



## Fallen larches

### The story so far

We know we have to fell the larch. Even though the advice from Natural Resources Wales has now changed, it would be unsafe to leave the trees standing as they will die due to the disease. We could never be sure that a dead tree wouldn't fall over and injure someone. So we have to engage a contractor to fell and extract the trees.

We think we have found a contractor willing to do the work. However he has other work and is hampered finishing these jobs by the horrendous weather this winter. Also we need agreement with Torfaen Borough Council regarding rights of way, safety and movement on their land.



*This lovely old hedgerow will have to be protected from the machinery.*

### The options

There are three routes for removing the timber. Our preferred option was to take it out through the Mountain Air gate, across to Penyrheol and then down through Cwmynyscoy as this would be least disruptive to users of the woodland. We had spoken to Pontypool Park Estate and the Commoners and had negotiated a price for improvements to the track between BBCW land and the road. However we met a lot of opposition from TBC who were very concerned about the state of the road down to Cwmynyscoy.

We discounted taking the wood through the woodland straight down past Mineslope Cottages and through the new car park. The gradient is far too steep for safety, the cost of repair to the car park would be beyond our means and it is the route most used by pedestrians.

This left exiting the woodland through the Square. We were reluctant to do this as the road is not in good condition and we have no desire to inconvenience the residents of the Square. However, TBC were keen for us

to pursue this option, offering to repair the road prior to starting. It also means we need a licence to cross the land from Ebenezer Chapel up to the ford. We are still negotiating the price of this, as well as other agreements and safety measures to be taken.

### What now?

The problem is we don't know when this work will begin, due to the weather and other problems. As soon as we know, we will do our best to inform all users by means of email to members, putting a notice on the website and on our Facebook page and putting signs at the entrances. We urge you all to be aware of this and look out for them.



*One problem will be where to stack all the timber so it is safe for the public but accessible for the haulage lorry.*



*Felling all the larch in this section will mean a loss of habitat for a lot of creatures. A whole ecosystem will be destroyed.*

# Keeping everyone safe

With a harvester chopping down trees and a haulage lorry collecting timber and then taking its load down through the woodland, there are safety measures we will put in practice. Firstly, the top larch will be closed off completely. Secondly, sections of the top road may be closed when work is going on close to it. Diversions will be put in place. We hope to have a volunteer warning people when this is happening.



*A harvester stripping, trimming and stacking timber.*

The lorry driver will observe a speed limit of 10mph throughout the woodland and will give way to pedestrians. If you have dogs and can hear a big vehicle approaching, it would be a good idea to put dogs on a lead.

The haulage lorry is expected to make

two journeys a day Monday to Friday. The operation is expected to last between eight and ten weeks. Hopefully, this will keep disruption to a minimum. We intend to have a banksman preceding the lorry both up and down the road from the car park to the Square, warning drivers they wish to wait or reverse to enable the lorry to go through - it is a very tight fit in places and would be nigh on impossible for the lorry to reverse.

Warning notices will be put up at all entrances to the woodland and all sensible precautions will be used. The best advice is to stay away from the track that goes from the Mountain Air gate to the gate where the Bran stream begins.



*It's a big lorry with a trailer behind - very awkward to manoeuvre.*

## Forest school area

Just above the log circle a forest school area is being developed. It consists of a lot of interesting tracks leading in and out of the trees, a pond, beds for planting and some great furniture has been made for it - a train, tables, a bardic chair and seating so far. It should be a really interesting and exciting area for children of all ages.

### What shall we call it?

Let's face it - "forest school area" is a boring name. "Children's wood" has been suggested but that might not appeal to older children. We've looked at several options but someone out there probably has a

brilliant name for it.

We will offer a year's free membership to the person who can think of the best name for this part of the woodland. Entries sent to [roger.the.saurus@gmail.com](mailto:roger.the.saurus@gmail.com) by April 30th 2014.



*This train is proving very popular - and sometimes children are allowed on it*

*Snowmen for sale*



The Newsletter of Blaen Brân  
Community Woodland

## What's On

### Volunteer work

Contact Dave 07787525875 or email [blaenbran@gmail.com](mailto:blaenbran@gmail.com) for more details. Easier work takes place on Saturdays. Technical stuff happens during the week.

### Events

**March 22nd** Guided walk by David Williams round forest school area. Meet at car park 10.30

**April 21st** Easter egg hunt. Details to follow

**May 9th** (TBC) Volunteer day - learn the sort of things the volunteers get up to

**June 1st** Bird spotting with Gwent Ornithological Trust. Meet at car park 8.00 am

**July 4th** (TBC) Bracken bashing and brash clearing. Details to follow.

**September 6th** Open day celebrating 10 years of BBCW. Details to follow

**To be confirmed -**

Fungus forage - possibly late September

Photography day - possibly November

## For all details of events

Visit our website

[www.blaenbran.org.uk](http://www.blaenbran.org.uk)

Or join us on

facebook