

Erica Trust update for Parish Council Meeting April 2026

Our ongoing management tasks again followed their usual pattern with cutting and deer fencing another coup of hazel down in the woods and cutting another stretch of gorse along the top roadside. In both these cases the purpose is rejuvenation, not removal. Removal of exotic tree seedling is ongoing in most places and this 25/26 winter we have made a concerted effort with the tree seedlings of all types appearing on the heath - which are of course making a habit of popping up above the purple moor grass. Selected Scots pines are left to replace the tall pines which, eventually, are likely to be lost. We also do a certain amount of permanent gorse removal on the open heath. Gorse has loved the disturbance from the mechanical tree removal works and whilst some is most welcome for the likes of stonechats and Dartford warblers, too much can be too much of a good thing! We have also again done another tranche of gorse removal above The Hollow Track, mostly for fire risk control, but also to expose the native tree seedlings which are re-establishing woodland there. It was of course part of the felling consent issued to the Estate that woodland must return after they removed the big oaks there. Also regarding fire control, every winter we cut the old forest rides and create new cut lines over the open heath.

This spring seems to have been particularly good for bluebells and it is gratifying to see how far they are now visible up the woodland slope. The native type daffodils also seemed to do very well this year. Again thanks to the Parish Council for their original supply. The heath is gaining more and more colourful heathers and bilberry thanks to time, the mown fire breaks and of course the munching cattle. We will hope for further expansion of the silver-studded blue butterfly.

On the downside we were sad of course that one of the big woodland oaks fell – but like the beech that succumbed a few years previously, we have been able to leave it largely intact for nature to take its course. Likewise another beech that fell beside the permissive path along the Affpuddle Road. It is extraordinary to see how many beech seedlings will spring up in the open space created. Oaks are so much more reticent to reproduce themselves but there are nevertheless a promising number of seedling getting going - and of course we have planted more.

We have recently had the roadside oaks opposite Culppers Dish crown lifted as they were contravening the highways requirements re headroom.

Himalayan balsalm control is always required in the meadows – we undertake it on behalf of PBC on their land too. The wildflower seeding plots seem to have been successful – but we cannot yet judge the long term impact. This summer we are hoping to have a few cattle in the meadow as well as on the heath. Jake Hancock has drawn in his horns (!) and it will be the grazier we use on our sites near Wimborne who will be supplying them.

As always the help we get from our local community is greatly welcomed. Reports of fallen trees, broken fences, sightings of the returning wildlife and so on are always much appreciated.

Lesley Haskins Managing Trustee.