

**OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 13TH APRIL 2022 AT 5.00PM
Outwoods Visitor Centre**

To: Councillors Bailey, Campsall, Fryer (Chair), K. Harris, Morgan, Parsons, Smidowicz, and Tillotson

PB, RE(Vice-chair), GM, CN

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES
2. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS
3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING & MATTERS ARISING Pages 2 - 7
To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 2022.
4. RESIGNATION OF TRUSTEE
5. OFFICER UPDATE REPORT Pages 8 - 10
An update regarding issues raised at previous meetings, information concerning new issues and finance.
6. FINANCE UPDATE Pages 11 - 12
An update regarding finance.
7. ACTIVITIES AND OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT AT THE OUTWOODS SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE Pages 13 - 18
An update regarding activities and operational management at the Outwoods.
8. A.O.B

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Proposed dates for 2021-22 are:

20 July 2022
26 October 2022
25 January 2023
19 April 2023

A walk will be arranged at 4.00pm on 13th April starting from the Outwoods Visitor Centre

**OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
26TH JANUARY 2022**

PRESENT: Councillors Bailey, Campsall, Fryer (Chair), K. Harris, Morgan, Parsons, Smidowicz, Tillotson and PB, RE (Vice-Chair), GM, and CN

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

APOLOGIES: JN

1. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

Disclosures of personal interests were made as follows:

- (i) Cllr Smidowicz as a member of Charnwood Arts Council.
- (ii) Cllr Bailey, as Chair of Charnwood Forest Regional Park and farms land adjacent to the Outwoods.
- (iii) PB who farms land adjacent to the Outwoods.
- (iv) RE whose wife is a member of ArtsSpace Loughborough.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th October 2021 were agreed.

4. OFFICER UPDATE REPORT

A report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces was submitted (item 4 on the agenda). The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces highlighted salient points in the report as follows:

- the Visitor Centre and Café had opened on 27th November, it appeared to be popular with visitors and was encouraging new visitors to the Outwoods. The conversion had cost £140K, would provide an annual lease income of £20K which would offset costs of maintaining the woods and further revenue was expected through increased car parking charges.
- the interpretation panels had been installed in the Visitor Centre. It was intended to arrange for a cast of the Charnia fossil with specialist lighting as a long-term option and Officers were working with the GeoPark project to provide this.
- the tree felling programme for 2021 had been completed in December. The car park had been closed for three weeks to ensure safety of the public whilst the work was being carried out. All had gone smoothly and there had been no official complaints although some visitors had challenged the process informally. The replanting of the cleared areas was expected to begin at the start of February. Although £10K had been forecast in the budget, £29K had been raised as income, however there was £6K costs for preparing, planting and after care to account for.

Summary of discussion:

- the Council had been cautious in its estimation of the potential income raised from the felling of the trees, particularly as it had overestimated the potential income for the first felling programme. It was complex to determine the weight of the trees to be felled and therefore its sale price, as this was completed whilst they were in situ. Also the price of timber had been better than expected.
- the views of Loughborough from the spaces created were spectacular and it was hoped that one area would not be replanted to provide a small viewing platform.
- despite the increased timber prices, the Council had no plans to accelerate the timber felling programme. There was always a delay in going out to tender for these contracts and tree felling was best completed during the Autumn and Winter months when footfall was less. It was anticipated that the timber prices would not significantly fall during the year.
- the contractor was known and well recommended and the Council was pleased with its work.
- the after care from the first felling programme required further inspection before it was possible to update the Committee. Some work had been carried out but it was expected that the Rangers team would need to complete further tasks such as clearing bracken prior to planting. Further information could be circulated to Trustees after the meeting.

Trustees noted that the tree felling programme and sale of timber was in keeping with the Trust Deeds and income received helped to maintain the woods.

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces brought to the Committee's attention an email that had been received after the agenda had been published from Tony Thory (ArtSpace Loughborough) regarding the proposed Sculpture Trail in 2022 which had been circulated to Trustees prior to the meeting. He noted that ArtSpace had been unsuccessful in its bid for the larger part of its funding including a refusal from the Borough Council through its Grants Scheme. ArtSpace had explained that the Sculpture Trail could still be arranged, with some funded outreach work taking place, but that it would be on a reduced scale to its original proposal. It had asked if the Committee was able to contribute financially to the project.

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces recommended that it would be inadvisable for the Committee to contribute financially, particularly as the Council had decided not to allocate a grant, but that the Committee could reiterate its support for the Trail to be progressed. ArtSpace could seek donations from visitors to the Outwoods during the project.

Trustees suggested that ArtSpace should seek feedback as to why it had not received a grant from the Borough Council, although it was believed that this was generally provided. It was agreed that the Sculpture Trail was worthwhile and should continue but it was difficult for the Committee to contribute financially.

AGREED

1. that an update regarding the after care completed after the first felling programme be circulated to the Committee before the next meeting;

2. that the Committee does not contribute financially to the proposed Sculpture Trail 2022 but continues to support it taking place in the Outwoods;
3. that the report be noted.

5. FINANCE UPDATE REPORT

A report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces was submitted that covered the revenue budget as at 14th January 2022 (item 5 on the agenda).

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces noted the following:

- there had been some overspend on 'grounds and general maintenance' but this was mainly associated with additional work carried out during the Visitor Centre project which had not been covered by the contract.
- since the issuing of the report there was approximately £32K in contract costs and £6K for tree felling after care to include but it was expected that the finance would come in under budget for year end.
- going forward he wished to provide the Committee with an annual update on the net revenue position year on year.
- with respect to car parking charges, November had been lower due to the closing of the car park during tree felling and that December 2020/21 had been significantly higher than the previous year, likely due to COVID restrictions. The increase in car parking income in December this year was likely to be due to the opening of the café.
- An update regarding parking enforcement action could be circulated to the Committee after the meeting. It was proposed to serve warning notices initially with follow up fines notices if necessary. The Council was looking into the provision of a card reader for the car parking machine.

Summary of discussion:

- the Outwoods Management Committee Accounts were not filed separately as a Trust but were managed by the Council on its behalf. The Council met any shortfall in expenditure and the Account was audited as part of the Council's annual financial audit; this was considered to be operating within the spirit of the Trust Deeds. It was noted that the Finance Update report was welcome and longer serving Trustees remembered when updates had not been provided.
- the car park was very busy at peak times and would benefit from the planned marking out of car parking spaces to be completed. This had not yet started due to additional work carried out on the Visitor Centre. It was hoped to provide temporary markings before using the funding received from the Charnwood Landscape Partnership to create more permanently delineated parking bays.
- Officers were in consultation with the Council's Communications team to consider ways to promote other car parking venues such as near the Nanpantan Sports Ground and Moat Road.
- the County Council had been petitioned to repair the Right of Way footpath to the Outwoods from the sports ground as it was difficult to navigate in wintry weather and was impacting the surrounding fields. The path from Moat Road was

scheduled to be resurfaced and a provisional date of May 2022 had been given for creating the off road path between the Outwoods and the Beacon.

It was requested that the 'Fees & Charges Misc' category in the budget information be itemised separately so that the income from the tree felling could be clearly identified in the accounts. Officers clarified that at present the headings were taken from the Council's accounting system but further detail could be provided.

AGREED

1. that the 'Fees & Charges Misc' category in the budget information be itemised separately in future Finance Update reports to clearly identify the tree felling income in the accounts;
2. that a parking enforcement update be circulated to the Committee before the next meeting;
3. that the report be noted.

6. 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 6 on the agenda) and the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces drew the Committee's attention to the salient points.

Summary of discussion:

- the Charcoal burner was being prepared for operation in the Summer. Charcoal experts had offered to make charcoal for free which could be sold in the café. It was hoped to turn the session into a weekend event with activities and possibly a BBQ. Once details had been finalised, approval for the proposed plans would be sought from Trustees by email as it could require confirmation prior to the next Committee meeting.
- whether the fungi identified in the Outwoods could be harmful to the trees. Most fungi tended to live in symbiosis with the trees and not all native species were susceptible. Honey fungus could be aggressive, but it tended to react to changes in conditions and was part of natural woodland processes. Pictures of fungi including warnings could be installed in the Visitor Centre and it was possible a Fungi walk could be arranged (although advance planning would be required).
- it was intended to re-start the Bluebell walks, which had not occurred due to the recent pandemic, and to organise a number of walks, meeting outside the café.

The Committee wished to thank the Rangers for their hard work.

AGREED

1. That delegated authority be given to the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces to progress plans for a Charcoal Burning event and keeps the Committee informed of plans;

2. that the contents of the report be noted.

7. A.O.B

The dates of future meetings were reviewed, and Trustees were happy to continue with the quarterly meetings in the identified months.

It was hoped to hold the next meeting at the Visitor Centre with a walk around the woods arranged before the 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).

NONE

OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE –13th April 2022

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.

The Outwoods Visitor Centre Café

The official opening of the Visitor Centre Café took place on the 18th March. The opening was attended by many people including members of the OMC. A plaque dedicating the conversion of the cottage to the former council leader, David Slater, was unveiled by his widow Janice in the presence of his family and friends.



Charcoal Burning Event

Officers are working with the Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership to deliver a charcoal burning event at the Outwoods on the weekend of 18th/19th June 2022.

The details of this are being finalised and will be shared prior to the event. At the last meeting, delegated authority was given to the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces to progress plans for the event and keep the Committee informed.

The event will generate approx. 500kg of charcoal which we will be able to sell to visitors.

Tree Felling

The tree felling and replanting contracts that we have let include a two-year period of aftercare by the forestry contractors. This comprises of 2 visits per year for beating up (replacing dead trees) and removing excessive vegetation from around the planted trees.

Aftercare for the trees planted in 2019 has been completed. Future care for these trees will be undertaken by the rangers.

Car Parking

The car park at the Outwoods has been very busy recently. Plans are being discussed which should encourage the use car parks at Nanpantan Rd Sports Ground and Moat Road for access to the Outwoods. These car parks have direct PROW links to the woods.

The car park will be marked to designate the parking bays soon. This will increase the capacity through better space utilisation. This has been delayed due to staffing shortages.

A Project Officer from the Cleansing and Open Spaces Team has been assigned to implement card payments for the car park. A project timeline will be shared with the committee once it been completed.

Enforcement at the car park has been requested through the council's Street Management Team. This will commence shortly.

Staffing Update

James Lee, Senior Green Spaces Officer left Charnwood Borough Council towards the end of March. James has worked tirelessly to support the care and restoration of the Outwoods during his time at the Council.

Arrangements are in place to secure a replacement.

Officer to contact: Matthew Bradford
Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces
(01509) 634695
Matthew.bradford@charnwood.gov.uk

OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

13TH APRIL 2022

Report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces

ITEM 6 FINANCE UPDATE

Purpose of the Report

To update Trustees on finance issues relating to the Outwoods.

Update

The 21/22 figures (up to 31st March 2022) are as follows:

| Account (T) | Amount | Total Spend Inc Commits | Current Orig Budget | Variance |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Buildings-R & M | 1,996.12 | 1,996.12 | 5,000.00 | 3,003.88 |
| Car Park Machine P/R&M | 673.56 | 673.56 | 1,900.00 | 1,226.44 |
| Grounds General Maint | 19,411.65 | 19,411.65 | 4,000.00 | -15,411.65 |
| Fencing/Gates | 0.00 | 0.00 | 400.00 | 400.00 |
| Seats | 358.33 | 358.33 | 400.00 | 41.67 |
| Mtc of Trees, Shrubs | 5,640.00 | 5,640.00 | 4,800.00 | -840.00 |
| Electricity | 279.02 | 279.02 | 300.00 | 20.98 |
| Metered Water Charge | 188.02 | 188.02 | 700.00 | 511.98 |
| Unmeasured Water Charges | 190.70 | 190.70 | 300.00 | 109.30 |
| Equipment Etc P/R&M | 0.00 | 0.00 | 1,000.00 | 1,000.00 |
| Signs | 1,870.00 | 1,870.00 | 800.00 | -1,070.00 |
| Printing,Stat&Copying | 78.00 | 78.00 | 300.00 | 222.00 |
| Security Services & Charges | 769.51 | 857.79 | 800.00 | -57.79 |
| Promotional Activities | 150.00 | 150.00 | 1,000.00 | 850.00 |
| Cesspit Emptying | 6,555.00 | 6,555.00 | 4,900.00 | -1,655.00 |
| MOS Contract - Basic | 128,188.80 | 128,188.80 | 128,200.00 | 11.20 |
| MOS Contract - Variations | 1,464.37 | 1,464.37 | 1,500.00 | 35.63 |
| Grant Contribution | -6,311.65 | -6,311.65 | -4,000.00 | 2,311.65 |
| Fees & Charges Misc | -29,166.50 | -29,166.50 | -10,000.00 | 19,166.50 |
| Car Parking Charges | -27,715.93 | -27,715.93 | -29,000.00 | -1,284.07 |
| Rent - General | -3,620.21 | -3,620.21 | 0.00 | 3,620.21 |
| Controllable | 100,998.79 | 101,087.07 | 113,300.00 | 12,212.93 |

Year on Year Net Spend

| Year | Amount | Notes |
|---------|----------|--|
| 2017/18 | £119,200 | |
| 2018/19 | £130,677 | |
| 2019/20 | £120,231 | |
| 2020/21 | £147,337 | One-off contribution of £36k to the Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership |
| 2021/22 | £101,087 | |

Car Parking Income

| | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 |
|------------------|------------------|----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| April | 2,763.25 | 3,503.00 | Covid19 | 3,918.10 |
| May | 3,200.60 | 4,407.00 | Covid19 | 2,790.95 |
| June | 2,376.85 | 2,403.50 | Covid19 | 2,405.40 |
| July | 2,265.05 | 1,763.10 | Covid19 | 2,423.40 |
| August | 2,738.10 | Machine out of order | 2,956.40 | 2,588.35 |
| September | 1,879.70 | 973.20 | 3,177.30 | 1,880.10 |
| October | 2,097.60 | 2,170.35 | 3,106.30 | 1,991.60 |
| November | 1,655.85 | 1,814.40 | 3,761.90 | 351.10 |
| December | 1,715.70 | 1,820.50 | 3,192.85 | 3,139.80 |
| January | 2,980.70 | 2,268.25 | 2,533.35 | 3,445.20 |
| February | 1,559.20 | 1,164.80 | 2,364.40 | 2,656.90 |
| March | 2,199.05 | 1,650.60 | 3,039.75 | 2,973.65 |
| TOTAL (£) | 27,431.65 | 23,938.70 | 24,132.25 | 30,564.55 |

There are approx. 50 active season tickets, accounting for £2,000.

Officer to contact: Matthew Bradford
Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces
(01509) 634695
Matthew.bradford@charnwood.gov.uk

Outwoods Management Committee Meeting

13th April 2022

Rangers Report

January-March 2022





Volunteering

All Green Gym sessions throughout January were held at the Outwoods. Thinning of the birch continued and a coppice cycle on the hazel has been initiated in compartment 5 as it has been identified that the hazel here has been neglected for many years. Hazel should be coppiced on a 7-25 year cycle in a woodland setting where the harvest is not going into commercial use. Some of the hazel in this compartment haven't been coppiced for approx. 50 years, so the coppicing of these plants has been challenging.

The volunteers cut any new growth away to allow access for the Rangers to then cut the hardwood stems with the chainsaws, leaving stools domed to promote healthy growth. The volunteers then followed up with transporting and stacking.

Due to natural entanglement during growing, this was a slow process, hence the period of time taken to manage this area.

Compartment 5 has not been coppiced in its entirety due to its large size. We have split this into 3 sub-compartments in order to limit the amount of vegetation being removed in one year. By working on an annual rotation throughout the woodland, this will increase the variation in layers, which is great for wildlife and biodiversity.





The filling of the log store was finally completed in early January. There is now 6m³ of 10" long silver birch logs. We have learnt a lot from this experience and have now streamlined the process so this will not take nearly as much time if we are able to deliver another charcoal burn in 2023. The log store is now built, so we can fill this upon request as long as we are given plenty of notice in advance.

At the end of January, wind gust speed picked up, though not above 40mph, so the woods remained open. However, as this was the first 'test' for some trees at the edge of the newly clear-felled area, some trees, such as this birch, were lost.



February was dominated by the arrival of three significant storms. On the 6th February, wind speeds reached 45mph, though this was not classed as a storm worthy of being named. Though this still resulted with the woodland being closed. The Outwoods High Winds policy stated that the woodland will be closed during wind gusts >40mph.

Storm Dudley hit on the 16th February, bringing wind gusts of over 50mph. To our surprise and relief, there was no noticeable damage caused by Storm Dudley. However, Storm Eunice followed quickly after Dudley on February 18th. Eunice resulted in several minor losses and broke a pine in 2 over the ride between Woodhouse Lane and Nanpantan kissing gate. These were quickly dealt with and the woodland was able to reopen soon after.

The majority of damage was caused by the arrival of Storm Franklin on 21st February. Several major oaks were uprooted. 3 of these were within the area most recently clear-felled of pine species. The largest oak was lost on the path travelling adjacent to Woodhouse Lane between the car park and Dean's Lane.





In better news, Spring arrived and with it came a stunning display of snowdrops in the Events space.

In Early February, the clear-felled area was restocked with mainly oak with 10% hazel to add unstorey. The bulk of the planting was undertaken by Shark Forestry, the contractor that carried out the felling project. Almost 1500 trees were planted, 300 of these by our Green Gym volunteers who were joined for the morning by local Councillors Jonathan Morgan, Jenny Boker and Roy Rollings.





Work also completed at the Outwoods reporting period includes ditch clearance, focussing particularly on bridges and areas near footpaths. During our inspections, we have also identified areas of footpaths which require improvements. In particular, an area covering approx. 30m on the stretch of ride between the kissing gate and Woodhouse Lane where the area was clear felled in 2019. This is very wet and muddy, even in drier periods of time. Due to the large level of repair required, this is beyond the abilities of the Rangers and may require the work being undertaken by a contractor.

In March, the Rangers began work to improve their operations yard. Since the café has been open, the Rangers yard has been a 'blight' on the view. The plans for the yard were not only aesthetic, but to improve the safety of visitors and introduce disabled access to the café/Visitor Centre.



The Rangers entrance has now been moved to the right-hand side of the toilets which was previously the pedestrian access. The pedestrian access is now the previous operational access. This opens up the Events space and has created access to the café, picnic area and Events Barn for wheelchair users, whom had experienced difficulty in the original format.

This work was largely completed in time for the official opening of the café/Visitor Centre. Since this time, the heras fencing has been further pushed back to increase the Events space.

At the same time as these improvements, a large oak, that was in decline, was removed from the Events space. This tree has been ‘repurposed’ in the form of creating more seating with sections of its trunk. Its branches were chipped and laid around the barn to create a ‘bed’ to suppress weed growth and a more palatable social environment.



Work also completed in the Events space has been the removal of daffodil and bluebell bulbs that were in the line of the new Rangers access that was being laid with stone or that were identified as being at risk of being trampled in the picnic and playground areas. These have been replanted in the raised bed surrounding the major oak in the car park. Some of the daffodils have flowered and hopefully, we'll see a pleasant result with the bluebells later this spring.

Since the opening of the café, we have unfortunately seen a huge rise in litter throughout the wood as well as having to increase our litter bin emptying from our usual once per week (winter) to three times per week. The takeaway items such as cardboard cups and food containers have been found scattered all the way down to the kissing gate. The café operators have invested in biodegradable and recyclable containers, but this doesn't prevent littering.

We plan to discuss with the café operators on whether a ‘bring your own cup’ scheme could be introduced or whether reusable cups could be loaned with a deposit reimbursed upon return. This would ease the pressure of waste management on the Rangers who are struggling to keep the Outwoods clean and tidy.