



Home > Quick links > Library > Help >

About us > Contact us > News > Search >

[2006 releases](#)

[2005 releases](#)

[2004 releases](#)

[Subscription](#)

[Consultations](#)

[Welsh language](#)

[Press contacts](#)

[Search](#)



16 OCTOBER 2006

NEWS RELEASE No: 8893

HEARTS OF OAK



Make-over for ancient woods at Castle Howard

Gnarled oak woods dating back to medieval times are being given a fresh lease of life at Castle Howard, North Yorkshire.

The Forestry Commission and Castle Howard Estate have sealed a far-reaching agreement to restore up to 600-hectares (1,500-acres) of ancient woodland, including oaks more than 500 years old. Forest chiefs have backed the plan with £90,000 over the next five years under the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS).

Work will take many decades to complete and will involve gradually removing non-native species, like conifers and sycamore, from key sites identified as ecological hotspots. That will allow trees including oak, rowan, birch and alder to flourish, together with wild flowers.

To make up for a lack of virility amongst veteran oaks, acorns are being collected for cultivation in the Estate's nursery. They will eventually be planted near their elderly parents, preserving the genetic strain. Rides will also be restored, a key habitat for butterflies, and alder planted in wetland areas. In addition, the plans ensure the sensitive management of ancient monuments.

Iwan Downey, Operations Manager with the Forestry Commission, said:

"The Forestry Commission is restoring all of its ancient woods in Yorkshire, but the private sector is also playing its part. Many of Castle Howard's woodlands are old and spectacular, nestling in an area of outstanding natural beauty. This work will restore their vigour and character. Not only will wildlife benefit, but also flora like bluebells. It will also ensure a sustainable supply of valuable hardwood in centuries to come."

Woods are classed as ancient if they appear on the earliest reliable maps, dating to around 1600. But some of the woods at Castle Howard are reckoned to be much older. Conifers were first planted in the 18th century as a commercial crop and to act as a nursemaid to trees like oak, giving them protection against strong sunlight and violent winds.

Nick Cooke, Forestry Manager at Castle Howard, said:

"These are really exciting times on the Estate. We are compiling a database of veteran trees and using forestry grants to speed woodland restoration. The revitalised woods will offer a glorious natural counterpoint to the magnificence of the House itself. We will maintain an important commercial softwood

business on the estate, contributing to the rural economy."

Forest chiefs have also saluted the estate for achieving a "green bill of health" for its eco-friendly woodland management. Using a Forestry Commission grant, the estate subjected itself to a tough external audit and can now carry the logo of the Forest Stewardship Council on its timber.

Iwan Downey added:

"Certification opens up new markets and also means landowners can access the full range of our grants. Almost uniquely, Castle Howard got full-marks for its forestry standards - a tremendous achievement."

Media calls to Richard Darn on 0113 2836598. mobile: 0775 367 0038.

Note to editor

The Forestry Commission is the government department responsible in England for protecting, expanding and promoting the sustainable management of woods and forests and increasing their value to society and the environment. Forestry makes a real contribution to sustainable development, providing social and environmental benefits arising from planting and managing attractive, as well as productive, woodlands. Further information can be found at www.forestry.gov.uk