

**OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**  
**10TH APRIL 2019**

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

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

APOLOGIES: Councillor Parsons, GM

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 RE whose wife was a member of Artspace Loughborough.
- (iii) by JN who lived on land adjacent to the Outwoods.
- (iv) by Councillor Fryer, Morgan and Poland as Leicestershire County Councillors during item 5.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 30th January 2019 were agreed.

**AGREED** by the Committee to consider item 5 - Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership Bid Update, before item 4 – Officer Update Report, to allow the Monitoring Officer to attend.

3. OFFICER UPDATE REPORT

A report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces was submitted (item 4 on the agenda) updating the Committee in respect of the following:

- (i) Natural Play Area – it was anticipated to be open by the middle of the following week in time for Easter. There would be minimal press publicity to reduce the chance of a spike in visitor numbers.
- (ii) Events Barn – this would become available for use once the landscaping had been completed and the surrounding area was seeded with wild flowers. It was hoped that the Sculpture Trail would be the first event to use the barn. As part of the funding for the barn from ESIF, the Council had committed to holding 20 events per year, but would not be charging for its use during the first 5 years.

- (iii) Septic Tank – this had nearly been completed and had been funded entirely by the Council.
- (iv) Entrance Works – this was proceeding as indicated in the report. The wall on one side had been hit by a car and partially demolished, so it had been completely dismantled for safety reasons.
- (v) Visitor Centre/cafe – it was expected to open by the end of the calendar year. Café operators were already showing an interest in its lease and volunteers could oversee the visitor centre once it opened. The British Geological Survey had offered to create a mould of fossils to complement the interpretation boards which would explain the geology and history of the site.

Trustees requested that the cast iron plaque on the side of the entrance gates be re-located to the Visitor Centre/Café wall.

- (vi) Compartment Felling – the first two compartments would be felled in September and the timber sold. The five-bar gate area would require upgrading for access. There would be significant press communication regarding the felling to reassure the public about the reasons for the felling and that the trees would be replaced with native species. Some of the good Scots Pine specimens might be retained.
- (vii) Sculpture Trail – the dates of the event had been slightly extended to finish on Sunday 9th June. It was hoped that visitor numbers would be managed more effectively this year by extending the event over a longer period.
- (viii) Green Flag/Site Information boards & Bluebell walk – information noted.
- (vix) Future meetings – the Committee agreed it would be beneficial to invite guest speakers to future meetings. The fossils in the area were of national importance and a protection plan was being created.

## **AGREED**

1. that the Senior Green Spaces Officer attends the next meeting to present the programme of works with respect to compartment felling;
2. that the Officers of the Council and the team at idverde be thanked by email for their excellent work in maintaining the Outwoods;
3. that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces invites a member of the British Geological Survey to speak about fossils at the next meeting of the Committee;
4. that the report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces be noted.

## 4. CHARNWOOD FOREST LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP BID UPDATE

An update regarding the project proposals for the Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership bid was submitted (item 5 on the agenda).

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces summarised the proposals and the estimated costings of the three projects. He drew the Committee's attention to the number of concerns regarding Project One and its compliance with the Trust Deeds.

*Councillor Poland joined the meeting.*

The Monitoring Officer explained that he wished to make the Committee aware that, with respect to its consideration of the proposal of a multi-function path in Project One, a clause in the Trust Deeds stated paths should be for 'on foot' only and that Bye-Law 15 stated that persons should not enter the woods by cycling or riding a horse. The use of wheelchairs in the woods were unlikely to be challenged in terms of the Trust Deeds.

He stated that legal advice previously obtained had clarified that the Trust had been created in perpetuity and currently the law stated that trusts created in this manner could only be charitable trusts, (which the Outwoods Trust was not). It was possible that if the Committee approached the Court to modify the Trust Deeds to enable Project One to proceed that the Court could say the Deeds had failed and the land revert to the National Trust or that the Trust needed to convert to a Charitable Trust.

During the discussion regarding Project One, Trustees raised the following points:

- Introducing cyclists into the woods could create issues with keeping cyclists to one area only and be perceived as encouragement to cycle elsewhere in the woods. It could be possible to cycle up the bridleway and place cycle racks by the entrance to the Outwoods and then to walk to the carpark using the path.
- if the Trust became a Charitable Trust (like Bradgate) it could be expensive, particularly to continue to maintain the woods, and the Committee might be expected to finance any deed alterations. There could be issues over whether the Council could legally support a charity and the Trust would need to be totally self-resourced and self-governed. Income raised at present was re-invested into the Outwoods by the Council.
- the path could be created for foot traffic only and not for cycling or equestrian purposes, with signage asking people to dismount.
- an alternative option could be to create a path alongside the road outside of the Outwoods boundary, but safety was of a concern.

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces responded by stating that the aim of the project was to improve access to the woods without using cars. Bridleway K19 was being improved to support this aim, although there was a parcel of land to cross that the ownership of which was uncertain. The existing path would be upgraded, was inside the Outwoods boundary wall and part of the SSSI so approval from Natural England would be required. Creating a pathway alongside the road was not within the remit of the project funding and would require input from Leicestershire County Council, which could be sought. There was a project to link the lower Beacon carpark to the Outwoods carpark by footpath but this would be on the opposite side of the road to the proposed path.

He stated that the purpose of the projects were to improve resilience in the Outwoods for visitors and that as Project One was complicated to deliver, prior to the meeting he had consulted Julie Attard from the National Forest, and now proposed an alternative project to upgrade and improve the toilets in the Outwoods carpark. The Bid was at the stage where the project details were being finalised so there was an opportunity to alter the proposal.

There were no questions with respect to Project Two and Project Three.

It was proposed that Project One be discontinued and that a project to upgrade and improve the existing toilets in the Outwoods carpark be costed and submitted.

10 votes in favour

None voted against or abstained.

The proposal was carried. Trustees noted that as the funding had been obtained it was advisable to use it, that it would be worthwhile to improve the toilets and that the proposal for the multi-function path could be revisited in the future with consultation with other partners.

## **AGREED**

1. that Project One to create a walking/cycle/equestrian path from junction of Woodhouse Lane to Bridleway K19 to the Outwoods carpark be discontinued and replaced with a project to upgrade and improve the existing toilets in the Outwoods carpark;
2. that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces investigates the costs and details of the project to upgrade and improve the existing toilets and that the decision on this project submission as part of the HFL bid be delegated to the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces and the Chair and Vice-chair of the Outwoods Management Committee;
3. that Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces communicates the decision regarding the project to upgrade and improve the existing toilets to the full Committee and provides the information of its costs and details to the Committee at its next meeting;
4. that Projects Two and Three are approved for consideration and that the decision on the final projects submission as part of the HFL bid be delegated to the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces and the Chair and Vice-chair of the Outwoods Management Committee.

## 5. FINANCE UPDATE

An update regarding finance issues for the 2018/19 year was submitted (item 6 on the agenda).

In response to queries by the Committee, the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces stated that:

- (i) the report detailed the financial situation almost at year end. There had been no further expenditure since the date of the report.
- (ii) the car parking charges had provided 20% of the annual costs. It was hoped that the income from the visitor centre/café and increased visitor numbers resulting in more carparking fees would enable the Outwoods to start funding its maintenance by itself.
- (iii) charging for carparking had not appeared to have reduced the numbers of visitors and the improvements made to the site using this money could be seen.

**AGREED** that information be noted.

8. 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 7 on the agenda).

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces presented the report and stated that a High Winds Policy was being drafted and would be presented to the Committee for approval. In response to queries by Trustees he stated that if gusts went above 45mph signs would be placed at the entrances advising members of the public not to enter for their own safety. It was not possible to prevent access if people disregarded these signs. Once the entrance had been improved the gates could be closed and the potential impact on the café income would be considered as part of its contract. The use of CCTV and mobile cameras could be investigated to identify where the motorbike rider was accessing the woods.

Trustees noted that it had made a significant difference clearing the rhododendron.

**AGREED** that the report be noted.

9. A.O.B

There was no other business.

## 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 5. CHARNWOOD FOREST LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP BID UPDATE

It was proposed that Project One be discontinued and that a project to upgrade and improve the existing toilets in the Outwoods carpark be costed and submitted.

10 votes in favour  
None voted against or abstained.

The proposal was carried.

### **AGREED**

1. that Project One to create a walking/cycle/equestrian path from junction of Woodhouse Lane to Bridleway K19 to the Outwoods carpark be discontinued and replaced with a project to upgrade and improve the existing toilets in the Outwoods carpark;
2. that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces investigates the costs and details of the project to upgrade and improve the existing toilets and that the decision on this project submission as part of the HFL bid be delegated to the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces and the Chair and Vice-chair of the Outwoods Management Committee;