

Sustainable management of a deciduous woodland – Dalby Forest

Introduction

Dalby Forest is located in North Yorkshire, West of Scarborough and South of Whitby and within the North Yorkshire Moors National Park. It is an ancient deciduous woodland with human evidence dating back as far as the Bronze Age. The 3500 hectare forest also contains coniferous woodland used in the timber industry. Surrounding Dalby forest is moorland and mixed farm land.

Woodland Management

On steep slopes, deciduous woodland will be left unmanaged to reduce erosion and disturbance to the slopes.

Coppice management involves cutting down trees and allowing the shoots from the stumps to grow. This creates more stems and in future some of these will be cut again to allow further growth. This means that the forest will always have a mixture of young and old trees.

Invasive conifers have been gradually replaced with oak trees as they are native to Britain and are more suited to the temperate climate. Areas which already contain oak woodland have been turned into conservation areas to protect the trees.

Deer can be a nuisance in woodland as they eat tree shoots and rub their antlers on the bark as a mark of their territory. This can disrupt the ecosystem so a control of 4-7 deer per sq Km has to be met to allow a balance.

Wildlife Management

The Forestry Commission who run Dalby Forest have tried to create a varied landscape with a mixture of woodland, moorland and scrub. This provides a variety of habitats for wildlife in the area.

Invasive species such as Himalayan balsam and Rhododendron (planted by the Victorian's) will be removed to allow the new oak trees to develop and recolonise.

Community Management

Friends of Dalby Forest, who are made up of local volunteers, work in partnership with the Forestry Commission on a variety of different tasks and events throughout the year, with regular meetings the 3rd Sunday of every month. This ranges from footpath maintenance to tree planting.

Volunteers are also encouraged to visit Dalby Forest to develop and look after the mountain bike trails.

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Leisure and Recreation Management

The forest aims to provide facilities and activities that meet the needs of tourists and local visitors.

The visitor centre at Thornton-Le-Dale has been sustainably built and has wind turbines, rainwater harvesting as well as counters made from recycled materials. Inside there is a hands-on interactive exhibition which allows visitors to understand the work done in the forest.

Recreational activities found at Dalby Forest include Go-Ape which has Segway hire as well as treetop walkways and zip wires; bike barn cycle hire and courses, park run and woodland themed play areas.

Education

Dalby Forest has become a hub for sharing knowledge about usage and sustainable management of ancient deciduous woodlands.

Weekly and daily monitoring takes place to look at the impact of recreational use on the forest.

Research is being carried out on how the woodland is responding to climate change and pollution.

Children have been introduced to woodlands and wildlife through use of the 'ranger in a backpack' resource which include games and activities for children to use as they walk around the forest. Activities range from building shelters, to finding out about the forest through touch.

The Dalby Activity Centre allows visitors to learn about the forest through guides. Again these focus around activities such as minibeast hunting. Family activity packs can also be bought from the visitor centre to do activities such as orienteering.

Recently a new app has been created called the ForestXplorer which allows visitors to learn about the woodland and wildlife.