

OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 26TH OCTOBER 2022 AT 5.00PM

Outwoods Café / Visitor Centre

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

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

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES
2. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS
3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING & MATTERS ARISING Pages 2 - 6
To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 20th July 2022.
4. PETITION – TREE FELLING / OUTWOODS RESTORATION PROJECT Page 7
To consider a petition received by the Committee.
5. OFFICER UPDATE REPORT Pages 8 - 11
An update regarding issues raised at previous meetings, information concerning new issues and finance.
6. FINANCE UPDATE Pages 12 - 13
An update regarding finance.
7. A.O.B
8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

dates for 2022-23 are:

25 January 2023

19 April 2023

A walk will be arranged on 26th October at 4pm starting from the Outwoods Carpark.

**OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
20TH JULY 2022**

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

Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces
Head Ranger
Democratic Services Manager

APOLOGIES: Councillors Bailey, Tillotson and PB

1. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

No disclosures were made.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING & MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th April 2022 were agreed.

3. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

In accordance with the Trust Deeds, the Mayor of Charnwood had been invited and declined to be appointed as the chair of the Outwoods Management Committee.

AGREED that Councillor Fryer be appointed as the Chair of the Outwoods Management Committee for the period of 2022-23.

AGREED that RE be appointed as the Vice-chair of the Outwoods Management Committee for the period of 2022-23.

4. 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:

- The visitor centre cafe had proved very popular and exceeded expectations all round including the café proprietor. The low water pressure identified in the building would involve replacing the water supply pipe between the highway and the building. The work to be funded from the Building Repairs and Maintenance budget and the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces had signed off an order for the necessary works.
- The Charcoal burning event held on 18th/19th June 2022 was a great success with approximately 750 people attending. The burn yielded 100 bags of charcoal for sale. The café operator had agreed to sell the charcoal on behalf of the Committee.
- The Sculpture trail which the Committee visited prior to the commencement of the meeting had received many positive comments, excellent coverage on the local news and had attracted new visitors from further afield. Artspace would

produce an evaluation report, and this would be presented to a future committee meeting. Initial thoughts were that it will run again.

- Ciaran Fern from Idverde had been appointed as the Council's new Senior Green Spaces Officer. All committee members welcomed this appointment.
- Work was in progress for the manufacture and installation of a plaque to mark the contribution Alan Moss had made towards the woods.
- There was no information available about the number of tree losses from the new planting scheme, but it was noted that the contractors were obligated to replace trees felled.
- Anticipated that an update on the Outwoods calendar 2023 be given at the Committee meeting in January.

There was a detailed discussion on car parking and alternatives to paying other than by cash. The parking meter provider was investigating card and pay by phone methods. It was anticipated that once alternative methods of paying had successfully been installed then the possibility of increasing car parking fees and season tickets be considered by the Committee. It was agreed that a parking strategy report be submitted to the October meeting which would not only look at car parking fees but promoting other nearby free car parking sites to encourage more visitors. The Committee were generally supportive but cautioned about capacity and the fine balance of increasing parking fees without discouraging visitors.

AGREED

1. That a parking strategy report be submitted to the October committee meeting.
2. That an evaluation report on the sculpture trail be presented to a future committee meeting.
3. That an update on the progress with the Outwood's calendar 2023 be submitted to the January meeting.
4. That the report be noted.

5. FINANCE UPDATE

A report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces was submitted that covered the revenue budget (item 6 on the agenda).

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces highlighted the following matters:

- The café proprietor had as part of the lease agreement received a 50% rebate to allow for start-up costs. It was noted that this was due to expire November 2022 which would see an increase in rental income.
- One of the two trampers (all terrain buggies) had broken down and come to the end of its useful life. A 50% grant contribution from the Forestry Commission had been sought to purchase a replacement buggy.
- Car parking income continued to be monitored with the income figures for April to June above the budgeted income.

In considering this item there was a discussion about businesses such as dog walkers, rock climbing establishments and personal trainers using the woods in pursuit of their own business objectives. The Committee asked that a watching brief be made on such business activities.

AGREED that the report be noted.

[At this point in the meeting Councillor Campsall left the meeting]

6. **FELLING AS PART OF THE OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

A report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces was submitted that provided a status update regarding the Outwoods Management Plan and tree felling, (item 7 on the agenda).

The Committee commented on the comprehensive nature of the current Management Plan, and their attention was drawn to appendix 2 setting out the current byelaws. The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces was optimistic of drawing up all encompassing and consistent byelaws for all open spaces in the Borough. It was noted that the Committee would in due course be requested to give their approval of any new byelaws before submission to the Secretary of State.

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces stated that the Management Plan was due for review after April 2023 and it was suggested that as part of the consultation process on changes to the plan that Trustees be re-issued with the deed documents.

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces reported that the recent felling programme had attracted a small amount of criticism from visitors and local residents. A complaint letter had been received from a resident in Woodhouse Eaves and this was read out to the Committee. In addition, it was highlighted that a local councillor had arranged an online petition. The Committee were advised that the felling programme was compliant with Nature England and Forestry England guidance and when undertaken responsibly was good for the health of woods and forests.

AGREED that

1. the Chair and Vice Chair respond to the letter of complaint about felling of trees thanking the resident for raising their concerns and highlight that the matter had been considered by the Committee who were of the opinion that the felling was in accordance with the Outwoods Management Plan.
2. the deed documents be re-circulated to Trustees as part of the consultation process for the review of the Management Plan due after April 2023.
3. the report be noted.

7. PETITION

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces provided an update regarding the submission of a petition concerning the recent felling programme. It was noted that a local councillor had arranged an online petition which at the date of the meeting had been signed by 105 people. It was noted that the petition would need to be presented to the committee as the decision-making body.

AGREED that the update be noted.

8. RANGERS REPORT

An update regarding activities and operational management at the Outwoods was submitted (item 9 on the agenda). Matters within this report had been considered as part of other items on the agenda.

AGREED

1. That the report be circulated to all councillors after the meeting.
2. that the contents of the report be noted.

9. A.O.B

Trustees discussed the following:

- Opening hours of the café - the Committee felt that the cafe closing at 4 p.m. was a missed opportunity and asked the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces to investigate whether the café proprietor would consider extending their opening hours particularly in the summer months. Anecdotally it was considered that the reason may be due to recruitment difficulties with staff.
- Harry Bowler Trustee - a vacancy existed on the Committee and a potential new trustee had attended the meeting to observe. He agreed that he wished to join the Committee and therefore it was

AGREED that DG be appointed as a Harry Bowler Trustee with immediate effect.

The dates of future meetings were confirmed and that the café be the preferred venue.

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
26th OCTOBER 2022

ITEM 4 PETITION – TREE FELLING / OUTWOODS RESTORATION PROJECT

Date received: 5th September 2022

Number of signatures: 114

Text extract from petition below:

The Outwoods restoration project was initially planned to take place over ten years. Recently a decision was made to shorten this to five. The acceleration of the scale and pace of felling and re-planting as a result of this decision poses a risk to the very features that make the Outwoods so valuable, and goes against the principles of ancient woodland management as outlined by the Forestry Commission. We would like Charnwood Borough Council to review the guidelines and consider a more gradual approach.

Why is this important?

The current policy risks:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/720995/FCPG201.pdf

- a sudden and drastic loss of wildlife habitats from which it is much harder for species to recover (p26)
- permanent damage to soil structure and drainage (p29)
- vigorous growth of bracken and bramble in cleared areas which could smother the growth of new trees and existing flora (p29)
- increasing the vulnerability of existing ancient trees to windblow(p27)
- reducing the carbon sink more rapidly than necessary at a time when climate change is an ever-present threat

OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
26th OCTOBER 2022

Report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces

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.

Car Parking

At the last meeting of the OMC the Committee resolved that a parking strategy report be submitted to the Committee at its scheduled meeting in October 2022. Unfortunately, the parking strategy has been delayed due to resourcing issues and will be presented at a future meeting of the Committee.

With regard to the introduction of card payments at the Outwoods parking machine, a feasibility test took place on 19th August to assess the viability of card payments at the site. This test was passed, and officers are currently setting up the payment arrangements with our payment provider. Officers are trying to get the arrangements in place as soon as possible, however, they are dealing with multiple suppliers which is complicating matters.

Alan Moss Plaque

Work is in progress regarding the manufacture and installation of a plaque to mark the contribution Alan Moss has made towards the woods.

Tree Felling

At the last OMC meeting it was reported that:

“At the present time, it is unclear whether any felling will take place over the winter 2022/23 this is primary due to the recent vacancy of the Senior Green Spaces Officer. The position will be filled from late July 2022 and discussions will take place around the priorities for the new postholder. There is a backlog of work, borough wide, that will need to be factored into the work plan for the rest of the year.”

The 10-year felling programme started in 2018/19 and is approximately 50% complete. There is an income allocation of £10k in the current years budget for the sale of timber. Officers are still assessing the viability of completing a tender for the felling and sale of timber at the present time. It may be possible for felling to take place this winter, with the replanting deferred to autumn/winter 23/24.

Compartments 1B, 1C, 7A, 12B and 12C are still to be completed.



Any update on this matter will be forwarded to Trustees in due course.

Outwoods Calendar for 2023

A proposal will be brought forward at the next meeting.

New Seating Area

Created by Men & Women in Sheds in collaboration with Charnwood Arts and The Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme. Funded by The National Lottery Community Fund



The seating area is intended to be a social, reflective space for people to relax and take time out together in the forest. The design of the bench has been created by Men & Women in Sheds and has taken inspiration from many of the different creative activities they've tried their hand at during 'Feel Good in the Forest – Skills Sharing' sessions.

The seat is designed to incorporate elements of the work that the Men & Women in Sheds produce in house, such as bug / insect boxes, as well as each individual having a space (seat back panel) to personalise. The bench itself will be sturdy and robust, made from hardwood, with the back panels made from slices of oak with the raw tree-bark edges adding interest at the tips.

Appendix: Sculpture Trail Update

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

APPENDIX

Sculpture Trail Update received from Tony Thory, Sept 2022

We have removed virtually all the work from the Outwoods now, the polar bears and willow 'keeper' will be removed shortly. The one other piece remaining is Jo Sheppard's wonderful willow horse head 'One's Favourite'. This was built in situ and cannot be removed without being pulled apart and destroyed, so, following chats with the rangers we thought, as it still looks great, it was a good idea to leave it be as long as it remains safe and presentable. I hope that is ok and you agree? (agreement received)

I must say we felt the trail this year was a great success, attracting large numbers of extra visitors to the Outwoods and creating a strong sense of community among the regular visitors too. The feedback we have received has been fantastic. I would note that there was still a big problem with parking, and with many cars parked on the road on what is a blind hill, it's amazing there has not been a bad accident.

*Regarding next year, we have various plans and commitments that mean we will not be in a position to undertake a similar trail at the Outwoods. However, we would like to propose a smaller scale 'Tree People Trail'. The 'Tree People' included in both the trails we have run at the Outwoods so far have proved extremely popular with visitors and the media. We feel it would be a great shame not to do anything at the Outwoods next summer and this led us to think that a simpler 'Tree People Trail', where visitors are challenged to find the ceramic tree people in the trees, could be a great compromise. It would maintain the momentum of the sculpture trail project while being more achievable for us in terms of funding and resources. **Please let us know what the Committee thinks in principle?***

Many thanks for the support of the rangers and letting us use such a wonderful venue,

OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
26th OCTOBER 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 22/23 figures (up to 17th Oct 2022) are as follows:

Account	Total Spend	Budget	Variance
Buildings-R & M	8,971.46	5,000.00	-3,971.46
Car Park Machine P/R&M	2,846.34	1,900.00	-946.34
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	2,493.42	4,800.00	2,306.58
Electricity	79.21	300.00	220.79
Metered Water Charge	147.06	500.00	352.94
Unmeasured Water Charges	172.42	300.00	127.58
Equipment Etc P/R&M	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
Signs	0.00	800.00	800.00
Printing, Stat&Copying	78.00	300.00	222.00
Security Services & Charges	1,032.61	800.00	-232.61
Promotional Activities	24.22	1,000.00	975.78
Cesspit Emptying	0.00	4,900.00	4,900.00
MOS Contract - Basic	65,029.20	130,100.00	65,070.80
MOS Contract - Variations	741.76	1,500.00	758.24
Grant Contribution	0.00	-4,000.00	-4,000.00
Fees & Charges Misc	0.00	-10,000.00	-10,000.00
Car Parking Charges	-23,260.52	-29,000.00	-5,739.48
Rent - General	-5,245.00	-14,000.00	-8,755.00
Controllable	53,110.18	101,000.00	47,889.82

Car Parking Income

Please find below the car parking income up until 17th October 2022

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
April	2,763.25	3,503.00	Covid19	3,918.10	4,012.60
May	3,200.60	4,407.00	Covid19	2,790.95	4,143.10
June	2,376.85	2,403.50	Covid19	2,405.40	3,835.80
July	2,265.05	1,763.10	Covid19	2,423.40	4,663.30
August	2,738.10	Machine out of order	2,956.40	2,588.35	4,146.80
September	1,879.70	973.20	3,177.30	1,880.10	4,253.80
October	2,097.60	2,170.35	3,106.30	1,991.60	1,249.85*
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	26,305.25

*to 11th October

There are approx. 80 active season tickets, accounting for £3,200.

Officer to contact: Matthew Bradford
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