

## The Billericay Tree Wardens's Bi-monthly

### News-sheet for June 2024

News-sheet back copies, the “Billericay Tree Wardens’ Guide” and Factsheets can be accessed on the Town Council’s website under the heading “The Town”.



Conserving Our Tree Heritage  
In association with Billericay Town Council

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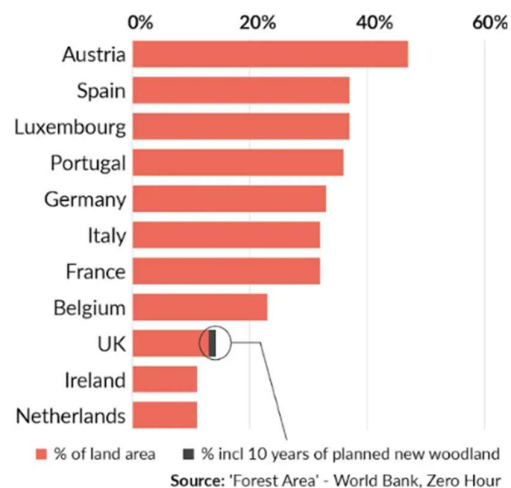
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### 1] The Zero Hour Campaign – Tackling the Climate Crisis and our Declining Wildlife:-

There’s a Bill that has already been presented in Parliament that needs further cross-party debate in the house to make it law. The Bill combines the Climate Crisis and our declining wildlife and how it is imperative that both are addressed in unison. There is an open letter on the Zero Hour (ZH) campaign website [[zerohour.uk](http://zerohour.uk)] that one can complete and send to our Basildon & Billericay constituency MP requesting that they also back the Bill. Many of us that are concerned about the future of our fast changing climate and the decline of our wildlife see this Bill as a “*last chance saloon*” to address a very serious situation. The ZH website takes time to trawl but all the relevant facts and warnings are (in our opinion) well laid out. It follows the science. The Billericay Tree Wardens (BTW) have signed the campaign as a group and its members have also been invited to individually sign up. This is a national campaign backed by many **cross-party** MPs and parliamentarians and many organizations, businesses, societies and groups – 150 and 1525 respectively and still rising. As have 92 Local Authorities across the UK and 208 professional earth scientists (as of May 2024). It has to be said, that considering the seriousness of the Climate Crisis and the decline of Nature, why would anybody not sign up the Zero Hour campaign?

Woodland as Percentage of Land Area - UK and Western Europe



### 2] The Billericay Tree Wardens’ Guide

We have recently published a “**Billericay Tree Wardens’ Guide**” and lodged a file copy with the Town Council’s website (under the heading “The Town”) with a hard copy lodged at the Billericay Library. The Guide is a 40 page compilation of tree-related reference data, articles, facts and views by the BTW.

### 3] Application Made for a Woodland TPO – Cowbridge Woods

We have good reason to believe that there is a “*perceived threat*” by a Developer to either build residential housing or to construct an access road through Cowbridge Woods. Cowbridge Wood is now classified by Natural England as Ancient Woodland. The wood lay adjacent to Bluebell Road and the Mountnessing

Road. The wood is owned between three of the residents that back onto the wood along the Mountnessing Road. Deed documents obtained from the Land Registry verifies this. We alerted BBC Planning who have taken note of our concerns but require more proof as to the threat. Since then, a Friend of the BTW has secured preliminary documentation produced by Redrow Homes that may be applicable to qualify for the revised Local Plan that is still to be published. Redrow Homes are trying to secure access to the field behind the wood. We have presented this evidence to BBC Planning and await their decision with respect applying a Woodland TPO. We thank our Friend of the BTW for researching this information and bringing it to our attention. As yet, there is no Planning Application submitted but we maintain vigilance. The photograph shows Cowbridge Wood to the west and Pleasant Drive and its woodland to the east.



A portion of mainly secondary woodland is represented on the Pleasant Drive recreational area but this lay on BBC land and is now a separate entity. In recent times a new woodland was planted at Pleasant Drive by the ECC, the BBC biodiversity team and the BTW providing the volunteers. *Redrow's map audaciously encompasses the Pleasant Drive recreational area in the hope of securing access to the field beyond!*

#### **4] The Ancient Tree Inventory (AWI)**

Natural England are now identifying and documenting the smaller parcels of Ancient Woodland throughout England. So far, the number of Ancient Woodlands overall in England is approximately 52,000 so this ongoing documenting of the smaller Ancient Woodlands will significantly add to that number. The designation as an AWI will not confer protection directly but is a stepping stone to legal protection (Woodland TPO) should development threaten their existence. Local Plan Developers take note! One of the Friends of the BTW has been trawling various ancient maps of Essex and has liaised with Natural England to include various local woodlands to be included in the AWI.

The definition of an Ancient Woodland is one that has remained in continuous existence since AD 1600. Some have been regularly coppiced throughout but their roots are ancient!

#### **5] Hedgerow Protection Law Enhanced in England**

The Tree Council welcomes the passing of UK Government legislation to protect hedgerows in England, including a cutting ban between 1<sup>st</sup> March and the 31<sup>st</sup> of August to safeguard nesting birds. In April, the Government announced its intention to introduce hedgerow protections, which had lapsed as cross compliance with European rules ended at the beginning of the year. Now The Management of Hedgerows (England) Regulations 2024 has been made into law, effective from May 23 2024, providing a legal baseline for hedgerow management practices. A 2-metre buffer strip, measured from the centre of a hedgerow, where a green cover must be established and maintained. Also, no cultivation or the application of pesticides or fertilisers should take place within this buffer strip. Our agricultural countryside still bears the scar of the massive hedgerow removal carried out in the late seventies and early eighties. That and the reliance of spraying the fields with pesticides and insecticides has decimated our farmland bird populations.



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#### **6] The Free Tree Giveaway Event**

As per last year we are to hold a Free Tree Giveaway event in the High Street and in two locations simultaneously. One outside Paul Robinson's Solicitors and a second location as invited by the Waitrose supermarket, by their rear shop entrance adjacent the car park. We will aim to give away about 100 sapling

native trees with some mini-whips for the young folk. Please save any surplus plastic pots of the nine inch variety so we can recycle them for this event and not purchase new ones – Thank you.

### **7] The Junction of Hillway and Hatfield Drive**

As reported previously, a parcel of land at the junction had several mature trees providing Street Scene amenity were felled by a Developer with a view to constructing a dwelling there. However, there is now a legal stalemate between the Developer and ECC Highways as to who has right to the land. The BTW had requested that the trees were to be replaced but the legal situation has prevented this. One of our “Friends of the BTW” has noticed that the felled trees had started to regrow as per coppice! The surrounding grassy sward required cutting so he contacted the Basildon Borough Council (BBC) who sent their maintenance crew along and mowed around the regrowing trees. The longer the legal stalemate persists, the taller the trees will regrow!

### **8] In Suspicious Circumstances**

We are mindful that explaining the following in any more detail may evoke legal implications. But briefly, we had successfully organized with the Basildon Borough Council (BBC) a replacement tree for a felled TPO veteran oak tree along Grange Road in South Green. However, the healthy replacement tree has since quickly died in “*mysterious circumstances*”. On the plus side, two further replacement trees nearby have survived, are flourishing and a nearby resident is to kindly water them in times of drought.

### **9] A Members’ Autumn Barbecue**

We have scheduled a date for our barbecue on 2<sup>nd</sup> November at the Norsey Wood Tree Nursery. More detail of the arrangement nearer the time. Nathan to supervise but any offers of help will be gratefully received! It’ll be a smoke filled night! This was an event that was cancelled in the spring because of excess rain and the flooding of the Norsey Wood tree nursery! We have permission from the Basildon Borough Council and the Norsey Wood Society to hold such an event.

**We would like to say thank you to the various BBC and BTC Councillors who support our goals and those “Friends of the BTW” (FoBTW), who’s anonymity we respect, who offer their technical advice and practical support when called upon via their empathy for trees and wildlife**

**A thank you must go to the Billericay Town Council for providing the BTW with advice, a meeting room at the BTC’s Chantry Centre, moral support and Personal Liability & Personal Accident insurance for BTW members and their volunteers, whilst out in the field with no geographic restriction**

**We take this opportunity to thank the company of S H Goss & Co Ltd that has generously provided the use of equipment, materials, transport & Nathan’s time for BTW’s planting projects**

**The Billericay Tree Wardens are a voluntary group and all information contained therein is not legally binding and is provided as a source of advice and information only**

**The BTW’s next members’ Committee Meeting is scheduled for  
Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2024 at 7pm**

**Prepared by the Billericay Tree Wardens [Editor JHS]**

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