

## Managing Cannock Chase – Update December 2020

Over the last few years Staffordshire County Council, working with RSPB and Natural England, has been discussing and developing options for managing open habitats on Cannock Chase. You kindly took time to give your views on these options and asked to be kept informed on progress.

The options included types of management that have been used for many years on the Chase, such as cutting and controlled burning of heather, cutting and spot treating trees and scrub, and cutting and spraying bracken. They also included reintroducing grazing with livestock, which was the traditional way the Chase was managed before the Great War.

This email is to update you on what's happening, and the work planned over the coming months. General information can be found by clicking on the link below:

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/environment/Environment-and-countryside/Managing-Cannock-Chase/Overview.aspx>



### Grazing Pilot Begins (again!!)

This year we had planned to take forward the grazing pilot at Moors Gorse – a small area of heathland and woodland near the visitor centre. We started work on the scheme, and then had to put everything on hold due to coronavirus. However, we are now back in action. Clearance work has been undertaken in preparation for installation of the fencing, which will start in early January. The fence is located amongst vegetation to help it blend into the landscape, and the area has been carefully checked by ecologists, archaeologists and the AONB team to make sure it's the best location. Gates will be installed but tied back initially

until the cattle arrive later in the spring. Water troughs and cattle handling facilities will also be installed. The scheme does not affect any public footpaths or bridleways, but the gates will continue to provide foot access to the area as at present so it remains fully accessible.

The fence will include 'wildlife routes' to enable deer and other wildlife to safely move around their habitat, and we'll be monitoring these to check how effective they are.

Later in the spring 6 carefully selected cattle will be brought onto the site to graze until the autumn, helping to sustainably manage the site and improve conditions for wildlife; grazing will continue each year from spring to autumn. Any further grazing on other parts of Cannock Chase Country Park will be subject to plenty of further discussion, formal consultation and to independent approval by the Secretary of State. To find out more about the pilot, click the link below:

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/environment/Environment-and-countryside/Managing-Cannock-Chase/Moors-Gorse-detailed-proposals.aspx>

### **Invertebrate habitat**

Areas of bare ground have been created at targeted locations around the country park. These provide fantastic conditions for rare heathland invertebrates and can also be used by birds and reptiles. Many insects, like beetles and mining bees, create burrows in areas of bare ground and use these areas to warm up or to hunt for prey. They are a really important feature for many species but one that requires management intervention, especially in the absence of grazing.

### **Adders**

We have been working with reptile experts to better understand how adders and other reptiles are using the site. Adders are becoming increasingly rare and require special attention to ensure their survival. We are looking forward to working with the AONB Partnership and other partners in the coming years to focus more on these fascinating species.

### **Scrub management**

We are continuing our usual management of the vegetation over the winter, with scrub management taking place at various locations in advance of bird breeding season.

### **Trails upgrade and a new play area**

This winter we'll be refreshing the interpretation panels and leaflet for the RAF Hednesford Trail, with support from the Cannock Chase AONB Partnership and Cannock Chase SAC Partnership and installing new information about Brindley Village with support from the



Brindley Village Legacy Group, AONB Partnership and SAC Partnership. We are also carrying out some improvements to the ToCH Trail on Brindley Heath.

In 2021 we will be replacing the play area at Marquis Drive – **we'd love your views on the design of the new play area** – please complete this short online survey by **13<sup>th</sup> January**:

<https://bit.ly/scccountryparks>

### **AONB News**

Did you know the Cannock Chase AONB Partnership also has an electronic newsletter with updates about activity all across the AONB, not just on SCC land? If you would like to keep up to date with wider AONB news, alerts and updates, you can stay connected by subscribing to the AONB e-newsletter, by clicking the link below:

<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKSTAFFORDSHIRECC/signup/16990>