

Breathing new life into Line Bank habitats

An update from Sue Scott ~ Clerk to Town Estates Charity

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At last, woodland management work is underway at the Line Bank Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Following a number of years of preparation; agreeing expert management plans from the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, the Forestry Commission and Natural England, and then winning grant funding from the government's Countryside Stewardship scheme - Ray, his team and the 'forwarder' arrived onsite. This expert team and very special piece of equipment are often to be seen working around the Major Oak in Sherwood Forest and on the sensitive landscapes of Clumber Park and Thoresby Hall, so we are very privileged to welcome them to Misson.

Ray and the 'forwarder'



The eight-wheeled 'forwarder' can grab and carry timber off site without causing any damage or rutting of the public bridleway, meaning walkers and riders can continue to enjoy using the bridleway to pass through Line Bank and on to Idle Stop without getting stuck in the mud.

The current woodland management works are concentrated along the bridleway, and in particular in reducing the shading of the first borrow pit pond by overhanging trees and scrub. Line Bank is designated as a SSSI due to the rarity of the aquatic plants present in the old borrow pits and these are now at risk from the excessive tree growth around the ponds. Using the traditional management

technique of coppicing, the willow and hawthorn around the ponds are cut down to grown level from where new growth will emerge in future years.

Coppicing is an ancient technique which typically created small lengths of timber (for firewood or chair legs for example) by creating a multi-stemmed tree rather than one with a single main trunk. Here's an example of a previously coppiced hawthorn in Line Bank.



We will be re-coppicing trees such as this over the five-year period of the management plan and also creating new coppiced areas of hazel and thorn. One of the oldest coppiced trees in England, a small-leaved lime at Westonbirt Arboretum, is over 1,000 years old and has some 60 stems. It was re-coppiced with a 20-year gap in 2012.

One tree we have just re-coppiced in Line Bank is an eight-stemmed sweet chestnut which is probably about 30 years old. Hopefully by coppicing again this year, it will have a long future ahead of it! This particular tree is something of a mystery. It's not native to the UK and doesn't occur in our local

countryside so has probably been planted in Line Bank with human intervention, unlike the naturally occurring tree species such as oak. If you have a walk past the coppiced 'stool' adjacent to the bridleway, try counting the tree rings to see when the last coppicing took place.

Coppicing is not only good for the tree, it also benefits wildlife; particularly woodland flora as regular opening of the tree canopy allows sunlight to reach the woodland floor where flowering plants can emerge from the seedbank. This is the intention in Line Bank where we will work towards a range of tree ages from potential veteran oaks and crab apples to the young growth of hazel, holly and thorn supporting a wide range of biodiversity that can flourish in such habitats. For further information please see the Town Estate Charity page of the Misson Parish Council website.