

**OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 7TH OCTOBER 2020 AT 6.00PM
BY VIRTUAL MEETING**

To: Councillors Bailey, Campsall (Vice-chair), Fryer (Chair), K. Harris, Morgan, Parsons, Poland, and Tillotson

PB, RE, GM, CN, JN

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES
2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR
3. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS
4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING & MATTERS ARISING Pages 2 - 8

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 29th January 2020.
5. OFFICER UPDATE REPORT Pages 9 - 12

An update regarding issues raised at previous meetings, information concerning new issues and finance.
6. ACTIVITIES AND OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT AT THE OUTWOODS SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE Pages 13 - 26

An update regarding activities and operational management at the Outwoods (emailed previously to the committee).
7. A.O.B

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Dates for 2020-21 are:

27th January 2021
14th April 2021

**OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
29TH JANUARY 2020**

PRESENT: Councillors Bailey, Campsall (Vice-chair), Fryer (Chair), K. Harris, Morgan, Parsons and Poland.
PB, RE, CN, and JN.

Rita Gries, Community Nature Engagement Officer, Idverde & RSPB

Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces
Senior Green Spaces Officer
Democratic Services Officer (NC)

APOLOGIES: Tony Thory and Nita Rao, ArtSpace Loughborough

1. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

Disclosures of personal interests were made as follows:

- (i) by PB who farmed land adjacent to the Outwoods.
- (ii) by JN who lived on land adjacent to the Outwoods.
- (iii) by RE whose wife was a member of ArtSpace Loughborough.
- (iii) by Councillor Bailey who farmed land adjacent to the Outwoods.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th October 2019 were agreed.

3. SCULPTURE TRAIL 2020 PROPOSALS

An evaluation report regarding the Sculpture Trail 2020 proposals was submitted (item 4 on the agenda).

Tony Thory and Nita Rao were unable to attend and did not send their apologies in time for the meeting.

The Committee considered the information contained in the report after items 5 and 6 on the agenda and was assisted by the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces. It was noted that the 2020 event was proposed to be of longer duration and that there had been carparking and signage issues last year which Trustees wished to be resolved.

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces explained that there were a few logistical issues to discuss regarding the parking and the possibility of work being carried out in the car park at the same time as the event.

AGREED

1. that the detailed proposals for the Sculpture Trail event to be held in 2020 as submitted to the Committee at this meeting be supported in principle;
2. that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces liaise with the Chair and Vice - chair of the Committee, and ArtSpace Loughborough with respect to resolving logistical issues;
3. that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces circulate information by email to the Committee during the progress of this project, in particular, regarding any decisions that are made in consultation with the Chair and Vice-chair.

4. GUEST SPEAKER – WILDLIFE OF THE OUTWOODS

Rita Gries, the Community Nature Engagement Officer (Idverde & RSPB) attended the meeting to give a presentation about the wildlife of the Outwoods.

Key highlights of the presentation are as follows:

- the Outwoods was a unique ancient woodland that provided habitat for both generalist and woodland specific bird species. As it was located amongst farmland and other woodland this provided additional habitats for other species such as redwings and house sparrows. There had been a sharp decline between 1970s to 2018 in woodland species in the UK, with some bird species being 'red-listed' by the RSPB.
- the Outwoods provided habitat for 10 generalist bird species and 9 woodland bird species. It would be advantageous to encourage other bird species to use the Outwoods, (see item 6).
- historical recording of bird species observed in the Outwoods had been limited, but two volunteers were now completing bird surveys once a month. There were several websites or apps that could be used by the public to record bird sightings and a woodland tool kit that provided information about managing woods for wildlife.

Trustees discussed ways in which birds spotted in the woods could be recorded, examples included locating a chalk board in the car park, using the Council's social media to publicise wildlife recording or putting information in the Charnwood Newsletter and on the existing noticeboard in the car park.

AGREED

1. that the presentation slides are circulated to the Committee;
2. that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces investigates options to encourage the recording of bird species in the Outwoods by visitors.

5. NESTBOXES IN THE OUTWOODS

A report regarding the provision of nest boxes for two bird species was submitted (item 6 on the agenda).

Rita Gries, the Community Nature Engagement Officer (Idverde & RSPB) attended the meeting to give an update. She explained that six of each of the two models (made from durable woodstone) would be purchased and installed in March. The Head of Open Spaces stated that with the Committee's confirmation the Borough Council would pay for the installation. This was agreed as acceptable.

AGREED that Rita Gries be invited to the meeting of the Committee in January 2021 to present an update on the success of the project.

6. OUTWOODS CONIFER FELLING PROGRAMME PHASE 1 UPDATE

A report providing an update of the conifer felling programme was submitted (item 7 on the agenda).

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces stated that there had been no significant issues during the initiation of the felling programme. He wished to pass on his thanks to the officers, the Council's Comms team and Idverde for the high volume of work they had put into the programme to make it happen. He and the Senior Green Spaces Officer explained that the brash had been windrowed and the ground would be restocked primarily with oak in the next six weeks. One compartment would be contract planted, the other planted by volunteers. He referred to the income / expenditure in Appendix 2 of the report explaining there had been some preparatory work and unexpected costs not included in the original estimate.

Trustees discussed the following:

- that some of the costs appeared to relate to maintenance and planting – a three year after care service had been included, which would involve two visits for weeding and replanting for a potential 10% loss rate of trees. This cost had been paid in advance.
- whether some of the costs were not unexpected as stated in the appendix and that costs should be monitored - the brash raking had required additional management as it had been difficult to plant through what had been left on the ground, contrary to expectations. The Council had also felt it was important to restock the compartments this winter to give confidence to the public that the Council were committed to completing the project. The tonnage of timber obtained had been an estimate and the total estimated had not been realised.
- whether to condense the felling programme duration from 8 years to 4 years (this period of felling had covered two years' work) which would enable compartments to be planted with slow growing oak sooner and provide benefit to birdlife - there had been a lot of disruption for visitors during this initial felling period and it had required significant resource commitment. This impact could be reduced by shortening the programme. Natural England and the Forestry Commission would require consulting and the countryside stewardship agreement would require amendment.

- concerns about the differences between the projected expenditure and income in the report submitted to the Committee at its last meeting and the actual figures reported to the Committee at this meeting and whether the costs should have been known – it had been a learning experience for officers, some upfront costs had been expected, others had not. Preparatory work completed during this year would be in place for the next period of tree felling.

The Committee wished to pass on its thanks to Council officers, the Comms team and idverde staff for their hard work.

AGREED

1. that the Senior Green Spaces Officer check the accuracy of the restocking specification figures on page 19 of the report (Appendix 1), and circulate the correct figures to the Committee;
2. that the Committee supports in principle that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces initiates discussions with Natural England and the Forestry Commission regarding the reduction of the duration of the felling programme;
3. that the Head of Open Spaces and Cleansing submits a report providing more details of expenditure and income projections for the next round of tree felling to the Committee at its meeting scheduled on 22nd July 2020.

7. COTTAGE CONVERSION PROJECT

A report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces providing an update about the ranger's cottage was submitted (item 8 on the agenda).

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces stated that a donor trustee and a ward councillor had registered to speak at the Plans Committee meeting on 30th January 2020 in favour of the application being approved. All Trustees were welcome to attend the meeting and if successful a press notice would be released on behalf of the Committee.

Trustees discussed the following, taking into consideration that the application had not yet been approved:

- how the kitchen area would be invested – the kitchen would be installed by the successful operator and it was likely to be a full repair and insurance lease, although the area to be leased required careful consideration in respect of the visitor centre space and its decoration.
- how the visitor centre/café would operate, its terms of lease and how the visitor centre would be designed – it was anticipated that the cafe would be let on commercial terms, and the visitor centre would have wall panels explaining the history of the Woods and its wildlife, the Committee and its benefactors.

AGREED

1. that if the planning application was approved, a subcommittee of the Outwoods Management Committee be created to review the proposals submitted by catering operators for the café when the Council goes out to tender;
2. that if the planning application was approved, the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces submits a report to the Committee at its next meeting on 15th April 2020 providing the details of the future lease, what it will cover and the designs for the café / visitor centre for the Committee's consideration;
3. that if the planning application was approved, the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces and the Chair and Vice-chair of the Committee be given delegated powers by the Committee to discharge the conditions of the application if required prior to the next meeting of the Committee, ensuring that Trustees are kept informed of such decisions.

8. OFFICER UPDATE / FINANCE REPORT

A report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces was submitted (item 9 on the agenda). The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces drew the Committee's attention to the following:

- (i) Charnwood Forest Regional Park – the bid had been submitted; inspectors were scheduled to visit the site in February with a decision being made in March.
- (ii) the bus lease had expired and the bus had been removed from site – there was an opportunity to have a smart refreshments concession at weekends on a simple contract, this could be in place to support the Sculpture Trail event. Trustees thought this was a good idea and would be beneficial for visitors.
- (iii) Car Park Charging – a ticket machine that accepted contactless and chip and pin payments had been sourced and would be installed into the car park at the earliest convenience.

Trustees discussed the following:

- the budget information and that the rent of land deficit included the carryover of rental income from the bus.
- the season ticket sales for the car park – that numbers of sales were holding steady.
- that the car parking income in the report for this month was low as it included income up to 15th January 2020 only.

AGREED

1. that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces keeps the Committee informed of the progress with the Charnwood Forest Regional Park landscape bid;

2. that the Committee supports the proposal to arrange for a refreshments concession to be sited in the Outwoods car park at weekends on a short-term contract;
3. that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces circulates by email to the Committee a guide specification of the type of refreshments concession being suggested and obtains the Trustees' views.

9. ACTIVITIES AND OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT AT THE OUTWOODS SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

An update regarding activities and operational management at the Outwoods was submitted (item 10 on the agenda).

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces stated that it had been a busy period for the rangers.

Trustees were disappointed that a camp had been found including BBQs and considered whether there would be a risk to the new trees being damaged. This was considered to be low risk, particularly once the carpark security measures had been implemented.

AGREED that the contents of the report be noted.

10. A.O.B

A Trustee was concerned that the Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) had been double accounted for in the budget and also in the expenditure for the felling programme. The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces agreed to check the figures and report back to the Committee.

The dates of the future proposed meetings were considered and found to be acceptable.

ADDENDUM - DECISIONS WHEREBY A VOTE WAS TAKEN

At the meeting of the Committee held on 6th September 2017 it was agreed that when the Committee voted by a show of hands on decisions made by the Committee that this information was documented as an addendum to the minutes (minute 2.2 refers).

Item 7. COTTAGE CONVERSION UPDATE

It was proposed that the Committee gives delegated powers to the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces and the Chair and Vice-chair of the Committee to discharge conditions of the planning application, if approved.

11 voted in favour
None voted against or abstained.

The proposal was carried.

AGREED

3. that if the planning application was approved, the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces and the Chair and Vice-chair of the Committee be given delegated powers by the Committee to discharge the conditions of the application if required prior to the next meeting of the Committee, ensuring that Trustees are kept informed of such decisions.

Item 8. OFFICER UPDATE / FINANCE REPORT

3. It was proposed that the Committee supports, in principle, the proposal to arrange for a refreshments concession to be sited in the Outwoods car park at weekends on a short-term contract.

11 voted in favour
None voted against or abstained.

The proposal was carried.

AGREED

2. that the Committee supports the proposal to arrange for a refreshments concession to be sited in the Outwoods car park at weekends on a short-term contract.

OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 7TH OCTOBER 2020

ITEM 5 OFFICER UPDATE REPORT

Purpose of Report

To update the Outwoods Management Committee on issues raised at previous meetings of the Committee and to bring new issues to the attention of the Committee.

Impact of COVID 19

It was considered necessary to close the Outwoods for a period from 22nd March 2020. This decision was made knowing that other local attractions like Bradgate Park and Beacon Hill had decided to close. The combination of increased visitor numbers and the narrow paths in the woods made social distancing very difficult for visitors. All three of these locations reopened simultaneously on the 13th May.

The Council suspended all charges for car parks up until 3rd August 2020. This was over concerns around virus transmission at the pay and display machines. Work is going on to extend parking season tickets in recognition of the closure of the woods and the period for which the charges were removed.

The Council have been unable to facilitate the meetings of the Outwoods Management Committee for its scheduled meetings on 15th April and 22nd July 2020. This was due to the restrictions imposed by the social distancing guidance. It is hoped that future meetings can continue virtually until the guidance is relaxed, and face to face meeting can take place again.

Additional, COVID related, signage is in place at the Outwoods and this is in the process of being refreshed.

Charnwood Forest Regional Park – Lottery Funding

In March 2020, the Charnwood Forest Regional Park Partners received notification that the application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a Landscape Partnership Scheme grant had been successful and £2.78 million had been awarded towards the £3.7 million Scheme. This will enable eighteen integrated projects to be carried out in Charnwood Forest over the next five years.

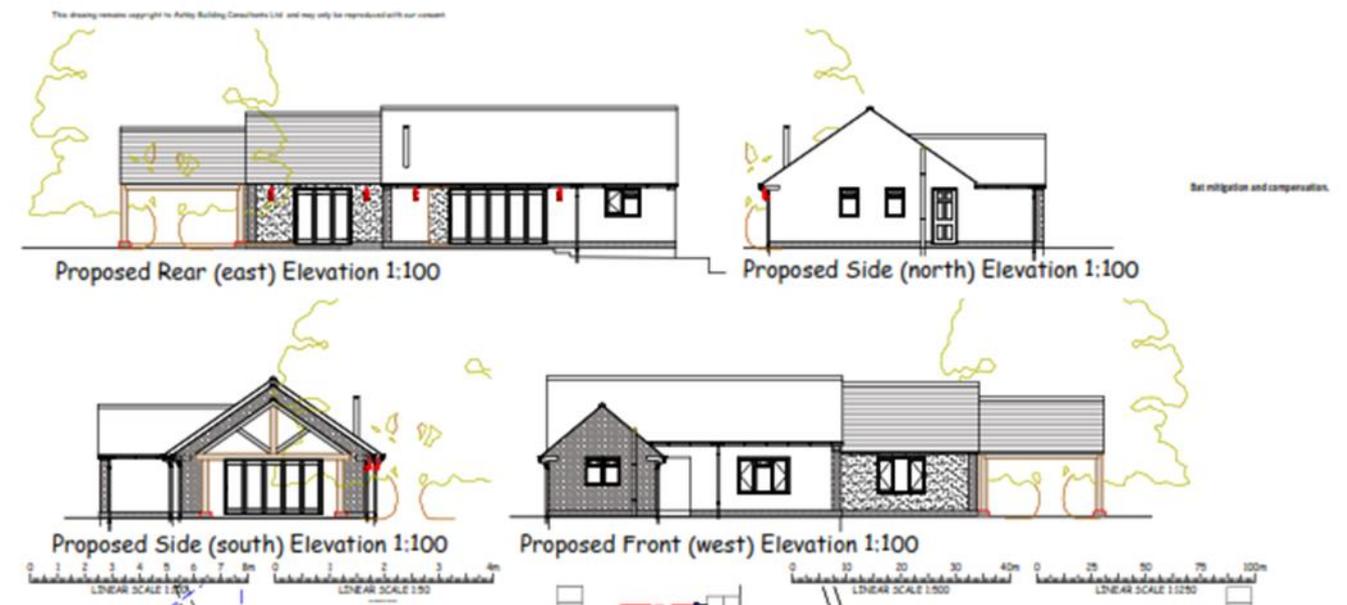
The Coronavirus pandemic has brought a number of unexpected challenges and delays but the Partnership received official permission to start from the National Lottery on 1st July 2020. Work is now underway. A core team of five members of staff (3.5 FTE) will support the Partnership to deliver the Scheme. The team will be hosted by the National Forest Company.

The central aim of the Scheme is to create a step-change in the way Charnwood Forest's heritage and landscape is explored, understood and cared for.

The Outwoods Visitor Centre Café

Planning permission for the cottage development was awarded at the end of January with a number of conditions attached. Work to secure a contractor to undertake the work was suspended in March 2020 due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

The current planning permission for the building expansion consist of three elements; the internal reordering of the cottage within existing footprint, building of an extension to create a larger more flexible space and the addition of an external canopy adjacent to the play area to provide a covered open air space with the ability of parents to monitor their children when using the play area.



Throughout the summer period, the need for the Council to review its current revenue and capital budgets became apparent and a new Capital Plan is being prepared for approval. This created a level of uncertainty around the funds committed to deliver the project.

Risks of increased capital spend arising from higher build costs being returned from the full tendering exercise can be mitigated by including or excluding elements of the proposals as appropriate e.g. the canopy could be omitted if the tendered price came in higher than expected.

It is also worth noting that even within the current footprint, the redeveloped cottage would have twice the internal space of the bus it is replacing and would therefore still be a viable proposition, all be it at a far reduced scale and potential.

The Council wished to ensure that there was sufficient demand within the market and ensure an appropriate return on its investment. A soft market testing exercise was completed to test, specifically, the appetite within the market from potential operators for:

- taking on the operation of such a facility on a full repairing lease / operational license,
- the length of lease / license likely to be sought and
- an indication of the potential annual revenue which is likely to be realised from the lease / license.

38 organisations accessed the tender 'box' and a further 3 organisations made contact outside of the official process. Of these, 16 responses to the exercise were received.

The level of interest and the responses received gave a high degree of confidence in the viability of the visitor centre/café and it is expected that the project will be retained in the Capital Programme.

Officers are working on a revised Project Plan with the aim of getting the facility opened prior to the summer holiday period of 2021.

Tree Felling/ Planting Programme

The impact of the coronavirus has meant that we have not commissioned any tree felling or planting over the coming winter period. It is hoped that the programme can recommence in the autumn/winter of 2021. The programme can remain on schedule by reprofiling the number of compartments that are to be felling and replanted.

Finance

Please find the accounts for the period 1st April to 28th September below.

Account (T)	Total Spend Inc Commits	Current Orig Budget	Variance
Buildings-R & M	1,180.50	5,000.00	3,819.50
Car Park Machine P/R&M	210.00	1,900.00	1,690.00
Grounds General Maint	0.00	4,000.00	4,000.00
Fencing/Gates	0.00	400.00	400.00
Seats	0.00	400.00	400.00
Mtc of Trees, Shrubs	0.00	4,800.00	4,800.00
Electricity	88.30	300.00	211.70
Metered Water Charge	-96.16	700.00	796.16
Unmeasured Water Charges	140.86	300.00	159.14
Equipment Etc P/R&M	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
Signs	-521.00	200.00	721.00
Printing,Stat&Copying	186.00	300.00	114.00
Security Services & Charges	654.39	800.00	145.61
Contribution	0.00	36,400.00	36,400.00
Promotional Activities	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
Cesspit Emptying	0.00	4,900.00	4,900.00
MOS Contract - Basic	52,771.35	126,700.00	73,928.65
MOS Contract - Variations	610.29	1,500.00	889.71
Grant Contribution	-6,311.65	-4,000.00	2,311.65
Car Parking Charges	-4,877.61	-29,000.00	-24,122.39
Controllable	44,035.27	157,600.00	113,564.73

Car Parking Income

The income received via the car parking machine is as follows:

	Banked 17-18	Banked 18-19	Banked 19-20	Banked 20-21
April	£0.00	£2,763.25	£3,503.00	£0
May	£87.00	£3,200.60	£4,407.00	£0
Jun	£1,906.20	£2,376.85	£2,403.50	£0
Jul	£1,918.60	£2,265.05	£1,763.10	£0
Aug	£2,324.25	£2,738.10	£0.00	£2,956.40
Sep	£2,081.75	£1,879.70	£973.20	£2,793.70
Oct	£2,479.80	£2,097.60	£2,170.35	
Nov	£1,834.15	£1,655.85	£1,814.40	
Dec	£1,736.60	£1,715.70	£1,820.50	
Jan	£2,310.90	£2,980.70	£2,268.25	
Feb	£1,980.00	£1,559.20	£1,164.80	
Mar	£1,805.75	£2,199.05	£1,650.60	
	£20,465.00	£27,431.65	£19,767.25	

*period to 28th September

Officer to contact: Matthew Bradford
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Matthew.bradford@charnwood.gov.uk



The Outwoods Management Committee Rangers Report

1st May-31st July 2020

May



The Outwoods bluebells were still just about in bloom for the droves of fortunate visitors that arrived when the gates were reopened in early May.

In anticipation for the large volume of visitors and to reduce the number of vehicles parking on the dangerous 60mph Woodhouse Lane, the Rangers marked out 63 (excluding the disabled bay) parking bays. This new layout changed the way that those arriving in cars considered their parking habits which was restrictive to the numbers that the car park can hold. By setting out 2 rows of standard UK size parking bays, marked out with chalk spray, horizontally in the middle and also using the edges of the area, this has increased capacity by at least 30%.

Many of the visitors have thanked the Rangers for this guidance and we are hoping that these temporary measures can take on a more permanent feature in the future.





The Rangers are maintaining the new glade area behind the charcoal burner. The vegetation there is making a strong fight back, in particular the bracken. Any native bluebells have been preserved as well as managing numbers of nettle and holding back the bramble. There are already positive signs that this area can eventually become an attractive wildflower area within the

wood with a view of eventually also seeing the encroachment of nearby grasses. It is hoped that eventually this area is at a stable enough level to remove the picnic benches from the car park into this more attractive setting.



In the meantime, the Rangers have improved this picnic area in the car park by keeping vegetation down so that visitors can enjoy a view into the woodland.



However, since the gates reopened, there seems to have been a high level of littering overnight in this area as, presumably young people have used this to eat their takeaway meals.

Maintenance has also continued in the green play area and bungalow garden.



In collaboration with idverde engineers, the bridge that was started towards the end of April was concluded. A dry stone wall provides solid edging under the timber structure and provides a larger outlet for water to travel. Work will continue on further aesthetics.

June

There should be more positive things to report on than litter and ASB, but unfortunately, litter has been the outstanding issue for June. This has not just been an issue at the Outwoods, but throughout Charnwood's wildlife areas. With lockdown continuing, many people still furloughed, children being kept from school and the weather being glorious, visitor numbers to open spaces have been unprecedented.

Unfortunately, the Rangers arrival to work every morning to find that their hard work to make our wildlife areas as safe and well maintained as possible, is frankly demoralising. The level of disrespect by so many visitors is disheartening.



Vandalised bollards and posts in the car park



Not all of this littering is committed by unruly teenagers, but by a surprising amount of those that may usually be observed as respectable, intelligent people. It may be absent-mindedness, complacency, habit or some kind of protest, but, this is currently a big problem. As well as the usual amount of take-away and picnic packaging, there are discarded latex gloves, facemasks and wet wipes.

The Rangers are trying to positively engage with those that have discarded waste irresponsibly and we are receiving feedback on the worry of lifting the plastic lids on the bins due to fear of cross-contamination. The plastic lids cannot be left off the bin, even for a short amount of time, as the crows and squirrels empty them. We are now working on how we can redesign the bins to avoid contact, keep them wildlife safe, easy for us to maintain and keep the cost at a minimum.



On the 8th June, our Ranger, Liam heard a car alarm going off in the Outwoods car park. Upon checking, he noticed a car speeding out of the car park and then saw broken glass on the floor. 2 cars had been broken into a handbags stolen. Liam called the police and waited for the car owners to return to their vehicles to inform them what had happened.



Liam also stayed to help clean the broken glass out of their cars and gave them the crime number given to him by the police so that they could pass this to their insurance companies.

The ladies were very grateful for Liam going above and beyond his duties.

In better news, we feel that we are especially privileged to maintain the Outwoods and even more so to observe the wildlife that lives or visits there. In June we observed many wildlife species but capturing these on camera can be troublesome! Here, this Ringlet butterfly (right) and Small Tortoiseshell (below) were kind enough to allow us to capture their image to share with you.



On the 12th June, a medium sized tree came down across one of the primary paths in the Outwoods. This tree had recently been identified to be removed this winter due to some rotting at the base, but it wasn't expected to come down prematurely. The Rangers closed the footpath and dealt with this very quickly.



The Rangers have also continued the maintenance of the Outwoods primary footpath network and glade area near the charcoal burner.

Disappointingly, the Asulox herbicide application last year proved unsuccessful. We believe that the application may have been too late and the bracken already dying off which would mean that the product wouldn't have been given sufficient chance to kill the roots.

This has led to the need for repeated strimming of the bracken to keep it at bay. We plan to repeat the application of the Asulox next month in order to try again to bring the bracken under control .





In preparation for the easing of lockdown restrictions including the reopening of playgrounds on July 4th, the bark was topped up in the Outwoods green play area at the end of June. Again, *idverde*'s engineers were called upon to operate the large plant required. All play equipment was also visited by the *idverde* Playground Inspector to ensure that the play area was suitably safe for re-opening after it's long closure.



July

The play area reopened as planned on 6th July in line with all of Charnwood Borough Council's play areas. The play equipment is wiped with disinfectant wipes every morning, though ideally, all parents will be bringing anti-bacterial gel with them to sanitise before and after use. We have observed some following this but there are still many in number that are not.

Compliance with social distancing is still an issue. We have witnessed large groups meeting, arriving in many cars to the car park before they embark on a walk. The Rangers do not challenge these groups to reduce the risk of confrontation.

The toilets were also reopened after a deep clean. Signs have been placed with social distancing guidance to encourage visitors to be compliant and reduce the risk of transmitting the disease. We have also installed barriers to add further guidance. The water fountain is still closed to visitors for obvious reasons.



Due to age and inevitable rot as the timber was in the soil, one of the benches has needed to be removed from the Outwoods this month. The family are aware.

The bench near the kissing gate has also been identified to be removed for H&S reasons.



On the 4th July, the Rangers on duty were contacted by a visitor who had lost his elderly Springer Spaniel, Elsie. She was last seen near the Prince of Wales plaque in the morning, whilst they travelled their daily walk. The Rangers searched the Outwoods thoroughly for the duration of Elsie's disappearance, looking deep into some of the dense holly where she may have found shelter. Though, with Elsie being 14 years old and in need of daily medication for liver problems, once she had been missing for a week, hope was almost gone.

On the 11th July, an organised search was arranged by Elsie's family and many local people got involved in the search. Still, there was no sign of her.

However, on Sunday 12th July, Elsie was found alive near to Nanpantan reservoir. She was very weak but we hear that she is making a recovery with her very relieved and grateful family.

been missing since Saturday, she went missing in The Outwoods chasing a ball and disappeared. She is an older Springer Spaniel who is on medication, so we need to get her back to her owner. Please share, still no sightings.

MISSING

APPROX 10.30 – 04 JULY 2020

Elsie



Harvey's Army North * Harvey's Army South * Harvey's Army Scotland * Harvey's Army Wales

** URGENT **

Needs medication
For liver condition

07842 211 505

OLDER ADULT FEMALE
SPRINGER SPANIEL
LIVER / WHITE

MISSING FROM
THE OUTWOODS
JUBILEE WOOD
NANPANTAN
LEICESTERSHIRE LE11 3YG

SIGHTINGS NEEDED

PLEASE NOTE
LOCATION + DIRECTION OF TRAVEL
+ CALL ASAP

DO NOT CHASE,
SHOUT or GRAB



It is a legal requirement to report any
found dog to the Dog Warden

Contact Harvey's Army Confidentially on: 07833 727 975



The area in front of the rock face was cleared and tidied. There had been a lot of brash from the windrows created from the felling operation that had somehow made it's way into this area over the warmer months. As this is a visitor attraction, this is now, again, looking more presentable.

The oak that was blown from the face of the rocks has been left in place as it is secure. This forms a good sized bench, perfect for social distancing.

As well as regularly remarking the car park space lines, the Rangers have been topping up the stone in the car park. With the recent inclement weather, the stone has been washed away causing pot-holes.

During this run of bad weather, some of the steeper primary paths in the Outwoods have suffered erosion. We have yet to manage this situation as we may need to involve our engineers and the heavy plant machinery to repair the paths and deliver appropriate stone to the location.



Again, likely caused by inclement weather, though indirectly, we have lost a couple of young oaks over the pathways in the wood. One across the path at the bottom of the clear felled area close to the car park and another was hung up over the boardwalk.

Our Rangers, Liam and Tom, brilliantly managed to bring the tree down, avoiding damage to the boardwalk, by cleverly forming a buffer of logs and brash for the tree to be felled upon.



Glade and Kiln Area





We have continued to maintain the glade area behind the charcoal burner. It is hoped that the surrounding grasses will eventually take hold with the continuous management of the bracken. As well as improving biodiversity, the area is much more attractive, with an open feeling. In the past, with the bracken growing to a height of up to 8ft, the area felt oppressive and dark. We are very happy with the results here and will continue our maintenance.

We have recently met with a local kilnsman, Pete, who has recently set up a charcoal business in Newtown Linford through partnership with the National Forest Company. Pete visited the kiln and checked its viability and is happy to run a test burn in the kiln in the coming months. Under Pete's instructions, the Rangers have cleared around and under the kiln, ensuring all vents are clear. All is left to do is transfer some of our thinned silver birch timber to the kiln and cut into the required 10" pieces. We hope to learn from this experience and obviously hope that we can finally see the return of Outwoods charcoal production.





A sorry sight to arrive to find. Overnight visitors to the Outwoods made the irresponsible decision to have a fire in the middle of the car park on the night of 29th July. Logs were taken from the Rangers yard and butane gas was used to enhance the blaze. Burnt and exploded canisters were found up to 50ft away which would have been like missiles across the car park. We have no reports of injuries.

Fencing was removed and burnt along with limbs from nearby oak trees as well as our plastic cones, which keep the children safe from entering traffic. The barriers to maintain safe social distancing for the facilities were also strewn around the car park and left as potential hazards for visitors.

One of the oak picnic benches was also left dangerously perched on the bin. The previous weekend, 2 of these had been turned over completely. Police have been informed.

Further to report on anti-social behaviour; there have been small fires behind the rock face. These are usual at this time of year and fortunately, these have been small and self-extinguished. There have been signs of camping in the area and hopefully, these are taking some form of responsibility despite camping being disallowed under the byelaw's.

The Rangers are monitoring the usual camping spots, taking full water containers with them in case fires do need to be extinguished.

Outwoods Exotic Wildlife?



On the 14th July, the Rangers were alerted to a Facebook post on Spotted Loughborough. The post showed photos of a tarantula, seemingly (hopefully!) dead and sitting on a log in the Outwoods.

The Rangers immediately responded to the post, asking the person that posted the pictures to contact us. Soon after, we did receive a response from a lady visiting the Outwoods with her husband and 6 year old, who was the one that found the spider.

The lady directed us to the location which was found to be the log on the path towards Deans Lane next to the Common Cow-Wheat. Unfortunately, the spider was no longer there. On further questioning, the lady admitted that her husband had poked the spider with a stick, and the creature didn't move, thus establishing that it was dead.

From this information, we concluded that this was likely a prank by someone who's pet had died and had since removed the carcass.

Unable to let the matter rest, I contacted a friend who keeps nearly 50 tarantula's as pets, and asked them their opinion on the matter. After studying the photographs, they were quite convinced that the spider was alive, though stressed, due to it's well hydrated but balding portion of its abdomen. However, not able to establish whether the spider was alive or not from the photograph, they agreed to meet me at the Outwoods to try to locate and capture the spider if it was alive.

On meeting on site, I learned a lot about tarantula behaviour, hoping that this will never have to matter in my life again. Tarantula's do not travel far. They will maintain a small territory. This particular spider, a male *Lasiodora parahybana* or Salmon Pink Bird-eating tarantula is the 3rd largest tarantula in the world. It shouldn't be aggressive to humans and should hide should a human approach; however, they may 'freeze' if immediate danger is upon it (even if poked with a stick) though if provoked it can deliver a nasty bite but prefer to flick hairs from their abdomen. (may be the reason that there are no hairs on this examples abdomen). They would likely make their home in a hollow log if left in the wild, though a male may travel in search of a female to mate.

However, after 2 hours of a 4 person search, covering a wide area of the sighting and a thorough inspection of the inside of the log the spider was not found. We eventually concluded that this was, in fact, a prank of leaving a recently deceased spider in plain view of a footpath in order to scare people.

We hope that this is the fact of the matter, but we'll be keeping our eyes open, just in case!