much of the country for agriculture and water resources.

By mid-May, the UK was experiencing its driest spring in over 100 years. Although recent wet weather has eased conditions slightly, Spring 2025 still ranks as the sixth driest spring since this series began in 1836, with just 128.2mm of rainfall – approximately 40% below the long-term average and still the driest spring in more than 50 years.



England was particularly dry, experiencing its driest spring in more than 100 years, beaten only by 1893. Wales saw its sixth driest spring, and all other nations fell out of the top ten driest by the end of the month.

The dominant factor behind this unusual spring has been the persistent high-pressure systems, often originating from the Azores or mainland Europe. These systems have lingered over the UK since late February until the last week or so of May, blocking the usual flow of Atlantic weather fronts and allowing high pressure to dominate.

Met Office Scientist Emily Carlisle said: "The UK's climate continues to change. What's particularly notable about Spring 2025 is the combination of record warmth and sunshine, alongside very low rainfall.

"This spring shows some of the changes we're seeing in our weather patterns, with more extreme conditions, including prolonged dry, sunny weather, becoming more frequent. The data clearly shows that recent decades have been warmer, sunnier, and often drier than the 20th century average, although natural variation will continue to play a role in the UK's weather."

May overall will be remembered as sunny, warm and dry, with high pressure dominating for most of the month. The weather turned more unsettled from the 23rd onwards, as lower pressure pushed towards the UK and frontal systems brought much-needed rain to much of the country.

Again, the sun shone for the majority of May, meaning the UK recorded its second sunniest month, behind the 2020 top spot. Both Scotland and Northern Ireland though saw their sunniest May, with Wales its second and England its third.

It was a warm month too, with the UK recording its fifth warmest May on record. England recorded its second warmest May, with Northern Ireland its third, Wales its sixth and Scotland its seventh.

Although the first half of the month saw below average rainfall, with the UK seeing only 3.3mm of rainfall by the 17th, this increased through the second half of the month leaving the UK to have recorded 72% of its average May rainfall. England was the driest of the nations, recording 57% and here, there was a clear north/south divide, with Northern England recording 75% and Southern England just 47%.

Golden eagles soaring back to English skies

By Jo Lonsdale, BBC North East and Cumbria Investigations

AFTER years of absence, golden eagles are beginning to venture back into England from the south of Scotland, leading to hopes they might nest. Among those crossing the border in 2025 was a young male called Talla. Wildlife enthusiast Ian Glendinning has seen the UK's second biggest bird of prey many times in the Scottish Highlands, but he never expected to encounter one in his home county of Northumberland.

"It was the end of March and I was driving in a remote corner of the national park with a couple of friends and the rear passenger suddenly shouted out 'what on earth is that?'," he says.

"I looked over to my right and about 30 metres away there he was, sitting on a rocky outcrop. Before I could get my phone out for a photo it glided away, but it was absolutely colossal, there was just no doubting what it was. I would defy anyone not to be impressed seeing such a huge bird at close range."

Talla is one of around 50 golden eagles living in the Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway. Their resurgence is thanks to the work of the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project (SSGEP), set up when the population in the region had dropped to a mere handful.

Since 2018, SSGEP has successfully translocated 28 juveniles, collected at six to eight weeks of age, and 15 sub-adult golden eagles between four months and three years from the Scottish Highlands.

SSGEP chair Michael Clarke said: "Thanks to our satellite tagging, we can confirm that some are beginning to venture into Northumberland and further afield and these sightings reaffirm the importance of us extending our groundbreaking work."

The birds have also visited the North Pennines and the Lake District, even travelling as far as the Forest of Bowland in Lancashire and Nidderdale in Yorkshire.

"While it is too early to say if they are settling in these areas, it is a potentially exciting and significant milestone," Mr Clarke said.

Golden eagles were wiped out in England and Wales by the mid-19th Century, mainly due

to persecution by those who saw them as a threat to livestock or game birds.

Despite a brief return following the two world wars, when driven shoots largely ceased, numbers gradually declined again with the last resident golden eagle in England disappearing from the Lake District in 2015.

The UK's remaining population was then largely confined to the Scottish Highlands and Islands, particularly in remote, mountainous regions.

Dr Cat Barlow, CEO of the charity Restoring Upland Nature, which has taken SSGEP under its wing, said it is not surprising to the birds "exploring in England".

She said "In the first few years of life, the birds will go looking for new territory, looking for a mate, looking for new feeding grounds. They'll get up high in the sky and head for the areas that look interesting to them, usually those remote upland areas.They create a visual map of where they've been and when they find what they think is a good place, they'll settle there and try and attract a mate."

Welcoming a possible move south, she said: "I'm from County Durham myself and I'd love to see them back for good there."

It is not yet clear whether a golden eagle population in areas like the Lake District, or the Northumberland Uplands will establish itself without birds being brought from Scotland.

"In theory, as available territories fill up in the south of Scotland, eagles will begin to move into England and they have been visiting old nest sites," Dr Barlow said.

Northumberland Wildlife Trust CEO Mike Pratt said: "They don't see a border and the landscape either side of the borders of England and Scotland is so similar it's not a surprise they're coming south. The sightings are almost like the golden eagles giving their blessing and saying that the landscape can take them."

The charity has recently acquired the Rothbury Estate in Northumberland; 9,500 acres of land which include the Simonside Hills. Mr Pratt hopes one day golden eagles will be present there.

"It won't be a rushed process and we'll be consulting carefully, but the project in the south of Scotland has been such a success, people really love them. I would like to think the same could happen here."

Mr Glendinning has seen golden eagles three more times since that first shock sighting in March and feels a sense of "wonderment" each time.

He said "They just fit in perfectly with the landscape, I just felt a real sense of amazement that they are there and I can see them. It just feels like they belong here."

New Chair elected by Broadland District Council

AT Broadland District Council's AGM held last month, Councillor Caroline Karimi-Ghovanlou was elected as Chair and Councillor Adrian Tipple was elected to the post of Vice-Chair, following his year as Chair. At the same meeting, Councillor Sue Holland was re-elected as Broadland District Council's Leader.

Cllr Holland said "I would like to thank all our members for their continued hard work representing their communities. I am proud of what our administration and we as a council have achieved over the last two years for the Broadland communities and businesses we serve."

During the meeting, Cllr Holland announced her Cabinet team:

- Cllr Sue Holland, Leader.
- Cllr Natasha Harpley, Deputy Leader and Communities and Housing
- Cllr Steve Riley, Finance
- Cllr Dan Roper, Planning
- Cllr Martin Booth, Economic Development
- Cllr Jan Davis, Environmental Excellence

Broadland District Council Chair, Caroline Karimi-Ghovanlou said that she was excited and honoured to be elected to the role. Cllr Karimi-Ghovanlou said that she would support Norwich Door to Door during her time in office.

Outgoing Chair, Cllr Adrian Tipple was presented with a testimonial in recognition of his work, as Chair. Adrian raised nearly £5,000 for Natasha Allergy Research Foundation during his time in office.

Action to help 'Robin Hood' tree in heatwave

By Dan Martin for BBC News, East Midlands

AN ancient oak tree associated with the legend of Robin Hood is feeling the strain in the current heatwave, experts have said. The Major Oak in Sherwood Forest, in Nottinghamshire, is thought to be between 800 and 1,100 years old and has survived fires, winds and snowstorms during its long life, but now conservationists have taken action to protect it from the latest threat - the soaring temperatures.

The RSPB, which runs the nature reserve, said it had delivered 3,000 litres (660 gallons) of water to the tree's thirsty roots using special irrigation equipment.

In a social media post, the charity said: "As the heatwave continues, the legendary Major Oak is feeling the strain and we're taking action. Thanks to the tech we've installed, we've been alerted that the ancient tree needs extra support. This is just one part of our ongoing efforts to care for this iconic natural treasure as it faces even more challenges."

Visitors to the site have expressed concern about the impact of the heat on the tree, which, as legend has it, once gave shelter to the outlaw Robin Hood.

Chris Hudson said he had never seen so few leaves on the tree in the summertime, adding "It shocked us. The higher section has no smaller branches [or] twigs to produce leaves on and there's hardly any on the extremity."

Tracy Hall said she thought the tree was looking "particularly poor" and said "The signs that it is struggling have been there a couple of years now."

Last year the RSPB dispelled rumours the tree was dying. Responding to recent concerns about the tree's health, it said: "This watering system is just the latest development in a whole range of activity we've undertaken.

"We have been working with leading arborists and soil health specialists for several years, specifically focusing on the health of the Major Oak and possible solutions to the issue of soil compaction around its roots, in particular.

"On their advice, the vegetation around the tree is left to grow through its full cycle so its roots fully develop and help to break up the compacted soil, to retain moisture and nutrients and to enhance the biodiversity of its enclosure by attracting pollinating insects and other wildlife."

The charity said it was into the third year of a root restoration programme overseen by one of the UK's leading soil microbiology specialists.

The carbon output of trees may be overestimated, say researchers

Published on the Technology Networks website

NEW research reveals the amount of carbon dioxide released by trees into the atmosphere under a warming climate could be considerably less than currently predicted. Published in the prestigious journal Science today, the new findings are from an international research team that includes Chief Scientist at Western Sydney University's Hawkesbury Institute of the Environment, Distinguished Professor Ian Wright.

The research shows the amount of CO_2 respiring from tree trunks is not expected to increase as sharply as currently thought under a warming climate.

The findings give scientists important insights for predicting the amount and movement of CO_2 in our ecosystems as a result of warming temperatures, and strengthen scientists' understanding of plant thermal acclimation. The way that plants respond to changes in temperature.

Professor Wright and the international research team studied trees from around the world to measure the rate of carbon dioxide they produce from their stems, known as respiration, and to test new theory for how respiration rates respond to environmental changes.

Plants and trees respire to make energy to grow, and release carbon dioxide as a by-product. The respiration from their woody stems is a major contributor to the earth's annual carbon 'flux', or the rate at which CO_2 is added or removed from the atmosphere.

Scientists have long expected that a warming climate will inevitably lead to plants increasing the amount of carbon dioxide they release into the atmosphere, in turn leading to even more warming.

"This is likely true, but this latest research reveals that carbon fluxes under warmer future climates will not increase as much as currently thought," said Professor Wright.

Professor Wright and colleagues tested their theory using a global dataset of wood respiration consisting of thousands of measurements made on hundreds of species, from field sites spanning all major climate zones of the world. This included data from Australian savannas, rainforests and woodlands measured by Professor Wright and his team over the last decade.

He said the findings give scientists new information about how plant CO_2 production changes over a long period, depending on

environmental conditions.

"Short-term, temperature-driven changes in plant respiration rates are measured in seconds, minutes and hours. Due to the quick-acting enzymatic processes in plant tissues the changes in plant respiration are very fast, and predictable," explained Professor Wright.

"This contrasts with the long-term, temperature-driven changes in respiration rates that are measured in months, years and decades. Most global ecosystem models in the past have assumed that the same short-term behavior in plants also applies over a longer time period, but this is not the case.

"We now know that thermal acclimation over long time-scales will dampen the positive feedbacks between climate warming and carbon emissions from plants."

The research was led by scientists at Tsinghua University, together with researchers drawn from around the world including Western Sydney University, Imperial College London, University of Reading, and the University of California Berkeley.

Dr Han Wang and lead author Han Zhang from Tsinghua University said it has only been recently that the researchers have had sufficient global data to test if previous models were potentially overestimating stem respiration from trees.

Professor Sandy Harrison from the University of Reading, one of the world's leading vegetation modelers, said the global discovery has significant implications for how scientists predict global carbon fluxes under future climates.

"These findings give scientists a new approach for assessing the degree to which ecosystems around the globe can slow the rate of warming," said Professor Harrison.

Professor Wright said the research has significant impact, as future climates are predicted to have more frequent and more intense events such as heatwaves, fires, droughts and floods.

"We're already seeing that play out both here in Australia and around the world. However, these new findings suggest that, to some extent, ecosystems globally will slow the trends in one key driver of these changes – elevated atmospheric CO_2," he said.

Reference: Zhang H, Wang H, Wright IJ, et al. Thermal acclimation of stem respiration implies a weaker carbon-climate feedback. Sci. 2025. doi:10.1126/science.adr9978

New study reveals how Amazon forest giants handle light and heat

By Lauren Noel

IN a recent study published in New Phytologist, researchers at Michigan State University have uncovered how Amazon rainforest canopy trees manage the intense sunlight they absorb, revealing resilience to hot and dry conditions in the forest canopy while also offering a way to greatly improve the monitoring of canopy health under increasing extreme conditions. The study was made possible by funding from the National Science Foundation and NASA.

The study, led by doctoral candidate Leonardo Ziccardi with Associate Professor Scott Stark in the MSU Department of Forestry, shows how tropical trees act like giant solar antennas, absorbing vast quantities of light energy that must be carefully managed.

When trees absorb more energy than they can use for photosynthesis, it must be safely dissipated, either as heat or re-emitted as light, a process called chlorophyll fluorescence.

"It's been a long journey," said Ziccardi. "Since 2019, we've run multiple field campaigns across seasons, climbing giant trees in the heart of the Amazon to understand how these forests respond to environmental changes. We've spent hundreds of hours up in the canopy doing measurements. Some of the most intense and rewarding work I've ever done."

Ziccardi spent more than four years climbing trees nearly 200 feet tall in the central Amazon, measuring the fates of absorbed photons in thousands of leaves across many species, canopy heights, and light exposure conditions, producing a truly unique and unprecedented dataset.

Using a revolutionary handheld instrument, the MultispeQ developed at MSU by co-author David Kramer in the MSU-DOE Plant Research Laboratory, Ziccardi captured how leaves in natural settings balance incoming light with their ability to photosynthesize or dissipate excess energy.

The findings offer a first-of-its-kind, high-resolution look at how the Amazon canopy

navigates seasonal extremes. As the Amazon experiences increasing stress, due to both greenhouse gases and deforestation leading to hotter and drier conditions in the canopy, understanding how trees manage light energy is essential to predicting their future survival.

Not only does this climate change lead to greater physiological stress due to more frequent extreme conditions related to lower soil water availability and dry and hot air, it also can increase the amount of sunlight hitting the forest. This happens because drier conditions have less clouds and that lets more sunlight through. This study helps address whether Amazon trees can absorb and use this extra light under stressful conditions.

Despite facing intense sunlight and atmospheric dryness, many canopy leaves were able to continue photosynthesizing, but only by increasing their allocation to energy dissipation pathways.

For the first time in the Amazon, the study revealed a nuanced, three-phase response of leaves to rising light and drought conditions. Under low to moderate light, leaves balance energy use between photosynthesis and fluorescence, so these processes tend to increase and decrease together. As light and drought stress increase, however, this balance breaks down. Heat-protective dissipation mechanisms become overwhelmed, photosynthesis drops, and fluorescence can spike, signaling potential damage to the photosynthetic machinery.

The implications are critical for scientists using satellite observations of fluorescence, the so-called solar-induced fluorescence, or SIF, to monitor Amazon forest health. While SIF is often used as a proxy for photosynthesis, this study shows that photosynthesis and fluorescence do not always go up and down together. Under high light and stress, this relationship breaks down and leaves may fluoresce more even as their photosynthetic machinery declines, potentially leading to overestimates of ecosystem productivity during droughts.

Thousands of centuries-old trees, some extinct in the wild, preserved by ancient temples in China

By Tibi Puiu for ZME Science

AT the foot of China's Zhongnan Mountains, golden leaves blanket the courtyard of the Gu Guanyin Temple. The source of this shimmering display is a towering ginkgo tree, so old that it may have rooted here a thousand years ago. It has survived dynasties, revolutions, and concrete. What saved it? Not a conservation law or a fence … but faith.

According to a new study out last month, temples across China, Buddhist and Taoist alike, have safeguarded tens of thousands of ancient trees, acting as accidental arks in a landscape transformed by human hands.

The researchers documented 46,966 trees over a century old within 6,545 religious sites, including many that no longer grow anywhere else.

"It's where ecological and spiritual values converge," Yongchuan Yang, a conservation researcher at Chongqing University and a senior author of the study, told Nature.

The scale of the project is staggering. Led by Li Huang and colleagues from institutions in China and Australia, the team compiled data from national tree inventories and local forestry surveys. They focused on trees older than 100 years that grow outside of natural forests in villages, cities, and farmlands.

Of the ancient trees surveyed, nearly 6,000 belong to 61 species officially listed as threatened in China. Astonishingly, eight of those species are found only on temple grounds. Among them is the critically endangered *Carpinus putoensis* (pictured), whose only known living specimen, an estimated 200-year-old tree, still stands solemnly at Huiji Temple in Zhejiang Province. An example of what conservation biologists call "living dead" species.

In a country where centuries of agricultural and urban expansion have felled forests and fragmented habitats, temples emerged as unexpected sanctuaries. The researchers found that old trees were over 7,000 times denser inside temple grounds than outside. Their average age inside temples is 261 years, whereas outside it's just over 200.

Some trees go back even further. The oldest documented individual tree was likely planted during the Eastern Han Dynasty, around the time China's first state-sponsored Buddhist temple, Baima Temple, was built in 68 CE.

"Despite limited area and often artificial settings, temples serve as hotspots and long-term refuges," the researchers wrote.

Faith has shaped China's botanical landscape in other ways, too. Certain tree species, like *Ginkgo biloba*, *Podocarpus macrophyllus* and *Platycladus orientalis,m*hold deep symbolic value in Buddhism. Monks and devotees cultivated them intentionally, embedding them into temple life and ritual.

The researchers tracked how these "Buddhist species" spread across China not by natural dispersal, but by cultural propagation. Although such species made up only 12.5% of the total recorded, they accounted for a whopping 65% of all old trees in Buddhist temples and they often grow far outside their native ranges.

Ginkgo biloba once clung to a few glacial refuges in China's southern mountains, but today ginkgos flourish across much of the country, thanks largely to the religion that venerated them. Some temple ginkgos are over 1,000 years old.

"Buddhist temples preserved many individuals of culturally important plants beyond their natural distribution," the authors noted.

It's a powerful example of what ecologists call "cultural range expansion". The spread of species through human belief systems, not seed dispersers or pollinators.

So, what does this mean for conservation? To David Lindenmayer, a co-author from the Australian National University, the study provides a template for safeguarding biodiversity through cultural partnerships.

"These trees are ecologically vital," he said. "They store carbon, provide habitat, and serve as seed sources, but more than that, they connect people to landscapes."

Old trees are often keystone structures, stabilizing soils, cycling nutrients, and hosting countless animals and epiphytes. Their gnarled trunks and vast canopies reflect centuries of survival and support webs of life that younger trees cannot.

Yet these natural monuments are also vulnerable. Climate change, invasive pests, and extreme weather events threaten even the most secluded groves and while temples have protected trees from the axe and the plow, they cannot shield them from drought or typhoons.

"Although temple environments protect old trees from direct human disturbances, they remain vulnerable to climate-related stresses," the researchers warned.

In many cases, regeneration is a problem. People mow temple grounds or pave them with stone, making it hard for seedlings to take root. The authors recommend active propagation, using seeds from the oldest trees to cultivate new generations.

For conservationists, the message is clear: saving nature doesn't always require a fence. Sometimes, it takes a prayer.

This isn't a uniquely Chinese phenomenon. Similar refuges exist in India's sacred groves, Japan's shrine forests, and West Africa's ancestral tree sites, but China's case stands out for its scale … and its systematic study.

The paper urges policymakers to recognize cultural heritage as a conservation ally. In China, this could mean funding for temple tree care, integration into biodiversity planning, or public education campaigns that highlight the role of religious sites.

The trees themselves are living chronicles. At Tanzhe Temple in Beijing, 178 ancient trees grow in majesty, as they have done for hundreds of years. One of them, a stately *Platycladus orientalis*, is believed to be over 1,200 years old. It leans slightly, weathered but still thriving.

The findings appeared in the journal Current Biology.

-ICRAF)

Environment

WRITING on the New Atlas website, Rich Hardy reported that a perfectly preserved ancient tree fossil offered scientists an unprecedented view into a moment 42,000 years ago when the Earth's magnetic field went haywire. The compelling 2021 study tells the story of temporary environmental chaos, potentially influencing everything from an increase in cave paintings to the extinction of the Neanderthals.

Without the Earth's magnetic field we'd have a pretty hard time living on the planet. Beyond helping us simply navigate around the world with a compass, the Earth's magnetic field is fundamental to the existence of life. It helps deflect harmful solar winds and keeps our protective atmosphere in place.

However, our planet's magnetic field is far from static. In fact, it is profoundly dynamic, consistently shifting and fluctuating over time. Every few hundred thousand years it completely flips, with magnetic north switching places with magnetic south.

The last major geomagnetic reversal occurred 780,000 years ago and plenty of scientists suggest we are well overdue for a similar event. In between these full geomagnetic reversals, which can last up to 10,000 years, we find shorter disruptions to the Earth's magnetic field. These events are known as geomagnetic excursions.

Geomagnetic excursions are short-lived, and involve temporary changes to the Earth's magnetic field lasting anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand years. The most recent recorded geomagnetic excursion is known as the Laschamps excursion and it took place around 42,000 years ago.

"The Laschamps Excursion was the last time the magnetic poles flipped," explained Chris Turney, co-lead author on a 2021 study investigating this transformative event. "They swapped places for about 800 years before changing their minds and swapping back again."

Scientists have known about these dramatic magnetic pole events for a long time but it's never been clearly understood what kind of impact they have on life or the environment. That is until a few years ago, when an ancient fossilized tree was discovered in New Zealand.

Workers preparing a site for a new power-plant unearthed the massive kauri tree trunk, perfectly preserved for 42,000 years, with its rings offering up an incredible 1,700-year record of the Earth's environmental conditions exactly spanning the period of the Laschamps Excursion.

Turney said "For the first time ever, we have been able to precisely date the timing and environmental impacts of the last magnetic pole switch. Using the ancient trees we could measure and date the spike in atmospheric radiocarbon levels caused by the collapse of Earth's magnetic field."

Published in the journal Science, the research team described using detailed radiocarbon data from the ancient tree to create a novel timeline of the Earth's atmosphere across the period spanning the Laschamps Excursion. The team then ran a global climate model, incorporating previously gathered data from all over the world, to explore what acute effects this type of magnetic field disruption had on the environment.

The results revealed an incredibly dramatic period of environmental change, particularly in the stretch of time leading up to the few hundred years the Earth's magnetic field was reversed. The study calculated a depleted ozone layer, higher levels of ultraviolet radiation and increased atmospheric ionization all coalesced about 42,000 years ago. In tribute to author Douglas Adams in whose book, The Hitchhiker's Guide the the Galaxy, the supercomputer Deep Thought calculates the answer to the ultimate question of life, the universe and everything is "42" the researchers named this specific period the "Adams Transitional Geomagnetic Event."

Turney said "The more we looked at the data, the more everything pointed to 42. It was uncanny."

Alan Cooper, co-lead author on the study, suggests a number of novel environmental conditions would have appeared during the so-called Adams Event. Auroras, for example, would have been widespread across the entire planet, alongside extraordinary volumes of electrical storms due to increases in ionized air.

"Early humans around the world would have seen amazing auroras, shimmering veils and sheets across the sky," noted Cooper. "It must have seemed like the end of days."

Perhaps the most controversial part of the study is the degree of hypothetical speculations the researchers make between the Adams Event and evolution of life on Earth. One link raised in the study suggests the magnetic field disruption led to an influx of cave art, underpinned by the need for humans to seek shelter from the increase in ultraviolet rays.

"We think that the sharp increases in UV levels, particularly during solar flares, would suddenly make caves very valuable shelters," Cooper suggested. "The common cave art motif of red ochre handprints may signal it was being used as sunscreen, a technique still used today by some groups."

Other bold speculations in the study are that the Adams Event both prompted the extinction of several megafauna species in Australia and hastened the end for Neanderthals. Chris Stringer, from the Natural History Museum of London, called the study important but also questioned some of its broad hypotheses.

He said in an interview with The Guardian "The authors also make a link with the physical extinction of the Neanderthals around 40,000 years ago and I think it could certainly have contributed to their demise, but they did survive longer and ranged more widely than just Europe, and we have a very poor fix on the timing of their final disappearance across swathes of Asia."

Shifting to what the research can tell us about life on Earth today, Alan Cooper cautiously suggested his team's research offers novel insights into how the world would be affected if something like the Adams Event were to happen nowadays. He pointed to current movements of the north magnetic pole across the Northern Hemisphere as a potential warning sign.

"This speed, alongside the weakening of Earth's magnetic field by around nine per cent in the past 170 years, could indicate an upcoming reversal," said Cooper. "If a similar event happened today, the consequences would be huge for modern society. Incoming cosmic radiation would destroy our electric power grids and satellite networks."

The study was published in the journal Science.

Climate

THE Earth could be doomed to breach the symbolic 1.5°C warming limit in as little as three years at current levels of carbon dioxide emissions reported Mark Poynting, BBC News climate reporter. That's the stark warning from more than 60 of the world's leading climate scientists in the most up-to-date assessment of the state of global warming.

Nearly 200 countries agreed to try to limit global temperature rises to 1.5°C above levels of the late 1800s in a landmark agreement in 2015, with the aim of avoiding some of the worst impacts of climate change.

However, countries have continued to burn record amounts of coal, oil and gas and chop down carbon-rich forests, leaving that international goal in peril.

Climate change has already worsened many weather extremes, such as the UK's 40°C heat in July 2022, and has rapidly raised global sea levels, threatening coastal communities.

Lead author Prof Piers Forster, director of the Priestley Centre for Climate Futures at the University of Leedsn said "Things are all moving in the wrong direction. We're seeing some unprecedented changes and we're also seeing the heating of the Earth and sea-level rise accelerating as well."

These changes "have been predicted for some time and we can directly place them back to the very high level of emissions", he added.

At the beginning of 2020, scientists estimated that humanity could only emit 500 billion more tonnes of CO_2, the most important planet-warming gas, for a 50% chance of keeping warming to 1.5°C, but by the start of 2025 this so-called "carbon budget" had shrunk to 130 billion tonnes, according to the new study.

That reduction is largely due to continued record emissions of CO_2 and other planet-warming greenhouse gases like methane, but also improvements in the scientific estimates.

If global CO_2 emissions stay at their current highs of about 40 billion tonnes a year, 130 billion tonnes gives the world roughly three years until that carbon budget is exhausted.

This could commit the world to breaching the target set by the Paris agreement, the researchers say, though the planet would probably not pass 1.5° C of human-caused warming until a few years later.

Last year was the first on record when global average air temperatures were more than 1.5°C above those of the late 1800s.

A single 12-month period is not considered a breach of the Paris agreement, however, with the record heat of 2024 given an extra boost by natural weather patterns, but human-caused warming was by far the main reason for last year's high temperatures, reaching 1.36°C above pre-industrial levels.

This current rate of warming is about 0.27°C per decade. Much faster than anything in the geological record and if emissions stay high, the planet is on track to reach 1.5°C of warming on that metric around the year 2030. After this point, long-term warming could, in theory, be brought back down by sucking large quantities of CO_2 back out of the atmosphere.

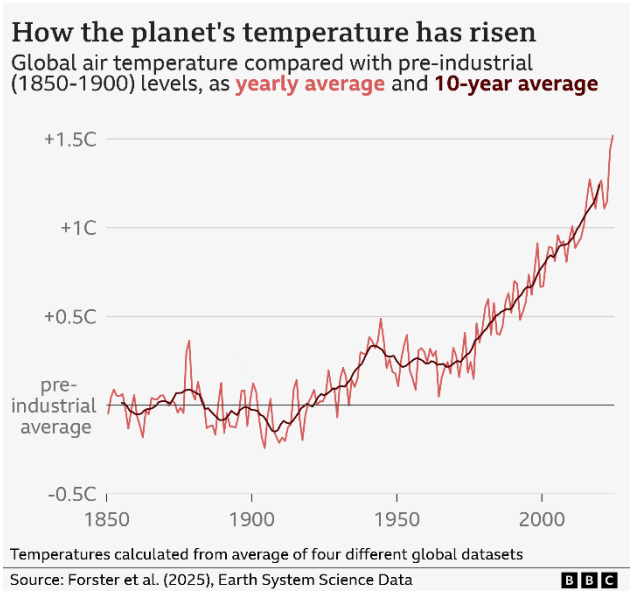
However, the authors urge caution on relying on these ambitious technologies serving as a get-out-of-jail card. "For larger exceedance [of 1.5°C], it becomes less likely that removals [of CO_2] will perfectly reverse the warming caused by today's emissions," warned Joeri Rogelj, professor of climate science and policy at Imperial College London.

The study is filled with striking statistics highlighting the magnitude of the climate change that has already happened. Perhaps the most notable is the rate at which extra heat is accumulating in the Earth's climate system, known as "Earth's energy imbalance" in scientific jargon.

Over the past decade or so, this rate of heating has been more than double that of the 1970s and 1980s and an estimated 25% higher than the late 2000s and 2010s.

"That's a really large number, a very worrying number" over such a short period, said Dr Matthew Palmer of the UK Met Office, and associate professor at the University of Bristol.

The recent uptick is fundamentally due to greenhouse gas emissions, but a reduction in the cooling effect from small particles called aerosols has also played a role. This extra energy has to go somewhere. Some goes into warming the land, raising air temperatures, and melting the world's ice.



However, about 90% of the excess heat is taken up by the oceans. That not only means disruption to marine life but also higher sea levels: warmer ocean waters take up more space, in addition to the extra water that melting glaciers are adding to our seas. The rate of global sea-level rise has doubled since the 1990s, raising the risks of flooding for millions of people living in coastal areas worldwide.

While this all paints a bleak picture, the authors note that the rate of emissions increase appears to be slowing as clean technologies are rolled out. They argue that "rapid and stringent" emissions cuts are more important than ever.

The Paris target is based on very strong scientific evidence that the impacts of climate change would be far greater at 2°C of warming than at 1.5°C. That has often been over-simplified as meaning below 1.5°C of warming is "safe" and above 1.5°C "dangerous".

In reality, every extra bit of warming increases the severity of many weather extremes, ice melt and sea-level rise.

Prof Rogelj said "Reductions in emissions over the next decade can critically change the rate of warming. Every fraction of warming that we can avoid will result in less harm and less suffering of particularly poor and vulnerable populations and less challenges for our societies to live the lives that we desire," he added.

SRISHTI GUPTA reported for Interesting Engineering that bald cypress tree rings reveal a 2,000-year history of climate disruption.

Notably, researchers found no evidence that human activities such as fire or logging contributed to the trees' demise.

The bald cypress *Taxodium distichum* has been quietly standing sentinel to centuries of ecological change in the murky wetlands of the American Southeast. These towering trees are some of the oldest living organisms in Eastern North America, their gnarled "knees" that tower above the water as a defining feature.

However, even long-lived specimens such as these are beginning to show the worrying signs of enormous global change. New research has found that while these trees do not die of old age, external stressors such as a changing climate, rising sea levels, pests, and erratic weather drastically shorten their lifespans.

In collaboration with partner institutions, a team of scientists from Florida Atlantic University investigated 95 specimens of ancient bald cypress preserved in subfossil form near the Altamaha River, Georgia. The researchers used radiocarbon dating and tree ring analysis to reconstruct over two millennia's worth of growth patterns of these trees and found how environmental changes impacted the cypress specimens.

"The rings of the bald cypress are like nature's journal entries, written year by year and season by season, showing how even slow changes can shape the course of life," said Katharine G Napora, the study's senior author.

The team's findings highlight a dramatic shift that began around 500 A D Before that point, bald cypress trees in the region regularly lived for more than 470 years, but after this period their average lifespan fell sharply to 186 years.

This drop corresponds with the beginning of a sixth-century climatic disruption known as the Vandal Minimum, which marked the start of a worldwide cooling period believed to be the result of extreme volcanic activity combined with the possible impact of a comet.

"This shift wasn't a brief disruption. Even

centuries later, the trees never regained their former longevity. Their lifespans continued to decline over time," said Napora.

"The last of the long-lived trees in the deposit died during another major climatic event, the Little Ice Age. Our findings underscore how long-lasting the localized effects of major climate shifts can be, especially for coastal forests that are already vulnerable to wind damage, saltwater intrusion, and rising seas."

Researchers found no evidence that human activities such as fire or logging contributed to the trees' demise. Dry spells may have encouraged the spread of mites and other pests, further stressing these trees.

"These ancient giants not only inspire awe but also serve as natural archives, helping scientists understand how trees have weathered past climate events and how they might fare in the face of modern climate change," said Napora.

Despite the grim trend, hope endures. Isolated pockets of old-growth swamps still shelter bald cypress trees up to 2,600 years old.

"In their quiet persistence, these trees offer both a warning and a lesson: that the world is more interconnected than we often realize, and that the story of the Earth isn't only told through written history. It's etched into wood, embedded in landscapes and carried forward by living organisms," said Napora.

"The past lives on in the trunks of these ancient trees, reminding us that environmental shifts, whether natural or human-caused, reverberate through time in ways we are only beginning to understand," she concluded.

The study has been published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

A study recently published in National Science Review highlights the key role of tree species diversity in mitigating climate change. These findings are crucial to consider for planning reforestation and afforestation projects, reported Mazz Cummings for the METEORED website.

Reforestation has been identified as a crucial component for sequestering carbon from the atmosphere, and mitigating climate change. With the scale of planned reforestation projects, it is crucial to understand how this can be done with the greatest climate mitigating impacts.

A study published in March using data from the Biodiversity–Ecosystem Functioning Experiment China (BEF-China) highlighted the key role of tree diversity in acting as a buffer against extreme heat under the canopy. Another study, recently published in National Science Review, also incorporating data from BEF-China highlights another key climate change mitigating effect of tree diversity in forests.

N_2O is the third most potent greenhouse gas after CO_2 and CH4. N_2O is emitted by soils as part of a natural microbial process called denitrification, whereby bacteria convert nitrate and nitrite in the soil into gaseous forms of nitrogen. This is then released into the atmosphere, where it contributes to global warming and climate change.

This newly published study highlights the role of tree diversity within forest ecosystems in mitigating the emission of this greenhouse gas. Professor Xiaoqi Zhou from East China Normal University says "Increased tree diversity enhances plant uptake and utilization of soil inorganic nitrogen, thereby reducing substrates available for denitrifying microbes." Higher tree diversity was found to reduce inorganic nitrogen availability, limiting denitrifying microbial activity, which in turn lowers N_2O emissions.

This study was conducted by analysing a global dataset of 201 paired observations on tree diversity and soil N_2O emissions with a three-year field experiment in subtropical China. Researchers incorporated tree diversity factors into a process-based model to estimate global forest N_2O emissions under different tree diversity scenarios. Their findings showed that even transitioning from monoculture forests to forests with two tree species could reduce global N_2O emissions by 10.39%.

The model showed that emissions continue to decrease with diversity, but 24 species showed the highest reduction observed in this study, leading to a 56.30% reduction in N_2O emissions. These results are invaluable, and highlight the key role of biodiversity in natural processes that help to protect the planet against global warming and climate change.

"Our findings demonstrate the potential of tree diversity to mitigate soil N_2O emissions in forests," concludes professor Zhou. "We hope this research provides a scientific foundation and data-driven support for forest management, reforestation initiatives, and climate change mitigation strategies."

Enhanced plant diversity reduces nitrous oxide emissions in forest soils worldwide, National Science Review, May 2025. Hanling Zuo , Wensheng Xiao , Mingqiu Dong , Xinyun Gu , Xia Liang , Pete Smith , Manuel Delgado Baquerizo , Lijun Hou , Xiaoqi Zhou

JUSTIN ROWLATT, BBC Climate Editor, reported that England faces huge future water shortages and needs a "continued and sustained effort" to reduce demand, including more hosepipe bans and 'smart' water meters, warns the Environment Agency.

The watchdog says that without dramatic action, England, which uses 14 billion litres of water a day, will have a daily shortage of more than six billion litres by 2055.

It says more homes will need meters reporting how much water is used in real time and in future prices may need to rise when supplies are tight.

The warning came with droughts already declared in Yorkshire and the north-west of England this year following what the Met Office says is the warmest and driest Spring in more than half a century.

The EA made the warning in its five yearly National Framework for Water Resources report. It said 5 billion litres would be needed to supply the public and a further 1 billion for agriculture and energy users.

The EA said customers in England need to cut their water use by 2.5 billion litres a day by 2055. Down from an average of around 140 litres per person per day to 110 litres per day.

It warns future economic growth will be likely be compromised as water becomes scarcer and has already highlighted how water shortages in parts of Sussex, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Norfolk have limited housing and business growth.

Alan Lovell, chair of the EA, told the BBC he would like to see water companies mak-ing more use of restrictions like hose-pipe bans when there are droughts to "bring home to people that the amount of water they use is making a difference."

The EA highlights England's growing population as a key driver of the deficit. Water companies ex-pect it to increase by 8 million people by 2055.

At the same time, climate change is altering weather patterns, creating new challenges for water supply.

The EA says England, like the rest of the UK, is already experiencing warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers. It expects that trend to become more pronounced and warns of more intense rainfall events creating the potential for a greater incidence of both drought and flooding.

Another key factor is the need to reduce how much water is taken, or "abstracted", by water companies and other users from England's rivers, the report says. Over-abstraction risks wrecking some rivers, particularly the fragile ecosystems of the country's chalk streams, said Mr Lovell.

"It ultimately could see the demise of those rivers to an extent that they will never come back in the same form," he told the BBC.

Adding to the pressures on supply is the fact that water companies plan to dramatically increase their drought resilience. By 2040 they aim to cope with the kind of drought you would expect once in every 500 years.

Professor Hannah Cloke, a hydrologist at Reading University, believes we need to change our attitude towards water. "We really don't value water," she says. "We need to think about it as a really, really precious resource. Everybody should be looking after water and conserving it and thinking about what they do when they turn on the tap and when they choose not to."

Everyone involved in the water industry, including domestic customers, will need to play a role in meeting the deficit, the EA says.

It says it is "vital" that water companies deliver on their promise to cut the amount of water that leaks from their pipes by half by 2050 compared to 2017-18 levels. That should save around 900m litres a day.

New infrastructure will play a role too. Last year water companies were given the go-ahead by Ofwat, the body that oversees the water industry, to invest billions of pounds in ten new reservoirs and two desalination plants as well as pipelines and other equipment to enable more water to be transferred between regions.

The aim is to create a "water grid" in the southern half of England, said Bob Taylor, the CEO of Portsmouth Water.

"We're also looking at using existing rivers, canals and other means to transfer water from areas where it is plentiful in the UK to the south east and east of the country where it is less plentiful," Taylor explained.

These new investments should ultimately deliver an additional 1.7 billion litres a day, the EA report calculates. But the first reservoir won't be completed until the end of this decade and the programme isn't due to be finished until the early 2040s.

A further 2.5 billion litres a day will have to found by reducing customer demand, including from domestic customers, the EA says. And, because of the delays delivering the new infrastructure, initially up to 80% of the deficit will need to be met by customers using less water.

As well as water companies switching

customers to the kind of smart meters and variable pricing already seen in the electricity industry, the EA is calling for the government to tighten building regulations on water use of new homes and consider minimum standards for water efficiency of products.

The EA report highlights the rapid growth in the number of data centres in England as an area of growing industrial demand for water.

Pip Squire, head of sustainability at Ark Data Centres, says water companies need to be much clearer with industrial customers about how much water they have available and how resilient the supply is.

"We need to know what the constraints are so we can design the system," said Squire. "We need energy, we need fibre optic connections, but we can build data centres that don't use water. They just cost more to run."

Saving our trees and woodlands

JOHN WIMPERIS reported for the BBC Local Democracy Reporting Service that a rugby team's plans to build a stadium pose a threat to an ancient tree, Green Party councillors are warning. The copper beech tree is not one of the ten trees that would be removed under Bath Rugby's design proposals for an 18,000-seater stadium on the Recreation Ground, but two councillors said a foundation and drain could be built into its root zone.

The councillors said the way the tree was being overlooked exemplified "what's broken in our political and planning system".

A spokesperson from Bath Rugby said the comments regarding the tree were "factually incorrect", and that the design proposals, which have not yet been approved, would protect it.

Green councillor Joanna Wright, speaking alongside colleague Saskia Heijltjes, said the club's present planning application "has failed to address the real threat to this important local tree".

The tree is recognised as "notable" in the Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Inventory.

Ms Wright said that people in political and planning systems "treat living ecosystems as if they're disposable, when in reality they are essential".

The stadium plan is a highly controversial topic in Bath, according to the Local Democracy Reporting Service. Some locals would like to maintain the green space in the heart of the city, but others point out that Bath Rugby has to spend around £1m every year assembling and disassembling temporary stands.

Bath Rugby CEO, Tarquin McDonald, said: "If we were not able to redevelop the stadium, it calls into question our ability to stay here long term. That would be tragic for the city and club."

Ken Loach, the film director, was one of the 5,500 commenters on the stadium planning application. Mr Loach, who lives in Bath, said: "Visitors come to see the Roman Baths and Georgian architecture, not to look at a modern sports stadium. You can see those without travelling very far."

MINDLESS vandalism which saw one tree killed, another set on fire and property destroyed was slammed by a housing association reported Jessica Rothwell, trainee digital reporter for the Oldham Times.

First Choice Homes Oldham (FCHO) has been forced to contact the police after a spate of attacks on some of its properties.

The attacks all took place in the St Mary's area and have already resulted in the death of one tree. More trees are also likely to be killed after the vandalism.

An *Acer* had its bark stripped off and will die following an attack earlier this month in Radcliffe Street. At the same time, two cages around *Acer* trees in the same street were smashed.

In March, an *Acer* was set on fire there and last year the bark was stripped off another *Acer*, this time in nearby Lord Street. This tree has

already been felled and the others will die too and need to be replaced.

FCHO is appealing for anyone who has information about the crimes to contact Greater Manchester Police. The housing association also believes the attacks, which will cost thousands of pounds to fix, could be linked.

It has cost more than £2,000 to fell the one *Acer* and then replace it. Other costs include nearly £400 to replace the damaged cages, alongside future costs running into thousands to fell the other two trees.

FCHO head of neighbourhood care David Wrigley said: "This mindless vandalism has caused considerable distress to our customers and staff who value the trees a great deal in the communal areas as a haven for wildlife and as living things to admire and cherish.

"It is difficult to understand why someone would want to do this but sadly, it is not an isolated incident now. This means we have called the police and asked them to investigate to try and find the culprits.

"It is unacceptable to cause this damage, it's anti-social, it costs money and it harms our communities. It must stop and if anyone knows anything about these crimes, I would urge them to contact Greater Manchester Police.

BEN ROBINSON reported for the Bury Mercury that fires being started in an area of woodland by youths has caused concern in a village, following a series of incidents in over two weeks.

An area of trees and undergrowth off Beyton Road in Thurston, near Bury St Edmunds, has become the centre of anti-social behaviour in the village.

One resident, who did not wish to be named, said while it has been a "persistent problem" for "many years", three blazes have taken place in the last 10 days.

The resident said "The village has expanded hugely and the number of the children using the woodland has increased tenfold. If you go into the woodland you can see the number of areas that have been subjected to fires.

"When we had those two incidents over one weekend I did go in and have a look to see where those fires have been created, and there were seven separate areas where there had been a fire."

The resident added that on several occasions, the fires have spread through the undergrowth and up the trees.

It follows an extensive dry period throughout the county. Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service said its firefighters were on "high alert" for wildfires in the region after the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) has issued an amber wildfire alert.

Deputy chief fire officer for the county Henry Griffin warned there had been a 100% increase on wildfires compared to this time last year. Speaking to this newspaper earlier this month, he said "vigilance from members of the public when the ground is so dry is important."

The Thurston resident added: "We have never objected to children going in there as long as they are sensible."

It is not the only area in Suffolk which has been faced with problems of youths starting dangerous fires. A fence was set alight in Woolpit as part of a series incidents which are being investigated by Suffolk police.

A planning appeal for a detached home on Plot 14, north of High Green, Old Haslemere Road, was dismissed by a government inspector due to concerns over three mature protected trees reported Georgia Hase for the Liphook Herald.

The proposal, submitted by Mr Carmino-Luciano Sellitto, was refused by Waverley Borough Council due to concerns over the impact on three mature protected trees.

Two oak trees near the entrance and a birch tree on the southern boundary, all covered by TPOs, are crucial to the site's character. The proposed building conflicted with the trees' Root Protection Areas, especially the birch. The

inspector found insufficient evidence to ensure the birch's survival and feared future occupants might prune or remove it, harming the area's greenery.

Despite housing needs, WBC felt the environmental risks outweighed the benefits.

A historic tree in Stroud Green at the centre of a three-year campaign is facing the axe once again reported Grace Howarth , Local Democracy Reporter for The Standard.

Haringey Council is consulting on a fresh proposal to remove the Oakfield Road plane tree, which is around 120 years old, giving residents until June 17 to respond.

Insurers Allianz and Aviva claim the tree is causing damage to the foundations of nearby homes and that hundreds of thousands of pounds could potentially be paid out in future. This is the council's justification for potentially felling it.

The environmental campaign group Haringey Tree Protectors says the claim is unsubstantiated. Campaigner Gio Iozzi said both insurers recently agreed to finally pay for the work on the two houses affected, meaning there was now "no need to fell this tree".

However, a court ruled in 2024 that the council was lawfully permitted to remove it.

Gio said poor foundations, clay soil movement, droughts or floods could also be contributing to issues with the homes' foundations and believed there wasn't enough evidence to support the tree's removal.

"Trees should not be felled just in case there is the potential of damage to houses in the future," she said. "If this logic is followed, all trees in Haringey would need to be felled just in case. Trees are only one factor in a range of pressures on houses."

A council spokesperson said: "We are currently consulting on a proposal to remove the tree. The court ruled in 2024 that a previous decision by the council to remove the tree was lawful and refused permission to bring an appeal against this.

"We are undertaking a further consultation in view of new statutory requirements that have come into force since that decision. Our proposal is based on consideration of the evidence submitted on behalf of the owners of the properties.

"We will carefully consider all the feedback we receive, including any new information or changes of circumstances, before coming to a final decision on the future of the tree."

Gio added there was "no rationale" to fell the tree and that green urban infrastructure was needed now "more than ever".

TOM HARDWICK, trainee reporter for The Derbyshire Times, reported that Alfreton Town Council is deeply saddened to announce that the tree planted on Centenary Green to commemorate the 80th anniversary of VE Day has been deliberately vandalised.

The memorial tree, which served as a living tribute to the courage and sacrifice of those who served during the Second World War, suffered extensive damage and, regrettably, has had to be removed for public safety and out of respect for its commemorative purpose.

Councillor Steve Marshall-Clarke, Lead Member for Environment, said: "We are appalled and saddened by this senseless act of vandalism. The VE Day 80th Anniversary tree on Centenary Green was planted not only to mark a historic milestone but to serve as a place of reflection and remembrance for the entire community.

"Its destruction is a deep disappointment, but we remain committed to ensuring that a replacement will be planted and the memory it represents will live on."

Plans are already underway to replace the memorial tree, and further details will be shared in due course. Alfreton Town Council remains dedicated to honouring the significance of this anniversary and the values it stands for.

A Kent landscape of ancient woodlands, wildflower meadows and chalk grasslands that inspired novelist Charles Dickens has been designated a national nature reserve, reported itvX.

Natural England, which advises the Government on the environment, announced the creation of the North Kent Woods and Downs national nature reserve on 30 May. This means the 800-hectare landscape has been marked out as an area of focus for conservation and nature restoration efforts.

The mosaic of different habitats is home to key species including Man and Lady orchids, the Maidstone mining bee, Hazel dormouse and skylarks, around 1,700 ancient and veteran trees, and the Silverhand Estate which is one of the UK's largest organic vineyards.

Dickens, who lived in different areas of north Kent during his life in the 19th Century, drew inspiration from the landscape in his writings.

The nature reserve designation also aims to boost the local economy, tourism and access to nature for around 400,000 people who live within five miles of the reserve and an estimated eight million who live within an hour's drive away.

The ancient woodlands have maintained tree cover since the Tudor era, when Henry VIII was said to have given Kent the nickname "Garden of England".

Natural England's partners, which include the National Trust, Woodland Trust and Kent County Council, will be working to support conservation efforts beyond the boundary of the reserve to create a joined-up approach to nature recovery for a further 1,100 hectares in the surrounding area.

Tony Juniper, chair of Natural England said: "Creating bigger, better and more joined-up natural areas is one of the most vital and fundamental steps we must take in meeting our national targets for Nature's recovery.

"This new reserve, with its hundreds of ancient trees set amid extensive chalk grasslands, lays the foundations for multiple partners to work together to improve Nature across a significant area of countryside."

The reserve comes as the eighth in the King's Series, a programme to establish 25

large-scale national nature reserves across England by 2027 in celebration of Charles' coronation.

Nature minister Mary Creagh said: "This new National Nature reserve will give people the opportunity to explore Kent's magical landscapes from wildflower meadows to ancient woodlands. Reserves like this one, and others in the King's Coronation Series, will deliver on our promise to improve access to nature and protect nature-rich habitats, as well as boosting the local economy in line with our Plan for Change."

Nick Johannsen, national landscape director at Kent Downs National Landscape, said: "The North Kent Woods and Downs National Nature Reserve is especially exciting because of the sheer scale, nearly 20 km^2 (4,942 acres) of land managed for nature, people, its beauty and history and for scientific research and so close to the urban centres of Gravesend and the Medway Towns.

"Many partners from the public, private, community and charity sectors are working together here, on some of the very best sites for wildlife in England."

With support from Natural England and Kent Downs National Landscape, the reserve will be managed by a number of partners including the National Trust, Woodland Trust, Kent County Council, Plantlife, Silverhand Estate (Vineyard Farms Ltd) and the West Kent Downs Countryside Trust.

Meanwhile, affiliated partners include Gravesham Borough Council, Birling Estate, Shorne Parish Council, Tarmac and Forestry England.

CHRIS YOUNG reprted for yahoo!news that a property management company plans to cut back trees that offer a "prime location" for birds to "perch and defecate" on people's cars.

Town & City Management Ltd has submitted an application to Bradford Council for permission to cut 2m off a row of tree branches next to the visitors' car park at the Limefield Mill development on Wood Street in Crossflatts.

The application says the trees are popular with birds, and visitors to the site often find droppings on their cars. It says the tree works will remove this "nuisance".

It calls for the branches to be lopped back so they no longer overhang the visitor parking spaces.

The residential building stands next to the Leeds Liverpool Canal.

The application says: "The branches are currently overhanging and it's a prime location for birds to perch and defecate on visitors' cars, causing a nuisance. There is plenty of growth on the trees and so amenity will not be affected."

PLANS to remove bins from an outdoor area in Nottinghamshire have faced criticism from some visitors who said it was not "human nature" to carry a bag of dog poo home reported Dan Hunt and Ben Mellor for BBC News, Nottingham.

Forestry England, who operates the Sherwood Pines site, said the removal of bins

was the "right thing" for the environment and suggested visitors could take dog waste home in an old ice cream tub.

Jason Maclean, from Forestry England said: "We believe that this approach will help better preserve the forest, but it is also better for waste management and recycling."

However, some visitors were critical of the idea, and described the move to remove bins as "very strange". One visitor to the site, Steven Williams, told the BBC that people would want to dispose of dog mess in "some way".

The 56-year-old from Codnor Park said: "Human nature is not to carry a bag of dog poo around with you all day. The thought of people taking that home in their cars or their camper vans, it's not going to happen - that's going to be abandoned."

Forestry England suggested visitors bring scented bags, purpose-built pouches or old ice cream tubs and dispose of the dog waste when they get home.

Mr Maclean said: "The vast majority of people are responsible and we hope the responsible dog walkers continue to enjoy our woodlands but maybe plan ahead so that they bring a bag with them to take their dog poo home."

Forestry England said in a social media post litter bins could often cause "problems" and called on people to bring a bag and take litter home with them.

The measure, part of a nationwide initiative, would allow the body to redirect "limited time and resources into keeping the nation's forests thriving", Forestry England added.

It said: "They often overflow faster than we can empty them and they attract wildlife, spreading litter and harming animals."

Alex Dunderdale from Warwickshire agreed with the idea and said: "There's nothing worse than seeing overloaded bins. It encourages flies and wasps and people have got to be more responsible for their own litter."

However, the 56-year-old added dog waste was a "whole different ball game" and said Forestry England should provide bins for people to get rid of the mess.

Yvonne Taylor, who lives in Tenerife, said: "I don't think I've got enough faith in human nature to think that people would take all the litter home rather than use the bins, but it's a nice ideal."

Mr Maclean said Forestry England had recently invested "heavily" in things such as play areas and changing facilities.

"We think and hope that our visitors would agree that being able to do these types of things is a much better way of using our limited resources on site, than spending a lot of time and resources in dealing with waste and litter," he said.

"We very much hope that people can buy into that idea and support us by taking their litter home with them."

CLARE BUTLER reported for This is Wiltshire that a common gardening mistake landed one homeowner at risk of a £20,000 fine and now officials are urging others not to do the same.

Martin Fielding, from Stockport, thought it was just a “regular tree” he was trimming back in his garden until he received an unsettling letter from the council.

As more Brits dust off the tools and tidy up their gardens this spring, experts say thousands may unknowingly be breaking the law simply by cutting back or removing trees in their own backyard. According to home experts at My Home Improvements, many people don’t realise that trees in residential gardens may be protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).

It means that if you cut down, lop, damage, or destroy a protected tree without permission, it could result in criminal prosecution and a fine of up to £20,000 in a magistrates’ court.

Mr Fielding, 51, didn’t realise that certain trees, even if its in your garden, can be protected and explained “It was blocking the light in the conservatory and leaning over the fence. So I gave it a proper cut.”

However, soon after he received a letter from the local council telling him the tree was protected and that he may have breached the order by cutting back too much.

Mr Fielding continued “I didn’t even know such a thing existed. I thought trees in your own garden were your responsibility. I was shocked to learn I could be fined thousands.”

A TPO is a legal protection issued by your local council to prevent important trees from being cut, pruned, damaged or removed without consent. These orders apply to trees that have environmental, historical or aesthetic value and yes, even if they’re on your private property.

Failing to get approval before carrying out work on a protected tree is a criminal offence.

“The trouble is, most homeowners have no idea their tree is protected,” says Sophie Willoughby, a gardening expert who was contacted by My Home Improvements.

Sophie explains “It’s easy to think you’re just doing routine garden work, but one snip too many and you could face a hefty fine. Councils take it very seriously and so they should. Mature trees are crucial for wildlife and air quality.”

Before cutting or trimming any large trees, contact your local authority to find out if there’s a TPO in place. Don’t assume it’s okay just because it’s in your garden

Get written permission. If a tree is protected, you must apply for permission to do any work on it. Take photos before you prune. This helps if there’s any dispute over what was done.

Use a professional tree surgeon

A spokesperson from My Home Improvements, added: “Before you pick up the saw or shears, take a moment to check your tree isn’t protected. Councils don’t issue TPOs lightly and breaching one can land you in legal trouble.

“Whether you’re trimming, pruning or removing, always ask first, as it’s a simple step that could save you £20,000 and a trip to court.”

TO tree or not to be … that was the question for hedge in a cottage called Hamlet in a posh Norfolk village reported Chris Bishop for Eastern Daily Press.

For when the hedge outside shuffled off its mortal coil, its owner applied to take arms against a sea of troubles and chop it down.

Now officials have agreed the curtain can fall on the specimen on Station Road, at Burnham Market.

An application by the owner's agent said: "We wish to remove the conifer hedge as it is dead on one side and not very aesthetically pleasing. My customer wishes to replace this with trees or hedging to keep privacy to the property."

A council tree officer called into investigate said: "The proposed work to remove a dying conifer hedge will have no impact on the character of the Burnham Market Conservation Area."

They added permission was not needed to remove hedges in conservation areas.

CURTIS LANCASTER reprted for BBC News that residents have said they feel "extremely angry" after a council voted unanimously to protect a controversial oak tree.

Winchester City Council received an intention to fell the more than 40-year-old tree from neighbours who raised concerns that it could damage their properties.

Speaking at a council planning meeting, the local authority's tree officer John Bartlett said there was "no evidence of actual damage being caused".

The council approved a TPO, which legally protects it from damage or destruction.

Mr Bartlett said it contributed meaningfully to local biodiversity and visual amenity, adding that its ecological and landscape value outweighed the reported nuisance issues.

The oak, which is situated in a conservation area, is located in the garden of a home on Canon Street, close to Winchester Cathedral.

Dr Sandra Steel lives in a home on the adjacent St Swithun Street and spoke for residents at the planning meeting. She said "The spreading roots cause structural damage. Our historic houses are particularly vulnerable".

Some of the properties on the road date back to the 17th Century and Ms Steel said there was evidence of "cracks in garden walls". She added that it was increasing the insurance of the local houses.

Despite these claims the council approved the protection order and said further evidence would need to be provided to consider the felling of the tree.

On hearing that verdict, Ms Steel said: "You are waiting for our houses to fall down I guess."

Speaking after the meeting she said they all "feel extremely angry" and called it "quite ridiculous".

"An oak tree belongs an open area or a forest, not in gardens of historic houses," Ms Steel added.

At least nine residents raised concerns about the tree's proximity and size after they said it had grown by 6ft (1.8m) in the last year. They said that the height and mass of the tree combined with unpredictable weather patterns could lead to serious damage to properties or injury of residents.

They argued that any sustainable management plan would require pruning on a five-year cycle, which is seen as an unfair and impractical burden on residents.

The objectors added that the tree, which they claim blocks light and sheds a substantial amount of leaves and debris.

Council said it is willing to accept further reductions to previous cut points on a 5–10 year cycle to improve light penetration to surrounding properties.

FALMOUTH Town Council has weighed in on a growing controversy concerning the fate of three trees in a conservation area in Falmouth reported Lee Trewhela, Cornwall LDRS reporter, on Voice.

The healthy lime trees were saved twice this year and once last year following peaceful

protests by a campaign group called Stop the Chop! but there is concern Cornwall Council will still fell the much-loved trees in Trelawney Road.

Falmouth Town Council is supporting calls for an inquiry into the mystery of why exactly the trees have to be chopped down. Despite repeated requests, Cornwall Council has not revealed the legal reasons why the 60-year-old trees need to be felled.

Falmouth's mayor Alan Jewell has written to Bryan Skinner, head of transport in the Environment and Maritime Infrastructure department at Cornwall Council, strongly objecting to the loss of the mature trees.

ARMED with a litter picker and black bin bags, a retired couple have spent the last few months picking up rubbish and tidying a wood in Nottingham reported Maddy Bull for BBC News, Nottingham.

Karen and Paul Bausor have lived opposite Sellers Wood in Bulwell for 45 years. They walk their dog and take their grandchildren to play there, but Mrs Bausor told the BBC the area had recently become "overgrown and disgusting", and her husband said it was "neglected".

A spokesperson for Nottingham City Council, which manages the site, said the authority accepted that parts of the woodland were in need of "extensive intervention".

Mr Bausor said the area had been full of wildlife, including kingfishers and newts, and plants like the early purple orchid.

The 67-year-old said "It was so beautiful. You wouldn't believe you were in the middle of a council estate, but now it's all neglected. There are three inner-city primary schools around here, and they used to look at the trees and flowers, but now no-one comes."

Mrs Bausor, 66, said it was not just litter that she was concerned about.

"A ranger used to clear the paths, cut back the dead trees, and strim the meadow, but I've not seen anyone in a couple of months, so everything is overgrown," she explained.

"That's putting people off coming because it's so dark, and every time I hear footsteps or someone walking behind me, I jump. No light can get in."

Corall Jenkins, executive member for neighbourhoods, waste and equalities at Nottingham City Council, said: "Keeping the city's green spaces clean and tidy is an important priority for the council. Our teams are scheduled to empty the litter bins at Sellers Wood Nature Reserve on a twice weekly basis and we will be talking to the teams to ensure that this is happening."

Jenkins said the authority had also applied for funding to carry out "much needed" site improvements.

"The proposed project will focus on enhancing both the ecological health of the woodland and the visitor experience through a range of initiatives," she added.

EUROPEAN funds to prevent forest fires have been poorly targeted and sometimes distributed in a hurry, according to a report from the EU's spending watchdog reported Jennifer Rankin for The Guardian.

The number of forest fires in EU countries has increased dramatically over the last two decades as the climate crisis fuels ever bigger conflagrations. An area twice the size of Luxembourg has been consumed by flames in an average recent year, killing people, destroying homes and wildlife and sending megatonnes of planet-heating emissions into the air.

The European court of auditors praised the decision to devote more money to preventing fires but said European-funded projects were not always spent where they could make the biggest difference. In Greece, authorities were using a map drawn up in 1980 to assess the risk of forest fires. In Portugal, one area selected as a priority for funds contained a zone that was underwater due to a recently built dam.

The auditors raised the concerns against the backdrop of a sharp increase in EU funds to prevent and respond to forest fires. EU funding has increased through the €650bn (£42.2bn) Covid recovery fund, launched in 2020 with the aim of helping EU member states recover from the pandemic-induced crisis by strengthening environmental policies and their technological base.

Greece, for example, is on course to receive €837m (£715m) of recovery funds between 2020 and 2026 to combat forest fires, having benefited from €49m (£41.8m) in EU funds during the previous seven-year budget period. Spain and to a lesser extent Portugal have also seen a sharp uplift in EU funds dedicated to forest fires.

The €650bn (£42.2bn) recovery and resilience fund, almost entirely funded by borrowing on markets, has already been criticised by auditors as lacking transparency and accountability.

The latest report highlights how governments have felt pressure to spend money quickly, leading to questionable decisions. Portugal's rural fire management agency, for instance, was not involved in decisions on how to spend Covid recovery funds worth €615m (£524.8) over seven years to combat forest fires. A Portuguese authority due to receive fire engines could not meet a 48-hour deadline from Lisbon to outline its needs, and ultimately key decisions on the fleet of 55 vehicles were made by national officials.

EU funds can be spent on activities to prevent or respond quickly to fires, such as cutting back vegetation, or building roads to ensure firefighting trucks quickly reach forested areas. The temporary nature of the Covid recovery funds, which expire in 2026, also raised questions about future funding. Vegetation, for example, needs to be cut back every three to four years to maintain firebreaks.

Nikolaos Milionis, the ECA member in charge of the inquiry, said: "We found that on a positive note more human money is being spent on prevention of fires. However, the way the European-funded projects are selected means the money does not always go where it could make the biggest difference."

He said little was known about the results of EU-funded projects or whether they would be continued.

The European Commission, which oversees EU funds, has been contacted for comment.

Between 2021 and 2024 there were an annual average of 1,874 forest fires in the EU, burning 527,000 hectares a year, compared with an annual average of 567 fires between 2006 and 2010 that laid waste to 268,000 hectares a year.

KALI LINDSAY, Durham Reporter for ChronicleLive, reported that newly planted trees have been deliberately snapped by vandals at three different locations across North Tyneside.

The three groups of trees in Wallsend were planted as part of the council's environmental improvement programme, intended to enhance the local environment and support biodiversity.

At Boyd Road, Farringdon Road and Howdon Park, 11, 15 and three trees were planted respectively by North Tyneside Council. The council was first made aware of the vandalism at the Boyd Road location, where 10 of the 11 trees have now been destroyed, just weeks after being planted.

Initially, five of the trees had been snapped, prompting the council to install strong protective cages around the remaining six in the hope of deterring further vandalism. Despite this, the cages themselves have now been forcibly bent and broken – and five of the six protected trees have now been damaged beyond saving.

Now, all three trees at Howdon Park, and two of the 15 trees at Farringdon Road, have been snapped. Councillor Sandra Graham, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Tackling the Climate Emergency at North Tyneside Council, said: "The vandalism of the newly planted trees in North Tyneside is utterly disappointing.

"They were planted as part of our commitment to improving air quality and making our communities greener and more pleasant places to live. To mindlessly destroy them is not only disrespectful to our environment, but also to our residents.

"Many of our trees are planted by local schools or community groups, which makes these acts even more detrimental as their efforts are being cruelly undone. We'll continue to do everything we can to protect our green spaces and young trees, but we ask residents to come forward if they have any information."

The council's tree planting group has advised against replanting trees at the same location, as further vandalism is highly likely. Alternative, more suitable sites within Wallsend are now being considered for the group originally planted at Boyd Road.

Although the trees are not protected under Tree Preservation Orders due to their age, the council is treating the incidents as acts of anti-social behaviour. The tree-planting initiative forms part of the council's Ambition for Wallsend programme, which aims to make the area a more attractive place to live and visit.

Residents who witnessed anything suspicious or have information about the vandalism should send Northumbria Police a direct message on social media or use the live chat and report forms on the Force website.

VISITORS to a popular walking spot in Nottinghamshire are being urged to take responsibility for their rubbish, especially dog poo bags reported Jake Garner for BBC News, Nottingham.

There are no bins at Thieves Wood near Mansfield and, despite clear "no litter" signs, piles of rubbish and discarded waste bags are often found scattered around the woodland, with the latter even sometimes left hanging from tree branches.

Sarah Dennis, who runs a food truck in the site's car park, said it was "horrible" and affected her business.

Forestry England, which manages the area, said bins at its other sites were frequently vandalised and posed a risk to wildlife.

Bins have never been installed at Thieves Wood, instead visitors are expected to take their rubbish home with them.

Ms Dennis said piles of dog waste bags deterred customers from using the picnic area, adding “People always ask my why there are no dog waste bins, and I end up feeling responsible," she added.

She told the BBC a recycling bin, attached to her van, is sometimes misused by visitors disposing of dog waste bags.

"I know people don't want it in their cars, but if they used something like a nappy bin in the boot, it wouldn't smell. I have to take all that home and sort through it. It's like picking up after someone else's dog and putting it in their car, you just wouldn't do it."

Dog walker Claire Vincent, who regularly visits the forest with her nine-year-old dog Ollie, said the responsibility was with the owners.

The 54-year-old added "It doesn't bother me that there are no bins, but it does bother me that people leave dog waste. You can just take it home, I don't see the issue. They put up signs recently, and the next day over 20 bags were left at the entrance. I just don't get it."

Professional dog walker Kate Sheppard, 48, thinks bins would "make a huge difference".

She said: "Despite the signs, people still leave litter. It's unsightly and a health risk. I pay for my own waste disposal, maybe visitors would be willing to pay a small fee for bins. I always take my waste away, and it frustrates me that others don't."

Plans to remove bins at Sherwood Pines, also operated by Forestry England, have recently come under criticism. Some visitors there were critical of the idea, and argued it was unrealistic to expect people to take dog waste home with them, but Forestry England said waste bins caused more problems than they prevented.

A spokesperson said: "They can quickly become mixed with different types of waste, may be vandalised, and often fill up faster than we can empty them. They also attract wildlife, especially when people leave litter on the ground nearby. Animals can mistake this litter for food, harming themselves and spreading waste further across the forest."

CHRIS BISHOP reported for Eastern Daily Press that Plans for two new homes to be built on the edge of a Norfolk town have been agreed, as long as trees on the site are protected.

West Norfolk Council has given the go-ahead for land on the outskirts of Downham Market to be developed. Three new properties were originally proposed for the site on the junction of London Road and the main A1122, but the number was reduced to two four-bedroom houses after concerns were raised over the loss of trees.

The council's tree officer said they contributed to "the landscape and amenity of the area" and said a preservation order was being drafted to project them.

He said the revised plans were an improvement, with one of the plots being moved further away from a group of ash trees, but he added no work should be carried out until a tree protection plan had been agreed with the Council.

MILES DAVIS, BBC Devon political reporter, reported that trees in ancient woodland could be cut down and homes and gardens compulsorily purchased as part of a £156m scheme to improve a traffic junction.

Plymouth City Council is consulting on plans to add new lanes on the approaches and exits of Manadon roundabout to the north of the city to increase capacity.

Tree protection campaigners are concerned that could mean cutting down trees in Manadon Wood and said there was a lack of trust in the council after it cut down more than 100 trees at night in Armada Way.

The city council said it was negotiating with property owners about buying land and some trees would have to be felled but said it would plant new trees in their place.

One of the proposals is to add another lane on the approach to the roundabout on the A386 Outland Road which runs alongside ancient woodland.

Dave Curno is a volunteer with Plymouth Tree People, a charity that works to protect and increase the number of trees in the city. He said: "The council has said there will be a lot of trees that need to be removed and they will be doing a three-for-one replacement.

"Our worry is that doesn't value the trees as they are. So a little sapling might not need replacing whereas some of the ancient or veteran trees are much more valuable and the ancient woodland in particular is irreplaceable."

Mr Curno said following the Armada Way tree-felling, trust in the council "does need to be built up". He said: "The Armada Way independent learning review stated that trust is the one thing the council needed to work on and this is the sort of scheme they can use to work on that trust."

John Stevens, cabinet member for transport at the Labour-led council, said the council was consulting on all aspects of the scheme: "We have learned, we are a learning council."

Stevens said some trees would have to be removed "inevitably" but the council would replace each tree lost with "at least three trees".

Regarding the possibility of compulsory purchase orders on homes and land in the area to facilitate the project, Stevens said: "In all schemes where you're expecting improvements to lanes there might be the loss of some land but that wouldn't be against the will of the people who are actually living in them now."

Plymouth City Council has £133m of funding from the Department for Transport to pay for the scheme and said it wanted to improve traffic flow for everyone passing through Manadon as the city expands.

The effectiveness of the plans and the cost of the scheme are also being called into question by the Conservative councillor for the area, Chris Wood. He said: "Plymouth does not have a very good track record of either financial management or project delivery.

"The amount of disruption residents are going to face for ten years - people losing their gardens, losing their houses as well. There's a lot of concern locally and we need to make sure the council are actually listening and can adapt the scheme to suit local people's needs."

PROTECTED trees and ancient woodland in Maidenhead would suffer ‘unacceptable harm’ were a four-storey tall block of flats approved, a planning inspector has ruled reported Sam Leech for the Maidenhead Advertiser.

Plans for the eight flats at Fairview, a detached home in Shoppenhangers Road, had been rejected by RBWM over the risk of harm to several trees at the site.

In an appeal decision, a Government planning inspector found that protected trees and ancient woodland backing onto Maidenhead Golf Course would likely be put at risk.

Developer Gill Capital Homes Limited submitted its plans for the Shoppenhangers Road site last year. The company planned to demolish Fairview and build eight one and two bedroom flats in its place.

An RBWM assessment of the plot described a protected mature oak tree at the roadside front of Fairview and an ancient woodland by Maidenhead Golf Course to its rear. The ancient woodland is registered in Natural England’s Inventory, which records woodland more than 400 years old and includes nearby Rushington Copse in the golf course.

A lawn around the oak tree would be dug up and replaced with a car park for the new flats, which council officers feared would cause harm to its roots. Plans to use ‘hand tools’ to dig around the roots of the oak, instead of heavy machinery, were proposed in the developer’s tree assessment of the site.

However, RBWM’s assessment said hand-digging was ‘not a reliable form of mitigation’ and would still likely mean tree roots are ‘severed’. RBWM later refused the application and cited a failure ‘to demonstrate proper protection of ancient woodland and trees’.

The developer though, argued its plans were acceptable in an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate. A statement of case on its appeal said the developer ‘strongly believes that the proposed development provides a valuable opportunity to enhance the local housing stock’.

It said problems raised by the council could be ‘adequately addressed’ with ‘minor amendments and additional evidence’. However, in a report published last month, the inspector found in favour of the council and dismissed the appeal.

The inspector said the developer had given a 'lack of detailed information' about how it would protect the oak tree and not carried out an assessment for trees in the ancient woodland.

The inspector concluded, 'the proposed development would cause unacceptable harm to protected trees'.

Gill Capital had submitted a bid for RBWM to cover its appeal costs and for its reapplication fee to be waived. It said this was because of 'the belief that the resubmission will be for a starkly similar, if not almost identical scheme which has been supplemented with additional information'. The inspector also rejected this bid.

Since appeal proceedings began, the developer has submitted a new application for eight flats at the site.

The Woodland Trust has submitted an objection to its plan and RBWM's tree team said, 'the current proposals are likely to cause deterioration of the ancient woodland'.

STUART ARNOLD, Local Democracy Reporting Service, reported for TeesideLive that the National Trust has defended tree felling operation on historic estate after concern over scale and timing.

The National Trust says it is satisfied with measures put in place to protect wildlife after concern was expressed about trees being cut down at Ormesby Hall during bird nesting season.

The trust, which is responsible for the upkeep of the hall and surrounding estate, said it had carried out risk management which was "above and beyond the norm" prior to the start of the work this month.

It previously applied for planning permission, which was subsequently granted, to fell about a hundred trees suffering from ash dieback, along with a small number of other species, including poplar, sycamore and birch either deemed dangerous due to their age, or poorly formed.

An original timetable envisaged the work could take place in January and February, but this was pushed back so an in-depth ecology assessment could take place, while it was also deemed preferable to carry out management of the woodland affected during drier months. One local resident, who said she was a regular visitor to the historic estate, but did not wish to be named, said spring and early summer was a time when birds were laying eggs and raising fledglings.

She said: "I appreciate that the trust may have obtained planning permission related to ash dieback and I understand the need for action in certain cases. However, the current scale and timing of the felling is deeply concerning, not only because of its potential impact on nesting birds, but also due to how much of the woodland is being removed in one go.

"It's hard to reconcile such extensive clearance, during peak nesting season, with the trust's stated commitment to protecting wildlife and enhancing biodiversity. Why could this not have been scheduled for after the nesting season, in autumn for example?"

Much of the work is taking place in Pennyman's Woods, which is popular with walkers, and borders onto Ladgate Lane.

Mark Bradley, a countryside manager employed by the trust, who is managing the project, said: "Whilst not ideal to carry out tree felling through bird nesting season, there is a balance to doing the work in drier ground conditions and thus preventing damage to the forest soils and potential issue with run off to water courses.

"Protecting soil is important for the whole woodland ecosystem, as we know a well-managed woodland with a diverse range of age structures is a much better habitat for a wider range of bird species than an even aged woodland."

Mr Bradley said pre-checks had been carried out using GPS mapping technology, which had enabled exclusion zones to be set up around nesting sites. He said: "To manage risks, before we began the tree work, we assessed the site and considered what needed doing against the potential impacts on wildlife and the environment.

"We also do what we reasonably can to avoid disturbing or damaging birds' nests. We also take extra care to look for wildlife that has special protection, including badgers, bats and rare or threatened birds and either suspend or alter work to make sure this special wildlife is protected.

"Once completed, this work will give the woodland on the Ormesby Hall estate a much better and more diverse habitat."

Mr Bradley added: "As Europe's largest conservation charity, we take all our work of this nature extremely seriously and operate to what we believe are the highest standards. Our risk management of nest sites is above and beyond the norm."

A spokesman said: "The work being undertaken is that which we referred to last year. We had initially planned to do the work towards the end of winter, but we wanted to wait for the contractor to carry out a full in-depth ecology assessment before commencing.

"Once this was completed, they advised the work would be better being carried out when the ground was drier, which is why it started this month. We are satisfied with the measures put in place to protect all wildlife that could potentially be affected and would not have agreed to this work had this not been the case."

The trust previously said some trees infected with ash dieback potentially posed a risk to the public should they be sufficiently weakened and collapse. The fungi, which attacks the leaves and branches of ash trees, causes fatal lesions and has been of increasing concern to land owners and local authorities in recent years due to its rapid spread.

Planting of native broad leaf species is due to take place in the felled areas at a later stage, which is aimed at providing a more diverse age and species rich woodland.

PARTS of the A14 "still look like a desert" after after many thousands of saplings died, reported Hannah Brown, Local Democracy Reporting Service, for BBC News.

More than 860,000 trees were planted between Cambridge and the A1, when the A14 upgrade was completed in 2020. Many died and had to be replaced by National Highways.

A Cambridgeshire County Council meeting highlighted the work the agency still has to complete, including more tree planting, restoring land and repairing a bridleway.

National Highways said: "Our ongoing environmental work remains a long-term project that we will continue to monitor and support. We take our responsibility to the environment very seriously. The A14 upgrade project was not limited to just improving the road."

A highways and transport committee meeting lasr month discussed a council report on the outstanding work needed to complete the upgrade project, as reported by the Local Democracy Reporting Service.

Alex Beckett, the chair of the committee,

agreed areas of the A14 "still looks like a desert out there" when the trees "should be thriving", adding it was "incredibly frustrating" National Highways had not provided requested information.

This included detailed evidence of why the initial planting failed, where the new trees were planted, the results of surveys and an improved planting plan to ensure better success, the council said.

About 270 hectares (670 acres) of habitat, including 40 native tree and shrub species, was created for wildlife along the new section of the A14, which realigned the dual carriageway south of Huntingdon.

National Highways said in 2022 about 20-30% of the trees had died but all were replanted and has since said 165,000 trees and shrubs were planted between October 2023 and April 2024, 90% of which have survived.

In the meantime, people living along the road have taken matters into their own hands by planting their own trees.

Histon and Impington councillor Ros Hathorn said a "massive screen of established trees, hedgerows" had been lost and people now "live with noise every single hour of every single day".

National Highways still has to restore land used as mineral barrow pits; detrunk the remaining section of the old A14; repair a bridleway constructed as part of the project and open access to a "landlocked" former services at Lolworth

The agency confirmed it intends to undertake a detailed assessment of the pits; it needs to do minor works to the old A14 section before it can be detrunked; it has yet to confirm when it will carry out the bridleway works; and it has put forward a proposed access route to the former Lolworth services.

RICHARD YOULE reported for the BBC Local Democracy Reporting Service that Woodland where 12 football fields worth of trees was illegally felled by its owner is to become a nature reserve after an organisation which helped in a long-running court case bought the land.

Jeff Lane caused a "devastating loss" to the environment by the illegal felling of 2,000 trees in 2019 on more than eight hectares (20 acres) on Gower, Swansea. At the time, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) called it the worst case of illegal tree felling it had seen in 30 years.

Gower Society, whose aerial photos provided evidence in the case, has bought the land and said the area would become a "haven" for wildlife in the centre of Gower.

The Gower Society formed in 1947 to protect and promote the landscape and history of the peninsula, which became the UK's first area of outstanding natural beauty in 1956.

For the last two decades it has taken aerial photos of Gower and one of these in 2020 showed land at The Old Forge farm at Lower Fairwood being far less wooded compared to an aerial photo it had taken five years previously.

Landowner Thomas Jeffrey Lane was convicted at Swansea Magistrates' Court in

2022 of breaching a section of the Forestry Act.

The court heard he had cut down about 21 acres of woodland, the equivalent of 12 football pitches, without holding an appropriate licence, along with non-compliance with an enforcement notice to restock trees he had previously felled in 2019.

Gower Society said it would lease the 43-acre site to a wildlife trust to manage as a reserve.

"It was a big decision, and a lot of money," said Jill Burgess, a trustee of the society. "We think it's going to be a wonderful legacy."

The land acquired by the Gower Society had been put up for sale for £390,000 but "after some difficult negotiations" it was able to purchase it, according to minutes from a meeting in March of the Gower national landscape advisory group.

This will be a major contribution to the landscape and a haven for wildlife in the centre of Gower, linking up with other wildlife trust reserves," said the society.

The reserve will be created by the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales.

"This will ensure the future protection of this site and its wildlife, and support work to restore its habitats and species," said the trust, which added that it would not be open to the public.

DANNY THOMPSON reported for CoventryLive that a tree surgeon was fined after what has been described as a 'deeply distressing incident' by Warwickshire Rural Crime Team.

Officers were informed by a member of the public of a hired tree surgeon was spotted discarding a live nest from tree branches he was cutting, with chicks seen falling to the ground.

Investigating the incident, police identified the person responsible who admitted to destroying a wild bird nest. A breach of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

A spokesman for Warwickshire Rural Crime Team said: "We were recently contacted by a concerned member of the public who witnessed a deeply distressing incident during tree works in a residential area in Wellesbourne.

“A tree surgeon, hired to remove branches, was seen tipping a live magpie nest, causing chicks to fall to the ground, before removing and destroying the section of the tree that contained the nest. Thanks to the swift action of the member of the public and our rapid response, we were able to locate a fallen magpie and the remains of the destroyed nest on the ground.

"Following our investigation, the individual responsible admitted to destroying a wild bird nest, which is a criminal offence under UK law.

"This action is a breach of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which clearly states: 'If any person intentionally takes, damages or destroys the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built, they shall be guilty of an offence'."

The offence is listed as: Section 1(1)(b), Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 The spokesman added: "To acknowledge the harm caused, the tree surgeon has paid £400 in compensation to the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds), supporting efforts to protect wild birds and their habitats.

"Destroying an active nest is a criminal offence that can lead to prosecution, fines, and reputational damage. We thank the vigilant member of the public whose quick action helped us intervene. Their compassion prevented further harm and I am pleased to report that the magpies have been seen since and are believed to be doing well.

"Let this serve as a reminder: wild birds need our protection, especially during nesting season. Every nest matters. Nesting season typically runs March to August," the spokesman shared. "It is illegal to cut or disturb trees, hedges, or shrubs if there is an active nest.

"Before starting any outdoor work you should thoroughly check for nests, postpone work if a nest is in use and when unsure, consult a licensed ecologist or wildlife authority."

RESIDENTS are “angry and upset” after trees were “ripped into like dinosaurs” to build homes reported Nathan Okell for the Warrington Guardian.

Preparation work has commenced as part of the Peel Hall housing development in Houghton Green, which will see around 1,200 new homes constructed. Plans have been submitted by developer Countryside for phase two of the scheme, which seeks approval for the layout, scale, appearance, and landscaping for 501 dwellings.

It also includes public open space, including an area of play, as well as internal estate roads and footways, but this preparation work has been criticised by those living near the site.

Geoff Settle, chair of Warrington Nature Conservation Forum and a former mayor of Warrington, said: “Residents are very angry and upset about the way the mature trees are being ripped out of the ground, and the distress this activity is causing to wildlife, especially birds.

“I have met up with a lot of familiar faces who have told me of their concerns. One said that seeing a video of a young deer running across roads and jumping fences reduced her to tears. Creatures are being flushed out of their home environment and into the traffic and gardens, and even the local bird of prey is having a hard time. The resident also told me that a friend of hers now has seen foxes in her garden because of the clearance work.

“People who back onto the tree removals look out of their upstairs windows claim that no noticeable care or attention is being taken by contractors during the bird nesting season. “Work should involve checking trees for nests and eggs. It is only a matter of time before hedgehogs will be coming off the Peel Hall fields, and in full bloom are more than 100 rare northern marsh orchids in the sodden patches off Radley Lane. At least greater crested newts are protected in a pond approximately meters away.”

Other concerns raised include asbestos left behind from when 12 old garages were dismantled by Warrington Borough Council years ago. Flooding on Birch Avenue, contractors using Elm Avenue, the loss of trees, and a colony of bats that fly over their rooftops to feed, are other issues.

One resident said: “Surely they do not have to rip every tree out. They took all the trees from behind ours, which were full of birds and are now just nothing. I was praying that they would leave the big ash tree, but no, they came back at a later date and just chopped it down.”

Another witnessed large machines ‘ripping into woodland like dinosaurs’. When she challenged the contractors, they told her that they were just doing a job of work, that they had mouths to feed, and that they were only following instructions.

A further concern Geoff has is the noise and pollution from the M62, where families will live closest to the motorway. He took sound measurements along the right-of-way footpath alongside the motorway, and these are regarded to be ‘very high’, especially when families are in their gardens or walking in the ‘nature’ area next to the slow lane of the motorway.

He said. “The inspector at the inquiry made it a condition of development that acoustic fences should adequately reduce sound levels. Windows that cannot be opened that face the motorway are not satisfactory. It will be like living in a factory or a prison.

“During phase one, Countryside boasted to the planning committee that it was giving the council millions of pounds in compensation. Yet funds are not available to upgrade an old and very narrow country lane, with high traffic flows and narrow carriageways.

“Warrington Borough Council could make improvements to Delph Lane safe by directing section 106 money to build a pavement, repaint ‘slow down’ signs, and more. After all, 1,200-plus vehicles will potentially be using the lane, where wing mirrors have been found in the gutter, and two sandstone walls were demolished within the last 12 months.”

On the issue of pollutants, Geoff received an email from Professor Jo Blair, based at Alder Hey Children’s Hospital, stating that microscopic pollutants can cause great harm.

Geoff added: “There are four main issues that need to be resolved. Protection for nature, damage to health and wellbeing, water flow and drainage, and highways issues. “These were raised as an issue of great concern during the inquiry. United Utilities has yet to comment about the latter until it has evaluated the situation, and it has requested that the development management committee should not proceed until they have submitted their findings.

“I would ask anyone who has serious concerns about activities in preparing the site should address them to the police on 101 and ask for the rural crime team.”

A council spokesman said: “All issues reported to us have been investigated, and there are no current planning breaches in respect of this site. We remain in close contact with Countryside as it progresses on-site with the consented development.”

Tree Preservation Orders and Conservation Area news

Broadland Tree Preservation Orders Served, Confirmed and Revoked

TPO No	*Address where tree(s) are located*	*Date served*	*Trees to be protected*	*Status*
2024 No BD0657	Front garden of Orchard House, Laburnum Drive, **Blofield**	07/05/2024	**T1 oak**	Provisional
2024 No BD0704	Front garden of Glencoe, 7 The Street, **Ringland**	20/11/2024	**T1, T2, T3 & T4 cedar**	Provisional
2024 No BD0723	Middle of The Green, Liz Jones Way, **Aylsham**	13/12/2024	**T1 oak**	Confirmed
2024 No BD0727	The Limes, Church Hill, **Beighton**	24/12/2024	**T1 & T2 lime.**	Confirmed with modifications
2025 No BD0730	Land east of Flambirds, Buxton Road, **Cawston**	29/01/2025	**T1** and **T2 oak**	Provisional
2025 No BD0732	Front garden of Thirfield, 8 Station Road, **Salhouse**	13/02/2025	**T1 oak**	Provisional
2025 No BD0734	Front garden of 3 Bircham Road, **Reepham**	19/02/2025	**T1 silver birch**	Provisional
2025 No BD0736	Front garden of 219B St Faiths Road, **Old Catton**	25/02/2025	**T1 oak.**	Provisional
2025 No BD0742	Rear of The Reading Room, Church Lane, **Burgh**	03/04/2025	**G1 2 x oak**	Provisional
2025 No BD0746	Highway verge adjacent to 3 Park Lane, **Reepham**	06/05/2025	**T1 oak**	Provisional
2025 No BD0748	Front and side garden and boundary between 40 & 42 Norwich Road, **Cawston**	16/05/2025	**T1 oak**	Provisional
2025 No BD0750	Land to the south of 10 The Street and east of 8 The Street, **South Walsham**	11/06/2025	**T1 oak**	Provisional
2025 No BD0755	Rear of Village Hall, 19 Crowes Loke, **Little Plumstead**	20/06/2025	**G1 2 x oak**	Provisional

Current Works to Trees Subject to a Tree Preservation Order and Section 211 Notifications for Works to Trees Within Conservation Areas

App No	*Address where tree(s) are located*	*Cat*	*Species and requested works*	*Decision*
2025/1187	11 Seton Road, **Taverham**	TPO	**T1 oak** - reduce 2 lowest lateral limbs growing over 11 Wiffy by 2.5m to suitable growth points. **T2 oak**- reduce 1 low lateral limb growing over 11 Wiffy by 2.5m to suitable growth points. Approx length of lower limbs 6-7m.	19/05/2025
2025/1213	Cedar House, 10 Parkside Drive, **Old Catton**	211	**T1 oak** – fell.	No objection
2025/1246	Patterson Lodge, 14 Great Hautbois Road, **Coltishall**	TPO	**T1 oak** – fell.	01/05/2025
2025/1269	The Manor House, Church Street, **Old Catton**	211	**Holly** – remove.	No objection
2025/1282	1 The Stables, Hospital Road, **Little Plumstead**	TPO	**T8 sweet chestnut** - reduce lowest limb to south from 2.5m back to stem. Reduce crown to east from 6m to 4m. **T9 pedunculate oak** - reduce height from 17m to 10 - 11m and southern radial spread from 6m to 4m.	Approved
2025/1286	1 Francis Stone Court, Saint Andrews Park, **Thorpe St Andrew**	TPO	**T2 pine -** ht 12m, w 6m. Crown reduce lateral limbs by up to approx 2m to reshape, whilst reducing height by approx 1.5m - 2m.	Approved
2025/1295	Oak Cottage, 113 Yarmouth Road, **Thorpe St Andrew**	211	**T7 *Pinus Sylvestris*** - crown lift to 5m.	No objection
2025/1303	Fir Tree Corner, 1A Station Road, **Brundall**	TPO	**G1 western red cedar** - average height 12m. Reduce height by 2 to 3m. Branch tips to be reduced by 1m. Crown lift alongside house for 2m clearance from building and in front driveway to 4m. Reduce stem leaning toward house.12m to 2m. **Small dead tree** - fell.	Split decision

2025/1316	Maingay House, Abbots Close, **Aylsham**	211	**G001 mixed species** - crown lift to 2.4m over footpath and strip ivy. **T001 Himalayan birch & T003 Himalayan birch** - crown Lift to 2.4m over road. **T004 common beech** - epicormic removal and sever and strip ivy. **T007 rowan & T009 common holly** - epicormic removal, **T010 silver birch** - fell dead tree**. T016 wild cherry** - height 14m, spread 6m. Crown reduce from structure by up to 2m. **T019 fig -** height 3m, spread 2m. Crown reduce from structure by up to 2m. **T020 *Prunus*** - crown lift to 2.4m over footpath and strip ivy. **T021 Norway maple** - sever and strip ivy. **T025 wild cherry** - height 9m, spread 8m. Crown reduce from structure by up to 2m. **T027 & T030 common holly** - sever and strip ivy. **T033 field maple** - height 11m, spread 3m. Crown lift to 2.4m over footpath and crown reduce from structure by up to 2m. **T035 cabbage tree** - fell 1 stem leaning over footpath.	20/06/2025
2025/1318	1 Booton Road, **Cawston**	211	**BHHT001 rowan** - height 6m, crown radius 2m. Crown lift to 2.4m over footpath. **BHHT002 whitebeam**- height 11m, crown radius 6m. Crown lift to 2.4m over footpath and reduce back from structure to give 2m clearance.	03/06/2025
2025/1347	2 The Cottage Drive, **Thorpe St Andrew**	TPO	**T1 beech** - property side crown reduction by 1.5-2m from 28-30m.	Approved
2025/1348	12 Bulwer Road, **Buxton**	TPO	**T1 sycamore** - remove lower branches to give 3m clearance. **T6 sycamore** - height approx 6m. Lower canopy by 3m. **T3 & T4 sycamore** - fell.	Split decision
2025/1361	Redwood, 92 Charles Avenue, **Wroxham**	TPO	**T1 Wellingtonia** - fell	Refused
2025/1347	2 The Cottage Drive, **Thorpe St Andrew**	TPO	**T1 beech** - crown reduction on property side by 1.5-2m from 28-30m.	Approved
2025/1348	12 Bulwer Road, **Buxton**	TPO	**T1 sycamore** – crown raise to 3m. **T6 sycamore** - approx 16m tall. Lower canopy by 3m. **T3 & T4 sycamore** - fell.	Split decision
2025/1361	Redwood, Charles Close, **Wroxham**	TPO	**T1 Wellingtonia** - fell.	Refused
2025/1381	1 Booton Road, **Cawston**	211	**BHHT001 rowan** - height 6m, crown radius 2m. Crown lift to 2.4m over footpath. **BHHT002 whitebeam**- height 11m, crown radius 6m. Crown lift to 2.4m over footpath, reduce back from structure to give 2m clearance.	No objection
2025/1382	Owl Cottage, 2 Church Lane, **Cawston**	211	**BHHT006 Turkey oak** - crown lift to 2.4m over footpath and to 5.2m over highway. **BHHT007 not identified** - fell.	No objection
2025/1386	35 High Street, **Cawston**	211	**T1 silver birch & T2 whitebeam** - crown lift to 2.4m over footpath. **T3 Judas tree** - remove tree stake and tie. **T4 lime** - fell fallen tree. **T5 common ash**- sever Ivy. **T6 not Identified** - fell**.** **T7 common ash** - reduce back from structure by up to 2m, ivy strip. **T8 hawthorn**- reduce back from structure by up to 2m.	No objection
2025/1389	17 Mill Lane, **Aylsham**	TPO	**T1 cherry** - root prune to enable repair to footpath.	Approved
2025/1418	Loke Cottage, 35 Chapel Street, **Cawston**	211	**T1 copper beech** - crown lift to a height of 3.8m.	No objection
2025/1424	Leeder House, 1 Leeder Hil, **Postwick**	TPO	**G1 4 x Leyland cypress**- fell and replant. **G2 3 x *sycamore*** - fell. **G3 4 x sycamore -** spread approx 7-8m. Reduce lowest lateral branches on northern side of crown by approx 3/4m.	30/05/2025
2025/1426	Porthcothan House, 40 The Avenue, **Wroxham**	211	**T1 holm oak -** height 15m width 13m. Reduce height by approx 2.5m. **T2 lime** - height 20m width 6m. Reduce height by approx 3m.	19/05/2025
2025/1434	Braydescroft, 3 Strumpshaw Road, **Brundall**	TPO	**Golden cypress** - 3-stem. Fell and replant	27/05/2025
2025/1463	Saxon Haus, 16A Harvey Lane, **Thorpe St Andrew**	211	**2 x sycamore, 3 x lime, 5 x beech** - height approx 28m. 2m crown reduction. **1 x beech** - fell and replant.	No objection
2025/1474	87A Yarmouth Road, **Thorpe St Andrew**	211	**G1 lime x 5** - re-pollard to previous pollard points as part of the cutting cycle.	No objection
2025/1500	Lucky For Some, 13 Millgate, **Aylsham**	211	**T1** - reduce/prune from 8 to 6m by 1.5 to 2m.	No objection
2025/1520	Oaklee, 68 Saint Williams Way, **Thorpe St Andrew**	TPO	**T1 English oak** - height 20m and width 18m. Reduce crown by 20% removing 4m in height to 16m and 3.6m in width to15.4m.	20/05/2025
2025/1521	36B Waterloo Road, **Hainford**	TPO	**T1 & T2 English oaks** - reduce to 3m monoliths	20/05/2025
2025/1522	The Oaks, 134 Shakespeare Way, **Taverham**	TPO	**T1 English oak** - height 20m, current width 8m. 20% reduction removing 4m in height to 16m and 2m in width to 6m.	20/05/2025
2025/1534	9 The Street, **Heydon**	211	**T1 oak x 3** - fell.	No objection
2025/1536	2 Widows Row, The Green, **Heydon**	211	**T1 sycamore** - fell.	No objection

2025/1537	Church View, The Street, **Heydon**	211	**T1 holly** - fell.	No objection
2025/1538	Park Farm, Park Lane, **Heydon**	211	**T1 Deodar** and T2 **fir tree**- fell.	No objection
2025/1557	23 Oakfield Road, **Aylsham**	211	**T1 Eucalyptus** – fell.	No objection
2025/1564	Anniversary Cottage, The Moor, **Reepham**	211	**T1 silver birch** – height 7m, diameter 0.5m, canopy width 3m. Reduce canopy height by 2m and canopy width by 0.5m.	No objection
2025/1565	59 Saint Michaels Avenue, **Aylsham**	TPO	**T1 common oak** - height 10m diameter 1m, canopy width 8m. Reduce large over-extended limb to the east over the garden by 3m. Reduce remainder of canopy by 1.5m. **T2 common oak** - height 15m, diameter 1.5m, canopy width 12m. Reduce eastern portion of canopy by 3.5m.	Approved
2025/1573	41 School Road, **Drayton**	TPO	**T1 beech** - reduce NW radial spread from 7.5m to 5m and shape into crown. **T2 sycamore** - remove lateral branch on the north side at approximately 7m (approx 15cm diameter) and smaller over-extended branch just above, at approx 8 m (approx 6cm diameter).	27/05/2025
2025/1574	14 Church Close, **South Walsham**	TPO	**T1 oak** - crown thin by 10%, reduce canopy by 3-4m from 10m. **T2 oak** - reduce canopy by 2m from 7m mainly over property. **T3 oak** - reduce canopy by 2m from 6.5m mainly over property. **T4 oak**- reduce canopy by 3-4m from 10m only over property. **T5 oak** - crown lift over garden to remove 4 lowest branches to match.	29/05/2025
2025/1575	Adj St Lawrence Church, The Street, **South Walsham**	TPO	**T3 & T4 lime** – fell.	Withdrawn
2025/1576	Holly House, 4 Stanmore Road, **Thorpe St Andew**	211	**T1 yew** - reduce and shape from approx 12m to 9m in height and 10m to 7m in width by 3m in height and width. **T2 ash** - reduce and shape from approx 6m to 5m in height and 3.5m to 2.5m in width. **T3 & T4 blue conifer** - fell. **T5 & T6 conifer** - reduce height from approx 6m to 5m. **T7 conifer** - reduce from approx 10m to 5m in height. **T8, T9 & T10 holly** - reduce from approx 7m to 6m in height.	No objection
2025/1581	Land At Littlewood House, School Road, **Drayton**	TPO	**T1 spruce, T2 & T3 Scots pine, T10) Norway maple, T11 sweet chestnut & T14 English oak -** fell under an exception of the TPO restrictions for dead trees.	Exempt tree works
2025/1582	Scotch Hill, Scotch Hill Road, **Taverham**	TPO	**T1-T5 Norway spruce (T1 G002583) Norway spruce x 3 (T7-11) Norway spruce (T1 C00287) Norway spruce x 2 (T13) sycamore (T14-16) Norway spruce (T2 C002593) mixed broad/conifers (T17) silver birch (T3 C002597//0 silver birch x 3 (T18) silver birch (T4 C002599) silver birch x 1 (T19-T29) Norway spruce (T30) silver birch** - fell under an exception of the TPO restrictions for dead trees.	Exempt tree works
2025/1592	30 Stuart Road, **Aylsham**	211	**G1 hawthorn** in rear hedge. Reduce height from 6m to 2m.	03/05/2025
2025/1596	49 Silk Mill Road, **Hellesdon**	TPO	**T1 unspecified species** - fell under an exception of the TPO restrictions for dead trees.	Exempt tree works
2025/1610	The Orchards, 20 Norwich Road, **Aylsham**	211	**T4 sweet chestnut** - tip reduce live growth on living branches by 1-2m. **T9 holly** - fell. **T12 yew** - reduce height from 16m to 13m and crown spread to the north from 7.5m to 5m radius. **T20 locust tree** - fell decayed stem. **T29 yew** - reduce impact damaged branches over highway to give a 5.5m ground clearance. **T35 tulip** - tip-reduce branches of eastern stem with open cavities by approx 2m height from 26m to 24m and crown spread to north-east by 1.5m from 8.5m to 7m in radius. **T6 yew** - remove one low branch to the east and tip-reduce the small branches over clothes drying area. **T7 & T8 yew** - tip-reduce lowest branches by no more than 2m to natural growth points to west over neighbouring access drive.**T36 yew & T37 Portugal laurel** - tip-reduce side branches by no more than 1.5m from 5.5m to 4m over drying area**.**	No objection
2025/1612	Burgh House, Burgh Road, **Aylsham**	211	**T1 ash** - fell. **T2 & T4 ash & T3 hornbeam** - reduce laterals to give 2m clearance from boundary. **T5 beech** - reduce crown 4.5m.	No objection
2025/1615	The Limes, Church Hill, **Beighton**	TPO	**T1 & T2 lime** - reduce height from 23m to 13m to a pollard (Due to close proximity to property).	Withdrawn
2025/1617	23 Firethorn Close, **Taverham**	TPO	**T1 oak** - height approx 12m. Crown lift by approx 5m to allow daylight into garden and to remove overhanging branches.	29/05/2025
2025/1635	Meadow Hill, 90 Lower Street, **Salhouse**	211	**T1 Lombardy poplar** - fell and replant.	02/06/2025
2025/1636	Baptist Chapel, Chapel Loke, **Salhouse**		**H1 hawthorn hedge** - high coppice of declining hedge and interplant with hawthorn and holly. **T2 ash** - multi-stemmed ash with 5 stems. Two stems severely compromised with a split in main fork and decay at attachment point. Remove the two compromised stems. **T3 ash** - multi-stemmed with extensive defects. Remove defective stems.	No objection

2025/1647	The Hall School St Faiths Road, **Old Catton**	211	See tree report for works to trees.	No objection
2025/1659	The Hall School, St Faiths Road, **Old Catton**	211	**T8 oak** - fell under an exception of Conservation Area restrictions for dangerous trees.	Exempt tree works
2025/1667	55A Yarmouth Road, **Thorpe St Andrew**	TPO	**T1 oak** - remove branches overhanging by 4 - 4.5m.	11/06/2025
2025/1675	Street Record, Castle Street, **Wroxham**	211	**AGUT001 crab apple** - crown lift to 2.4m over footpath. **AGUT002 wild cherry** - reduce and reshape by up to 2m from 8m to 6m tall and crown radius from 8m to 6m. **AGUT009 English yew** - epicormic removal.	05/06/2025
2025/1676	35 High Street, **Cawston**	211	**BHHT003 silver birch** - epicormic removal and crown lift to 2.4m over grass and footpath. **BHHT004 whitebeam** - crown lift to 2.4m over grass and footpath. **BHHT005 Judas tree** - epicormic removal, remove stake. **BHHT008 lime** - fell. **BHHT010 not identified** - fell dead tree. **BHHT011 common ash** - reduce back from structure by up to 2m from 4m to 2m. **BHHT012 hawthorn**- reduce back from structure by 1m from 2m to 1m.	No objection
2025/1677	Owl Cottage, 2 Church Lane, **Cawston**	211	**BHHT006 Turkey oak** - crown Lift to 2.4m over footpath and to 5.2m over highway. **BHHT007 not identified** - fell dead tree.	No objection
2025/1678	1 Booton Road, **Cawston**	211	**T1 rowan** - crown lift to 2.4m over grass. **T2 whitebeam** - crown lift to 2.4m over grass and reduce back from structure by up to 2m from 6m to 4m.	09/06/2025
2025/1679	8 Redcliffe Way, **Brundall**	TPO	**T1 oak** - height 20m, width 15m. Reduce by approx 2m and crown raise lower canopy to approx 2.5m. Height to be 18m and width 13m. **T2 maple** - fell and replant with a *Liquidambar* tree.	05/06/2025
2025/1682	2 Harrold Close South, **Walsham**	TPO	**T1 & T2 beech** - crown lift to 5.5m, reduce extremities of crown by shortening only longest laterals protruding from the crown by around 1.5m leaving a radial spread of around 6.5m. Work to be carried out in order to retain attractive amenity value and to lessen the impact on the house and garden.	06/06/2025
2025/1693	74A Thunder Lane, **Thorpe St Andrew**	TPO	**T1 oak** - crown lift over driveway and front garden to 3-4 m. Reduce lowest branch on southern aspect over driveway entrance back to a pollard point 3m from parent branch union . Crown lift on northern aspect to 6 m to give minim m of 0.5m of clearance to overhead wires. Reduce overextended lateral over road/path on SW aspect by 2 m (current length 10m). Crown lift over highway to 6m and footpath to 4m.	07/06/2025
2025/1697	The Gables, 6 Plumstead Road, **Thorpe End**	211	**T1 rowan & T2 goat willow** - fell.	09/06/2025
2025/1700	9 Sylvan Way, **Taverham**	TPO	**T1 beech & T2 Scots pine** - fell under an exception of the TPO restrictions for dead trees.	Exempt tree works
2025/1704	2 Walpole Way, **Freethorpe**	TPO	**T1 oak** - crown reduction 2-3m all round to a finished height of 15m.	01/06/2025
2025/1708	Former Post Office, 9 Brook Street, **Buxton**	TPO	**T1 oak** - fell under an exception of the TPO restrictions for dead trees.	Exempt tree works
2025/1719	Elmleigh, 20 Woodland Drive, **Thorpe End**	211	**T1 cherry** - fell under an exception of the Conservation Area restrictions for dead trees.	Exempt tree works
2025/1720	Land adjacent 16 Hautbois Road, **Badersfield**	TPO	**T1 Norway maple** - fell under an exception of the TPO restrictions for dead trees.	Exempt tree works
2025/1734	Rookery Row, 14 The Street, **Burgh**	211	**T1 unidentified** - reduce from 8m to 7m to previous reduction.	11/06/2025
2025/1737	Manestee, 42 Lower Street, Salhouse	211	**Holly bush** - overall height approx 7.7m. Trim to appro x 4.2m reducing by 3.5m. **Norway spruce** – fell.	20/06/2025
2025/1753	Gilden Croft, 56 Norwich Road, **Horsham St Faiths**	211	**G1 ash x 2** - crown reduce lowest four lateral branches from 12m to 6m radius.	12/06/2025
2025/1778	Rolston House, Norwich Road, **Horstead With Stanninghall**	211	**T1 variegated sycamore** – height 6m. Crown raise to 2m smaller lower 4 or 5 branches 50mm in diameter. **T2 pear** current height 1.8m. Reduce upper canopy by 1.5m. **T5 silver birch**- current height 14m. Reduce lateral spread of canopy over patio by 1.5m from 5m to suitable growth points on branches no larger than 5m. **T3 wild apple & T4 wild cherry** - fell.	19/06/2025
2025/1788	Honeywood, 39 Charles Close, **Wroxham**	211	**T1 Atlas cedar** - height 11m, width 10m. Crown raise to 4m, reduce crown away from building to allow 2.5m clearance and reduce selected branches over garden by 2.5m to reform shape.	16/06/2025
2025/1792	Annexe 260, Taverham Road, **Taverham**	TPO	**T77 ash** - fell to a 3m monolith.	16/06/2025
2025/1803	The Ferns, Beech Road, **Wroxham**	211	**T1 holly** - height 4m, Remove to approx ground level.	16/06/2025

2025/1810	Moor Lodge Cottage, The Moor, **Reepham**	211	**T3 goat willow (T3)** - remove stem closest to garage, reduce and shape crown by 3m in height & width from approx 7m to 4m. **G4 4x Leyland cypress** - dismantle to 1m tall stumps.	17/06/2025
2025/1815	The Grange, 21 Lower Street, **Salhouse**	211	**T1 copper beech** - height 12m, spread 11m. Raise crown for highway specifications to 5.2m. Raise crown over garden to 3m. Reduce lower section of crown growing over road. Remove 2-2.5m. **T2 & T3 cherry** - height 6m. Balance crowns and shape by removing no more than 1-1.5m from selective branches. **T4 whitebeam** - 10m height. Reduce height by 2m and shape.	17/06/2025
2025/1817	Oakapples 12 Lower Street, **Salhouse**	211	**T1 plum** - height 11m. Reduce crown by 2-2.5m.	17/06/2025
2025/1822	School House, 70 Norwich Road, **Horstead With Stanninghall**	211	**T1 horse chestnut** - fell and replant with same species.	18/06/2025
2025/1827	26 Mayton Avenue, **Frettenham**	TPO	**T1 oak** - fell and replant.	18/06/2025
2025/1836	Meadow View, 102 Lower Street, **Salhouse**	211	**T1 Leyland cypress -** in front garden. 1m crown reduction from 5m to 4m high and from 4m to 3m wide	23/06/2025
2025/1839	7 Charles Close, **Wroxham**	211	**T1 lime** - fell.	19/06/2025
2025/1840	Fourwinds, 37 Waterloo Road, Hainford	TPO	**T1 beech & T2 oak** - both dead. Completely remove.	19/06/2025
2025/1842	9 The Street, **Heydon**	211	**T1 oak & T2 ash** - fell.	19/06/2025
2025/1850	Walnut Meadow, 1 The Street, **Coltishall**	211	**T1 Portuguese laurel** – fell	19/06/2025
2025/1854	Edgewood,. 16 South Avenue, **Thorpe St Andrew**	211	**T1 oak** - height 15m. Reduce overhanging limbs back to boundary fence, reducing limbs on garden side only by 3m max, where necessary to bring canopy in line with boundary fence.	20/06/2025
2022/1860	The Gables, 6 Church Road, **Upton**	TPO	**T4 ash** - crown raise to approx 5m removing some lower branches.	20/05/2025
2025/1877	37 Charles Close, **Wroxham**	211	**T1 & T2 oak** - approx height 15m. Tops of trees are dead. Reduce dead tops from 15m to 10m just above live growth.	23/06/2025
2025/1893	1 Stuart Road, **Aylsham**	211	**T1 Norway maple** - remove and replace.	25/06/2025
2025/1903	Keepers Cottage, Wroxham Road, **Rackheath**	TPO	**T1 oak** - crown reduce height over highway from 11m to 8/8.5m and width 6.8m to 3.8/3.5m. **T2 ash & T4 sycamore** - remove lower limb back to stem for clearance over highway (max 7m). **T6 sycamore** - remove 2 lower limbs back to stem for clearance over highway (max 7m). **T7 oak** - crown reduce from height 14m to 11m and width 9m to 6m over gates. **G12** - crown lift to 5m over boundary. **T3, T5, T8, T9, T10 & T11 sycamore** - fell**.**	28/06/2025
2025/1905	64 Wilks Farm Drive, **Sprowston**	TPO	**T1 oak** - fell under exception of TPO restrictions for dangerous trees.	25/06/2025
2025/1914	The Lodge, Taverham Park Avenue, **Taverham**	TPO	**T1 & T2 English oak & T3 common lime -** fell replanting has been suggested.	26/06/2025

Note: This is not intended to be a definitive list of all the relevant details. Readers should always refer to the specific application on the South Norfolk and Broadland District Council Planning website at https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/planning-applications/find-planning-application.