

**OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
9TH OCTOBER 2019**

PRESENT: Councillors Bailey, Campsall (Vice-chair), Fryer (Chair), Morgan, Parsons, and Tillotson.
PB, CN, GM and JN.

Tony Thory and Nita Rao, ArtSpace Loughborough
Rita Gries, Idverde

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

APOLOGIES: Councillors K. Harris, Poland, and RE

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 Councillor Bailey who farmed land adjacent to the Outwoods.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 31st July 2019 were agreed.

3. SCULPTURE TRAIL 2019 UPDATE

An evaluation report regarding the Sculpture Trail 2019 was submitted (item 4 on the agenda).

Tony Thory and Nita Rao attended the meeting to present the highlights of their report and made the following comments:

- during the event 26 pieces of art were installed over 1.25 mile trail in the Outwoods.
- the Open Weekend had been attended by over 3000 visitors and 700 people had taken part in the workshops. It was estimated that between 16-30,000 visitors attended the event over the 6 weeks and the feedback received had been overwhelmingly positive.
- there had been concerns raised about car parking and a small amount of vandalism of two art installations had occurred.
- the plans for the Trail in 2020 was to arrange a similar sized event to this year but to run for a longer duration, starting later in May and finishing in August. There would be a move away from an opening event and have smaller ongoing

projects around the trail with Arts projects for specific community groups. It was hoped this would alleviate the car parking issues seen this year.

Tony took the opportunity to thank the volunteers, Arts Council, National Forest, the Borough Council, its teams, Idverde and the Outwoods Management Committee for their support.

Committee members discussed how to resolve carparking issues and how improving signage around the trail and adding signs to direct the public to using other entrances and car parks would be beneficial.

The Head of Cleansing and Open spaces noted that immediately after the event visitor numbers had appeared to increase, particularly with respect to using the trampers which were now fully utilised. In response to concerns over car parking, he stated that when the event opened this year, it had coincided with the opening of the play area and the height of the bluebells in flower, which would have impacted on the number of visitors. On reflection it would have been advisable to stagger the events and that the Council would have an improved carparking plan in place in future.

AGREED

1. that the proposals for the Sculpture Trail event to be held next year as submitted to the Committee at this meeting be supported in principle;
2. that a further report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee setting out the detailed proposals by ArtSpace Loughborough for the Sculpture Trail 2020;
3. that ArtSpace Loughborough be invited to attend the next meeting on 29th January 2020 of the Committee to present the proposals.

4. NESTBOXES IN THE OUTWOODS

A late report regarding the provision of nest boxes for two bird species was submitted (item 5 on the agenda).

Rita Gries, an RSPB officer on secondment to Idverde attended to present the report and explained that the woods were a perfect habitat for redstart and spotted flycatcher and that although these species had not been recorded in the Outwoods, they had been seen in the surrounding area. Funding was being sought from local groups to build nest boxes and volunteers from RSPB would be asked to monitor their use.

Trustees discussed the following:

- whether events like the Sculpture Trail would significantly impact the nesting birds due to the larger number of visitors, it was explained that the boxes would be located further in the woods away from primary paths.
- that there was no record of any species currently in the woods and that RSPB volunteers could be recruited to complete breeding bird surveys and species surveys of birds, flowers and insects once a month to obtain a base line. The

Outwoods could also participate in nation wide initiatives like the Big Garden bird watch or Butterfly count.

- Species information could be shared with national databases and mobile phone apps could also be used by the public to record sightings. Signs advertising particular mobile phone apps could be located in the carpark to encourage visitors.

AGREED

1. that the Committee welcomed installing nest boxes as a good initiative;
2. that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces liaises with Idverde to arrange for the nest boxes to be installed before March 2020;
3. that Rita Gries be invited to the next meeting of the Committee on 29th January 2020 to present an update.

5. OUTWOODS CONIFER FELLING PROGRAMME UPDATE

A report providing an update of the conifer compartment felling was submitted (item 6 on the agenda).

The Senior Green Spaces Officer stated that once a biodiversity list had been supplied, Natural England would provide consent for the practical works on the gateway to be completed. The contract company was on standby for getting the works done and it was anticipated this would be completed within the next two weeks. There were some concerns regarding the drop to the verge but a temporary fix would be applied to reduce the drop using concrete. The Council's Communications team would be publicising the work starting from next week to ensure members of the public were fully aware of the programme and the reasons why trees were being felled.

In response to questions the Senior Green Spaces Officer explained that:

- concerns had been highlighted by the County's Highways Department regarding the brow of the hill, but as the number of lorries would not be significant, their movements could be controlled to fit in with quieter traffic periods. Options to control traffic using flags or traffic lights were being researched to ensure compliance with the road's 60mph speed limit.
- Staff from Idverde and council officers would provide an onsite presence throughout the duration of the work, in particular to manage pedestrian access.
- 10 x A1 signs were being prepared to locate around the woods near to the carpark and the site of the felling.

Trustees discussed the following:

- the route the lorries would take to transport the felled wood away from the Outwoods, as there were some concerns regarding the use of Snells Nook Lane and the crossroads between the lane and Nanpantan Road. It was mentioned that the contractor had worked at other remote sites and that it was their responsibility to ensure it could travel along a particular route.

- the height of the 10 year old oak trees to be planted and whether a scheme could be introduced for Year 7 children in the borough to adopt a tree, so the child could watch the tree maturing. Similar projects had been introduced elsewhere in the country and there were opportunities to link this scheme with other projects the Council managed like the Native Tree give-away in November and the Community Tree Planting Programme where the Council had committed to plant 100,000 trees over four years in different locations across the Borough.

The Committee were shown a short video that would be made available to the public via social media explaining the felling programme.

AGREED

1. that the Senior Green Spaces Officer investigate how the wood felled in Jubilee Woods by the County Council was transported away from the site, to check with the contractor its anticipated route and circulate the response by email to the Committee;
2. that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces investigate linking the planting of trees in the Outwoods to other Council schemes and inviting school children to adopt trees across sites in the Borough;
3. that to assist in the administration of the matter, any questions or comments received by Trustees of the Committee regarding the conifer felling work be forwarded to the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces for his action.

5. HIGH WINDS PROTOCOL

A report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces regarding the high winds procedure was submitted (item 6 on the agenda).

The Senior Green Spaces Officer presented the report and explained that in preparing the protocol he had considered the whole site and applied similar criteria as was used by the National Trust. The actions that would be taken in the event of high winds depended on area usage and dwell times. The car park and toilets were considered high usage and the Rangers hut was also identified as high usage, because although it wasn't open to the public it was frequently used by the Rangers and therefore had a high dwell time. The main footpaths had been categorised as medium usage.

In response to questions the Senior Green Spaces Officer stated that:

- the protocol would be activated when wind gusts reached above 40mph as determined by the Met Office. The rangers would be on site to make the decision in consultation with council officers.
- the wind speeds had gone above 40mph approximately 3-4 times in the last year, and there had been only one occasion when the woods had been closed and the predicted wind speed had not been reached.

- the inspection that would take place before the woods were opened again would include inspecting all the trees around the carpark and a cursory drive around the main routes to check for hanging branches, trees uprooted etc.
- if something dangerous was found, the area would stay closed to the public and the tree team contacted, but actions to be taken would be determined on a case by case basis.

AGREED that the protocol be approved for implementation.

6. OUTWOODS CARPARK OPENING TIMES

A report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces was submitted (item 8 on the agenda).

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces stated that the gates would be installed after the conifer felling work had been completed, and that the opening times for the carpark would be as proposed in the report.

Trustees discussed whether using dawn to dusk criteria would be more appropriate based on sunrise and sunset times, but it was explained that this could lead to misunderstandings as to when dawn and dusk actually was and that as the contract operator would be opening and closing the gates following a route along with managing other sites, it would be logistically more efficient to have specific times. The winter closing time was considered by some Trustees to be a little late, particularly as it would be dark by 8pm. However it was noted that the public may wish to walk dogs after work and that the later closing time would only prevent cars from entering the carpark as one way plates would allow cars to leave.

AGREED that the proposed opening times be approved subject to monitoring and review over the following year to determine if the times were still appropriate.

7. OFFICER UPDATE 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 and the Council would know in February whether it had been successful.
- (ii) Events Barn – as stated in the report.
- (iii) Car Park Charging – the robbery of money from the car parking machine had cost the Council in lost income and time in replacing the machine, which had taken longer than anticipated. A card reader would be retro fitted which would reduce the amount of cash left in the machine overnight. Once the visitor centre was open the installation of CCTV could be considered.
- (iv) Visitor Centre/cafe planning application – it wasn't certain if the application would be submitted to the Plans Committee at its November meeting. Trustees

discussed whether the four Corporation (council) Trustees who sat on the Plans Committee would withdraw for the item or send a substitute with the consensus being that the members would withdraw for the item only.

- (vii) the bus lease - this was as stated in the report, and the Committee would be updated by email as required.
- (viii) Volunteer hours - as stated in the report.
- (ix) Barbed Wire next to gate – still under investigation, Trustees considered it would not be beneficial to formalise access via this route and the gate should be removed.

AGREED

1. that a donor trustee registers to speak on behalf of the Outwoods Management Committee at the Plans Committee meeting that considers the planning application for the visitor centre;
2. that the donor trustee drafts a statement to be read out at the Plans Committee meeting and circulates it to the Outwoods Management Committee by 6th November for its consideration and comment;
3. that if an objection is received to the planning application for the visitor centre that the Committee be informed;
4. that the councillors for the Outwoods Ward be contacted to see if they wish to also speak at the Plans Committee meeting when the visitor centre application is being considered.
5. that the contents of the report be noted.

8. FINANCE UPDATE

An update regarding finance for 2019/20 was submitted (item 10 on the agenda).

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces stated that the finance for 2019/20 presented no concerns at present.

AGREED that the information be noted.

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 11 on the agenda).

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces stated that there had been 25 new registered users for the trampers and the purchase of a third tramper could be considered once where to store it had been resolved. There were still issues with

cyclists traversing the Outwoods who were not particularly polite if challenged but it appeared to be only small number of cyclists involved.

AGREED that the contents of the report be noted.

10. A.O.B

Two matters were raised as follows:

- a picture of Alan Moss had been discovered at the Council offices from the time when he had been the Mayor of the Council. It was proposed to hang the picture in the visitor centre if planning permission was obtained. A picture of the other original donor Harry Bowler would also be sought to be hung alongside Mr Moss.
- whether Trustees would like a guest speaker to be invited to present on a suitable topic at the next meeting of the Committee.

AGREED that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces invite a guest speaker to the next Committee meeting.

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 4. SCULPTURE TRAIL 2019 UPDATE – future proposals

It was proposed that the Committee supports the proposals outlined by ArtSpace Loughborough.

10 voted in favour
None voted against or abstained.

The proposal was carried.

AGREED

1. That the proposals for the Sculpture Trail event to be held next year submitted to the Committee at this meeting be supported in principle;

Item 7. HIGH WINDS PROTOCOL

It was proposed that the protocol be approved.

10 voted in favour
None voted against or abstained.

The proposal was carried.

AGREED that the protocol be approved for implementation.