

National  
Trust

# Nature Haven News

Your Autumn / Winter update from National Trust Formby



## Creating healthier woodland habitats

### We're improving Formby's woodlands for people and wildlife.

Formby's pine trees aren't native to the coast, with some planted over 100 years ago. Ravenmeols includes plantations of pine trees planted in the late 1990's and early 2000's, some of which have failed.

Plantation woodlands are densely packed with trees of a similar age. The trees grow tall and thin as they compete to reach the sunlight, rather than establishing healthy roots. A tightly packed canopy also reduces light preventing saplings, wildflowers and other plants from growing.

Over winter we're creating light and space in the Ravenmeols woodlands, which will encourage a wider variety of woodland wildlife to thrive here. In time there will also be more food for rare red squirrels with new trees and shrubs growing berries in the woodland understory and healthier pine trees producing more pinecones.

**A BIG thank you to the regular volunteers supporting the ranger team with this important conservation work.**

### Welcoming everyone

(September to December 2023)

- ❖ 278 new members signed up to support .
- ❖ 1677 hours of time given by local volunteers.
- ❖ 40 pre-booked school and group visits.

Here's how we're giving nature a helping hand to create a healthier more diverse woodland habitat:

- ❖ Coppicing trees or cutting them back to ground level to encourage new growth.
- ❖ Thinning areas of densely packed pine trees.
- ❖ Removing self-seeded sycamore trees that are taking over.
- ❖ Leaving deadwood and encouraging wood decay.
- ❖ Planting around 400 sapling trees including holly, hazel and scots pine.
- ❖ Building a dead wood hedge to give new saplings a safe space to grow.

### Latest news

- ❖ Winter opening times for toilets 10am to 3.30pm.
- ❖ **Toilets closed** Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.
- ❖ Annual **tree safety work** has started in the woodlands, so please keep a safe distance.
- ❖ New limited edition NT **Formby pin badges** available for a suggested donation of £3.
- ❖ Bags of **seasoned logs** available for a suggested donation of £10 - pop and see the welcome team in the car parks.
- ❖ **Wicks Lane path** expected to close temporarily in January whilst SP Energy Networks carry out work to bury an overhead cable. Look out for updates on our social media.
- ❖ **Roe deer** have been spotted in both the northern and southern most parts of the woodlands.

# Ranger round up



Every time you pay to park, scan your membership card, donate or simply take your litter home with you you're supporting important conservation work at Formby's nature haven - thank you.

## Safety first

Over winter the ranger team carry out annual Tree Safety Management inspections. This involves risk assessing trees for potential defects that could impact their stability.

The woodlands across the site are split into zones from very high (e.g. near popular paths and seating areas) to low usage.

Each zone is inspected at different frequencies dependent upon how well used it is. Tree safety inspections are also done after every storm.

Trees that need to have branches taken off or to be felled for safety reasons are marked with spray paint. Then, over winter, work is undertaken to make these trees safe either by our ranger team or with specialist tree surgeons for larger more complicated work.

## Tried and tested techniques

We've laid the remaining section of hedge at Larkhill. The team have been working on the 230 metres of hedge along the heath and meadow over the past few winters.

Hedge laying is the process of bending and partially cutting (pleaching) through the stems of a line of shrubs or small trees near ground level. It's a traditional skill that has been around for centuries and helps regenerate trees and shrubs.

The final step will be filling the remaining gaps in the hedge by planting around 25 sapling hazel and hawthorn trees in February 2024.

## Prime property for rare newts

In summer we discovered that rare great crested newts are thriving at Wicks Lake. We've been creating some prime properties for these special amphibians to hibernate in.

We recently replaced the old, rotten fence surrounding the lake thanks to a grant from Ørsted through their Burbo Bank Extension Community Fund and a donation from The Southport and Formby National Trust Association.

This meant we needed to give newts and other amphibians some new improved special spots to hibernate over winter.

The 3 hibernacula were created by digging deep holes, filling with bricks and logs then topping with turf, twigs and leaves. They will provide a warm, damp, safe place for amphibians to tuck themselves away.

## Natural protection for new saplings

As part of this winter's woodland conservation work we've been working with volunteers to create a dead wood hedge. This natural fence will help protect around 400 sapling trees we'll be planting early next year. As well as creating a dead wood habitat for all kinds of insects, birds and small mammals.

A big THANK YOU to the regular volunteers who support the ranger team every week, come rain or shine, to carry out important conservation and maintenance work.



# Community Matters



## Sand wheelchairs to borrow for free

We have two sand wheelchairs that you can borrow for free, one at each car park. The wheelchairs are designed to be pushed by someone and come with big, wide tyres, increasing the surface area and helping to prevent sinking on sand.

You can request to book a sand wheelchair by emailing the team [formby@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:formby@nationaltrust.org.uk) more details can be found on the NT Formby website search "Borrow a sand wheelchair at Formby".



## Your gift will make a difference

Gifts in wills help us care for the places that really matter, from natural spaces and irreplaceable landscapes where wildlife can flourish, to unique buildings we can all enjoy exploring. Without gifts in wills, the National Trust wouldn't be able to protect and look after all the places in our care, including NT Formby.

Any legacy – no matter how large or small – makes a lasting difference and, if you like, you can choose to leave your gift to the place or area of our work that matters most to you.

Visit [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/gifts-in-wills](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/gifts-in-wills) to find out more about supporting us through a gift in your will.

## Get involved

We're busy planning activities to help you connect with nature in 2024. Everything from bird watching, fungi spotting, yoga and tai chi on the beach to discovering the history of Formby's shipwrecks and pre-historic footprints on a guided walk.

Watch this space for more details.







## Help give resting birds a break

This time of year, flocks of sanderling, dunlin, knot, grey plover, bar-tailed godwits build up on the sands to feed and rest.

The #SeftonCoast is a special and protected area for many internationally important wading birds with lots of places for them to pass through, rest and feed. It's a wonderful sight to see at Formby's nature haven, particularly in the Albert Road area.

You can help give resting birds a break and the best chance to survive their long journey ahead by;

-  Watching them from a distance and not dashing towards them.
-  Keeping dogs under close control.
-  Not riding horses near or through flocks.
-  Getting too close can force them to fly away suddenly and use up vital energy reserves.

Thank you for your support.

## Volunteer impact

(September to December 2023)

- ❖ 130m of hedge laid at Larkhill Meadow.
- ❖ 230m<sup>2</sup> of plantation woodland thinned.
- ❖ 150m<sup>2</sup> of sycamore felled to create space for replanting this winter.
- ❖ 10m of rotten boardwalk repaired.
- ❖ 65m of footpath resurfaced.
- ❖ 215m of dead hedges created.



# Raising vital funds

The new special edition NT Formby pin badges are flying off the shelf. Don't miss your chance to wear your support with pride or why not collect all 5?

These new designs celebrate the rare sand dune wildlife that calls Formby home and the Lifeboat Road boardwalk that helps give everyone better access to the beach (the iconic red squirrel badge is still available too).

Pop and see the welcome team in the car parks and pick yours up today for a suggested donation of £3.



You can grab a bag of FSC certified, seasoned wood while you're visiting too. Formby logs can also be picked up from NT Rufford Old Hall - £10 suggested donation.

NT Formby is the size of over 500 football pitches, and it costs hundreds of thousands of pounds a year to maintain, restore, care for and protect such a huge space.

Every time you buy a pin badge, pay to park, scan your membership card, give your time, donate money or simply take your litter home with you you're helping to keep NT Formby special for people and wildlife.

As a charity we rely on the support of people like you – THANK YOU.

## Wildlife to spot

- ❖ Rare **red squirrels** as they become more active in January chasing each other from tree to tree as part of their mating ritual.
- ❖ Flashes of rich, green **holly** providing winter berries for birds to feast on.
- ❖ The sweet sound of **robins** with their rosy red breasts, perched in trees on crisp winter days.
- ❖ Take a wander along the shoreline for a spot of **beach combing** to see what you can find. Watch out for harmful bits and pieces too.

Share and tag us in your photographs of wildlife spotted at Formby's nature haven @NTFormby.

## A natter with...

Bree Hodge- Ranger

**How long have you worked here?**  
Since May 2021.

**What was your previous job?**

My first paid role in conservation was with Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust in North Wales, as a seasonal officer over the summer of 2020. I had volunteered with them since 2018 before being offered the seasonal role.

**What is your role at NT Formby?**

My tasks are different every season. Winter includes habitat conservation work, such as removing vegetation from natterjack toad breeding pools, conservation work in the woodlands, or hedge creation. During spring and summer we do weekly wildlife surveys to monitor impact and changes. There are also lots of annual compliance tasks too like Tree Safety Management.

I also oversee some of our fantastic volunteer groups. The new countryside furniture group carry out regular inspections of on-site "furniture" including benches, signs, fences and paths. We then plan and carry out repairs or remove as needed. I am also working with the Wicks Lake group to improve this area for both people and wildlife.

**What do you like most about your job?**

The variety! There's so much to do here, no two days are the same. I love doing the species surveys, because it's always exciting to see the rare wildlife that we're striving to protect.

**Your favourite spot to enjoy nature at Formby**

Quieter spots where the birds can be heard singing and the natural ambience can be truly enjoyed in a moment of mindfulness.

**Describe NT Formby in three words**

Sandy. Windy. Busy.



## Blast from the past

Formby's special coastal landscape hasn't always been protected as it is today. Records from the 1900s show commercial sand mining took place. Wicks Lake first started to form in one of the sand excavation pits.

