Good afternoon,

I am writing to let you know that we will soon start timber harvesting work at Thurlbear Woods, where we will be thinning trees.

We expect to start working around 15th March 2024 for approximately 6 - 8 weeks.

I wanted to let you know about what is happening in the forest. Much of Thurlbear is classified as a Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) which means that we are gradually managing it back to the way it would have been several hundred years ago. We will manage the forest to help native broadleaf species such as oak and birch to regenerate naturally.

We are thinning across a large area of the woodland. This means removing selective trees for timber products. This gives the remaining trees more light and space to grow to their full potential. It also lets more light onto the forest floor which helps the flora. This is part of our long-term sustainable management of Thurlbear. We are working at this time of year to also protect the soil composition.

The woodland to the south of the area leased by the Somerset wildlife trust will be closed, as well as the public rights of way (please see attached map). Access from the north and northeast of the woodland will be unaffected. Please follow all signs and instructions at all times. These are for your safety, whether or not you can see or hear us working. This will help us to finish working as quickly as possible.

Forestry work is very hazardous. A falling tree can weigh several tonnes and hit the ground at nearly 60mph. If a harvesting machine chainsaw snaps, it can fly through the forest like a bullet.

Before we start any forestry work, we conduct thorough ecological surveys to check for species such as birds, mammals, rodents, invertebrates, flora, and fungi. We consider these findings against complex factors including tree health, how the ground slopes, soil condition, and likely rainfall when planning work that will support our long-term management plan. Thurlbear has good bat and dormouse habitat. We are working in early spring to be least disruptive to breeding wildlife.

We understand that residents may not be familiar with sustainable forest management, and we are keen to explain how this planned work supports the long-term health and resilience of the forest. Our climate is changing, bringing new threats to our trees, and we need to build resilience within our forests. With this in mind, we are already planning how we will restock the area with a diverse range of tree species that will thrive in the climate conditions we expect in 2050 and beyond.

You can read our full forest plan for Thurlbear online at [Blackdown Hills Forest Plan | Forestry England](https://www.forestryengland.uk/forest-planning/blackdown-hills-forest-plan)

I have attached a map to explain where we will be working. In areas highlighted yellow we will be conducting routine thinning to maintain the health and quality of the trees.

I would be grateful if you would be able to share this information through your news channels.

Please let me know if I can help by providing any more information or a short newsletter article.

Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or refer queries from local residents to westengland@forestryengland.uk.

If you have any questions about this work, please contact me via the details above.

Kind regards,

Chris.

**Chris Goode** (he/him)

Community Ranger

East Devon

**Forestry England**

[www.forestryengland.uk](http://www.forestryengland.uk/)

