



Oak Resilience in a Changing Climate: From Veteran Trees to Drought Management

Wednesday 25th February 2026

Online via Zoom, 10:00-11:30 (UK time); 11:00-12:30 (CEST)

Webinar open from 09:55 (UK time); 10:55 (CEST)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81523812053?pwd=jaAmGuFS9zuFpHpBy9xVaPiYu6Qd12.1>

Time	Speaker	Topic	Duration (mins)
10:00	Sandra Denman Bruno Scanu	Welcome and Introduction	5
10:05	Sarah McLusky	Webinar introduction	5
10:10	Jonathan Ireland (National Trust, UK)	Veteran oak continuity: Challenges and management at National Trust Cobham Wood	15
10:25	Discussion		10
10:35	Gabriele Satta (University of Sassari, Italy)	Detection and modelling of drought-induced holm oak dieback in Mediterranean ecosystems	15
10:50	Discussion		10
11:00	Matt Searle (Treeworks Environmental Practice, UK)	The Ancient and Veteran Oaks of the North Kent Woods and Downs National Nature Reserve	15
11:15	Discussion		10
11:25	Final remarks and close		5

Please note we will record the meeting just for archive purposes

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Veteran oak continuity: Challenges and management at National Trust Cobham Wood

Jonathan Ireland (National Trust, UK)

Jonathan Ireland is a National Trust Lead Ranger guiding a small team tasked with the management of multiple sites within North Kent. We cover chalk grassland, an in-hand farm together with several SSSI woodland sites including Cobham Wood, a wood pasture restoration project.

Cobham Wood is SSSI-designated for its saproxylic invertebrate populations. Pockets of decay & dead wood within our veteran Oak pollard stock are essential habitat for these bugs. AOD & COD is affecting our assemblages significantly. This talk highlights the issues & discusses potential causational factors together with our response to try & secure a continuity of habitat.

Detection and modelling of drought-induced holm oak dieback in Mediterranean ecosystems

Gabriele Satta (University of Sassari, Italy)

Gabriele Satta has recently obtained a PhD in agricultural sciences, curriculum in Monitoring and Control of Agricultural and Forestry Ecosystems in the Mediterranean Environment, focused on drought- and pathogen-induced forest decline in Mediterranean ecosystems. He is currently working on the integration of field observations, remote sensing, and ecological modelling for forest health assessment, with implications for early warning and adaptive forest management.

This talk presents a multi-approach framework for detecting and modelling drought-induced holm oak dieback at regional scale, combining remote-sensing indicators with environmental predictors to identify vulnerability patterns and support risk-based management under climate change.

The Ancient and Veteran Oaks of the North Kent Woods and Downs National Nature Reserve

Matt Searle (Treeworks Environmental Practice, UK)

Matt is a Principal Arboricultural Consultant at Treework Environmental Practice. A Chartered arboriculturist and town planner, Matt specialises in helping clients navigate their way through the planning process and manage their tree populations with a particular love of the care and management of ancient and veteran trees.

In 2024, Matt led a specialist team who surveyed 1,400 ancient and veteran trees, across 18 sites in the North Kent Woods and Downs National Nature Reserve. Over 900 of the surveyed trees were assessed as being Ancient and Veteran. Such trees are relatively rare across Europe and valuable primarily for the rare micro-habitats primarily associated with the presence of decay and dead wood. This 'irreplaceable habitat' value is recognised and safeguarded in UK planning policy.