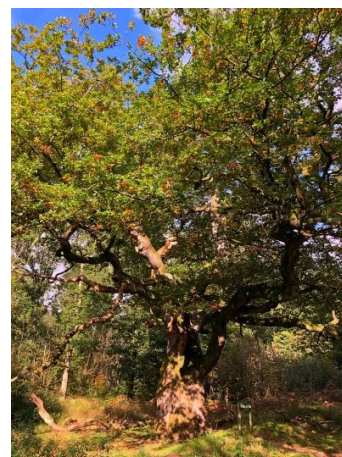


Hurling into spring at Savernake Forest

Spring is finally on its way to Savernake Forest. It is a joy to walk through the trees, see subtle signs of the woodland flora coming back to life, and listen to the rising tide of birdsong as our summer population returns to breed.

With that in mind, our forestry operations will soon be pausing after our final piece of work: halo-ing veteran trees in the grazing enclosures. Halo-ing means opening up space around the veterans by removing nearby (younger and sometimes non-native) trees and vegetation that are encroaching on their space. This increases the light, warmth, and water available to the veteran tree, improves air circulation, and reduces the risk of pests and diseases transferring from nearby trees and vegetation. Halo-ing also improves conditions for other important species, such as lichen. We are working on trees identified as most under threat by experts at wild plant conservation charity, Plantlife. We plan the work on a tree-by-tree basis, depending on each tree's condition and needs.



This photo of the White Road Oak shows the type of condition we are aiming for, with space around the crown and root plate, and low levels of competing vegetation.

By the time the halo-ing is done, it will be time to suspend works during the bird nesting season. Sometimes we are able to continue forestry works by placing buffer zones around known nest sites to minimise disturbance. But in this case, we have assessed that the most appropriate action is to stop works altogether. We will resume later in the summer, following the advice of our ecologist.



On a related note, we recently learned that some of the Forest's recently felled ash trees are on their way to Ireland to begin their new careers as hurleys; sticks used to play hurling and camogie. These trees were showing signs of chalara ash dieback which is very harmful to living trees but had not yet affected the timber. Logs for hurleys are unusual in forestry because they need to include the flare at the base of the tree trunk. The lower section of the tree produces the unique shape of the hurley's striking surface, called the *bas*. Ash is a durable and versatile wood, popular for even more uses than we previously knew of!

As ever, if you have any questions about Forestry England's work in Savernake Forest, please get in touch westengland@forestryengland.uk

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