

**OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
13TH OCTOBER 2021**

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

Tony Thory and Nita Rao (ArtSpace Loughborough)

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

APOLOGIES: Councillors Bailey and Tillotson, JN

1. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

Disclosures of personal interests were made as follows:

(i) RE whose wife was a member of ArtSpace Loughborough.

(ii) Cllr Smidowicz as a member of the local Arts Council.

(iii) Cllr Morgan and Cllr Fryer as members of Leicestershire County Council (during item 4).

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th July 2021 were agreed.

4. SCULPTURE TRAIL 2022

A report detailing the proposals for a Sculpture Trail in 2022 was submitted (item 4 on the agenda). Tony Thory and Nita Rao attended the meeting to support the Committee in its consideration of the proposals. He explained that the proposal was similar to the project previously submitted to the Committee at its meeting in April although it had been expanded to include an outreach programme. Funding bids had been submitted to the Arts Council England, Charnwood Borough Council and Leicestershire County Council.

Members welcomed the involvement of a student from Loughborough University and noted that the project could be expanded in future years to include Loughborough College students. As the students at this college were likely to be younger and more local it could further develop the inclusivity aims of the project and students could be involved with the workshop activities and co-creating art sculptures with the project's Lead Artist.

Cllr Campsall left the meeting.

During the consideration of this item the Committee became inquorate. However, during the consideration of the next item on the agenda, a quorum was re-established and the decision recorded here was agreed.

AGREED that the Committee supports the submission of proposals for the Sculpture Trail 2022 project.

5. OFFICER UPDATE REPORT

A report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces was submitted (item 5 on the agenda). The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces highlighted salient points in the report as follows:

- there had been minor delays in finalising the lease with the successful Visitor Centre Café operator. Once the lease was signed, it would take the operator 3-4 weeks to fully fit out the café and it was suggested that the Committee could attend a 'soft opening' of the Café before Christmas with a view to holding an official opening ceremony in the New Year.

PB joined the meeting.

- a plaque dedicating the building to former Council Leader David Slater had been commissioned and due to the long lead times for manufacture it could delay the official opening of the Visitor Centre. The plaque near the gate regarding the donation of the Outwoods by Harry Bowler and Alan Moss to the people of Loughborough would also be attached to the Visitor Centre building.

Cllr Campsall re-joined the meeting.

- the tree felling tender was proceeding through an evaluation process prior to the awarding of the contract. Depending on who was chosen, this could affect whether the trees were felled before or after Christmas.
- the proposed interpretation boards (as attached to this report) would be installed in the café as a temporary display and a cast of fossils could be created for a more permanent display. This could be in wood or stone and would replicate fossils from the woods. It was possible that Nita Rao may be able to assist in this.

Members were notified of the identity of the operator and were confident that the operator would be committed to making a success of the venture. They noted that leaflets about fossils and small gifts could be designed for sale in the Visitor Centre Café.

AGREED

1. that the Committee attend a 'soft opening' of Visitor Centre before Christmas and that a formal opening be arranged at a future date to unveil the plaques.
2. that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces update the Committee by email of the chosen dates for the felling programme once known.

3. that the proposed interpretation boards be approved for installation.

4. that the report be noted.

6. FINANCE UPDATE REPORT

A report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces was submitted (item 7 on the agenda). It was noted that it had been observed that some cars were not paying the parking charges but it was possible that the lack of contactless payment facilities was exacerbating this. The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces stated that it would be beneficial to instigate enforcement activities before the Committee's next meeting and report the findings at the meeting. Once the current projects in the Outwoods were completed the Council would review installing a contactless payment machine in the car park.

Trustees confirmed that the contactless payment machine would also allow for payment by cash. It was noted that the assessment of tonnage of wood to be felled was completed whilst the trees were still standing and could therefore vary once felled. This could affect the estimated financial returns and as financial returns had been over-estimated during the last tree felling programme, officers were cautious in their estimates for this year's programme.

AGREED

1. that the data for carparking charges in July – September be circulated by the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces to the Committee.
2. that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces arranges enforcement activities to take place at the Outwoods Carpark and report the findings to the Committee at its next meeting on 26th January 2022.
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 shared on screen by the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces (item 7 on the agenda) and he drew the Committee's attention to the salient points.

Summary of discussion:

- it had been suggested at a previous meeting that bird boxes be installed. Some bird boxes would be attached to the Visitor Centre but it was unclear if any further installations had occurred.

Cllr Harris joined the meeting.

- it had been suggested at a previous meeting that the area that had been replanted 3-4 years ago by volunteers required the scrub and new undergrowth

to be removed. The after-care programme from the first tree felling programme was in progress. A meeting with the Head Ranger was planned to review this and a summary could be provided at the next meeting of the Committee. It was noted that until the new trees were above the height of the undergrowth it would be challenging to remove.

- In light of recent media stories regarding the nature-depleted countryside of Britain it was important to recognise the significance of the Outwoods' habitat. As areas were further cleared, more insects would be encouraged into the space and this would then encourage more birds. The Outwoods was relatively rich in wildlife, but it was difficult to capture in photographs.
- Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) tended not to be applied to sites of special scientific interest and were applied mostly in an urban environment due its planning context. As the Outwoods was designated an SSSI this provided higher protection. Historic trees such as the tree at the entrance to the car park and other non-native specimens would be retained. There was a national Champion Tree Initiative where interesting trees could be identified and uploaded to a database. This could be beneficial for the Committee to participate in.

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

AGREED

1. that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces confirms whether bird boxes as discussed at a previous meeting had been installed.
2. that the Senior Green Spaces Officer provides a summary of aftercare that had taken place at the next meeting of the Committee scheduled for 26th January 2022.
3. that the Senior Green Spaces Officer investigates whether the national Champion Tree Initiative could be applied to trees in the Outwoods.
4. that the contents of the report be noted.

7. A.O.B

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces suggested arranging a walk around the Outwoods and the Visitor Centre in the next few weeks and also to take the opportunity to meet with the Head Ranger and Senior Green Spaces Officer.

In addition, the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces notified the Committee of the promotion of a hide and seek children's event using the Outwoods without the landowner's (the Council) permission. The promoters had been contacted and informed that if the event did proceed it would be considered as trespassing. A response was received, indicating that the event would be held at a different location.

AGREED to arrange a walk and meeting at the Outwoods in the next few weeks.

The dates of future meetings were noted.

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