



Fforest Fawr felling FAQ

Why are you felling trees in Fforest Fawr?

Unfortunately the larch trees in Fforest Fawr are infected with a disease called Phytophthora Ramorum, commonly known as larch disease. They are being felled as part of a nationwide strategy to combat the disease and prevent it from spreading further.

How many trees have been affected by larch disease?

The disease has affected approximately 6.7million trees across Wales.

How many trees will be removed at Fforest Fawr?

There are approximately 4000 larch trees in Fforest Fawr, and all of these will need to be removed. We plan to do the work in two phases – this will allow us to always keep areas of the forest open for people to use.

[This map shows where the larch will be removed from.](#)

How much of the forest is affected?

The total area of larch at Fforest Fawr covers approximately 50 hectares. The entire forest is 120 hectares. The work to remove the larch will be undertaken in two phases of approximately 25 hectares each to minimise disruption.

The natural make-up of the forest means that in most areas, the larch is dispersed in between other tree species. There is only one section of the forest in which the larch is dense and therefore needs to be clear felled.

In most areas we will remove the larch and retain the layers of shrubs, other trees and vegetation beneath the main canopy. This means that the majority of our planned operation is more akin to thinning rather than clear-felling.

[View the percentage of larch cover on this map.](#)

When is the work starting?

The first phase will start on 5th September 2018, with the 2nd phase starting in September 2021.

How long will to take?

We anticipate that phase one will take around six months, dependant on weather and ground conditions.

How much of the forest will close during the first phase?

We will do everything we can to minimise the disruption to visitors of the forest once the harvesting has started, but for safety reasons we will need to close off areas. Diversions will be clearly signed and the exclusion zone will be fenced off at path entrances.

If work progresses quickly we will try to re-open public footpaths and other trails within the exclusion zone and will adjust our signage and diversions accordingly.

The safety of our workers and people using the forest is our main priority so it's important that people adhere to the closures and follow diversions during this time. People straying from the diversions and entering the felling exclusion zone could cause delays to operations, or could lead to more areas being closed off.

[This map shows the felling exclusion zone and which trails will remain open.](#)

Will the car park close?

The car park will be closed for a period of 3 weeks from 3rd September 2018 while we fell trees close to the diversion trail. After that it will reopen and people will be able to use the diversion routes.

What time will the contractors be working?

The affected area will be closed off 24/7 during the felling operation. While the majority of the work will take place during working hours, our contractors may need to undertake some work on weekends. Even when there is no work being undertaken, the site remains operationally live and potentially hazardous. Public access to restricted areas remains excluded at these times.

How will the haulage trucks enter and leave the forest?

Our preferred route is for timber lorries to turn left out of the car park up the hill to join with the A469 Caerphilly Mountain Road so as to avoid the village of Tongwynlais.

How many trucks can we expect to see daily?

There will be a maximum of 6 lorries per day. We have requested that timber lorries travel in convoy to limit disruption throughout the day. Lorries and machinery will be entering and exiting through the car park and travelling along the forest road. Visitors should be aware of this and take extra care.

What is being done to protect wildlife during the felling?

Extensive surveys of the forest have identified sensitive locations for wildlife. These have included:

- Bat survey conducted by external specialists
- Installation of a static detector to assess the activity of bats.
- Specialist bird survey with exclusion zones in place around sensitive areas. Work has been planned outside of bird nesting season.
- Badger set monitoring including use of wildlife cameras to trace the movement of badgers.
- Survey for dormice. All work will be undertaken following best practice and under a dormice licence. Best practice such as broadleaf retention and minimal scrub clearance will also be followed to reduce the impact on dormice habitat.
- We've consulted with Butterfly Conservation about our plans and how to minimise the impact on butterflies in the forest.
- A Habitat Regulations Assessment has been carried out, there should be no detrimental impact on the Cardiff Beechwoods SAC

Will removing the larch cause an increase in flood risk?

We are aware that the road which runs between Fforest Fawr and Forest Ganol is prone to surface water flooding during periods of heavy rainfall. This is managed by Cardiff Council. We have a Water Management Plan in place and our flood experts have provided advice and recommended measures for us to put in place to prevent any increase in surface water reaching the road as a result of our operations.

Can horse riders still access the forest during felling?

We have a good, constructive relationship with the British Horse Society, and a concordat which allows horse riders to use our forest roads and designated bridleways.

Unfortunately when we begin felling diseased larch in September, there will be temporary disruption to the current permissive bridleway. We aim to limit this as much as possible, and hope that it will only remain closed for a few months. The far end of the forest near Ty Rhiw will be unaffected during this time.

Due to the potential amount of different recreational visitors using this trail we need to prioritise use by pedestrians and disability access.

What are you doing to stop cyclists and horse riders using the family sculpture trail?

The sculpture trail is public footpath which should not be used by horses or cyclists.

We are installing new signage, and a new kissing gate at the entrance to the sculpture trail. The signs will clearly state that the path is for walkers only.

We understand the frustration that different forest users will have during the time of the closures, but it is limited what we can safely offer in a relatively small area. We hope all forest users will be understanding and tolerant of each other and appreciate we are doing our best to facilitate as much access as possible instead of closing the forest completely.

What about schools who use the forest?

There will be no Forest school permissions during this period as the bus parking area will be out of bounds within the risk zone and there is no parking facility at the car park. We are also mindful that large school groups could be disembarking at the car park where we have machinery and timber wagons exiting. Schools have been informed either individually or through the Local Education Authority but will be available again from March 31st 2019 onward. We have already engaged with some schools to find alternative sites.

Will the trees be replanted after the felling?

After we've finished removing the trees, we will encourage the native trees in the forest – such as beech, oak, birch, wild cherry, rowan and hazel – to naturally regenerate. We will then monitor the forest over the following years to see how things progress before considering if we need to replant any new trees. This is the preferred option for Ancient Semi Natural Woodland Restoration within the UK Forest Standard.

Why are you replanting in Cwmcarn, but not Fforest Fawr?

At Fforest Fawr we know there are fertile soils and a large seed source as there are already sustainable numbers of native broadleaf trees in the woodlands. We have already witnessed prolific regeneration along the roadside areas, and areas where we've previously thinned out trees so we are confident that the site is ideal for this. Where a site is capable of achieving it, natural regeneration is the preferred method of restocking as the results deliver a more natural woodland.

Cwmcarn was planted as a dense conifer crop, so when the trees were removed there were little native broadleaves remaining and a poor seed source.

What happens to the larch after it has been removed?

Timber from infected larch can still be used, it will go to sawmills licensed to process it so the felling provides us with an opportunity to recover some of the economic value of the timber that is subsequently reinvested into Fforest Fawr and other Welsh Government Woodland Estates. The timber can be used for utility poles, fence posts, boatbuilding, decking, furniture, and construction lumber.

How will the forest change after the felling is complete?

We hope that in the future the forest will be a better place for people and wildlife.

Our plans for the felling include many opportunities for improvements to habitat and wildlife. For example, we will open up the forest road verges and create an irregular forest edge through scalloping to encourage new species and improve habitats for species such as silver washed fritillary butterflies.

Where certain larch trees are incredibly difficult to reach, and where felling them would cause more damage than good, we will simply take the crown off and leave the stump – this is called monolithing. Doing this will leave some valuable large diameter standing deadwood within the woodland, very important habitat within a woodland and will contribute towards the overall condition of this wood.

After the felling has been completed, we will be looking to undertake a recreational redesign of the forest so walkers, cyclists and horse riders can all get the most out of the forest. During the redesign, we would welcome input from different user groups about how best we can achieve this.