

**OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 28TH JULY 2021 AT 6.00PM
BY VIRTUAL MEETING**

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

PB, RE, GM, CN, JN

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES
2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR
3. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS
4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING & MATTERS ARISING Pages 2 - 6

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 14th April 2021.
5. TREE FELLING PROGRAMME Pages 7 - 16

A report regarding proposals for a Sculpture Trail 2021
6. OFFICER UPDATE REPORT Pages 17 - 18

An update regarding issues raised at previous meetings, information concerning new issues and finance.
7. FINANCE UPDATE REPORT Pages 19 - 20

An update regarding finance.
8. ACTIVITIES AND OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT AT THE OUTWOODS SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE Pages 21 - 33

An update regarding activities and operational management at the Outwoods.
9. A.O.B

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Dates for 2021-22 are:

13 October 2021
26 January 2022
13 April 2022

**OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
14TH APRIL 2021**

PRESENT: Councillors Bailey, Campsall (Vice-chair), Fryer (Chair), K. Harris, Parsons and Poland.
PB, RE, GM, and JN.

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

APOLOGIES: Cllr Morgan and Tillotson, CN

The Committee held one minute's silence in memory of the Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh.

2. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

Disclosures of personal interests were made as follows:

- (i) PB, who farmed land adjacent to the Outwoods.
- (ii) Councillor Bailey, who farmed land adjacent to the Outwoods and was the Chair of Charnwood Forest Regional Park.
- (iii) JN, who lived on land adjacent to the Outwoods.
- (iv) RE, whose wife was a member of ArtSpace Loughborough.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th October 2020 were agreed.

4. SCULPTURE TRAIL UPDATE

An update report regarding the Sculpture Trail 2021 proposals 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.

Summary of discussion:

- Arts Council funding had not been obtained for the project 2021 so the proposal put before the Committee at the last meeting could not be progressed. The Arts Council had not expressed any concerns about the project but had given advice on how to strengthen the structure of the project and the application for next year. Mr Thory would be meeting with representatives of the Arts Council to obtain further feedback to reapply in a few months' time for a smaller project in early summer 2021.
- Ms Rao had volunteered to work as an artist in residence in the Outwoods over the summer to keep the idea of sculpture in the woods alive and could create

smaller ephemeral sculptures and willow structures if the Committee so wished. These structures would be made of natural materials, would not be part of a sculpture trail and would be created as and when Ms Rao was available.

- to ensure that the spontaneity of the activity could be maintained it was suggested that Ms Rao work with the rangers and officers. Any vandalism or issues regarding the sculptures would be rectified quickly; if the structures became unsafe or less aesthetically pleasing they would be removed.
- natural sculptures commissioned by the National Forest for the Timber festival in early July could be relocated in the clearing near the Charcoal burner or by the visitor centre in the Outwoods once the festival had finished. The sculptures would be willow spires approximately 12-15 feet high.
- the Committee wished to be kept informed of the progress of the sculptures and that photos could be shared with Trustees.

AGREED

1. that the proposal for Nita Rao to create a more personal and scaled down activity is agreed, and that the willow structures created for the Timber Festival be relocated to the Outwoods when available;
2. that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces be given delegated authority to liaise with Nita Rao and the Rangers to manage the activities and locations of the sculptures;
3. that the Committee supports the submission of proposals for the Sculpture Trail project for 2022.

5. OFFICER UPDATE REPORT

A report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces was submitted (item 5 on the agenda).

Summary of discussion:

- in line with other open spaces there had been a rise in visitors during the first quarter of 2021. It was hoped to retain the 'first time' visitors once COVID restrictions were relaxed further.
- the COVID marshals' advice had generally been welcomed by visitors, although towards the end of the lockdown some of the encounters had been more challenging.
- there had been an associated increase in litter in the woods, with rubbish bins filling up quickly. Cleansing arrangements and litter picking had been increased to manage this. It was noted that a letter had been sent to the Loughborough Echo regarding this matter.
- there had also been an increase in the disposing of tree cuttings and garden waste along the walls of the Outwoods near Deans Lane and Jubilee Woods. It was not clear whether this was on the highway verge and would therefore be considered fly tipping.

- the barriers in the carpark currently didn't shut overnight. Gates would be installed as part of the Visitor Centre development and opening and closing times would be as agreed during a previous meeting by the Committee.
- the Visitor Centre project was underway and on track. The play area had to be closed whilst work was being carried out and would be opened once it was safe to do so. The tendering for the Café was at an advanced stage and operators would be assessed on a mix of cost and quality. The successful operator would be responsible for fitting out the kitchen and it was hoped to open the café during the summer holidays. In response to a question from a Trustee it was stated that there would be a requirement for the operator to litter pick in the vicinity of the café.
- the tree felling programme was still a work in progress. An update would be provided at the next meeting as work was planned to start in October / November 2021. Volunteers and the green gym were operating with members working in groups of six.
- there had been a report from the Woodland Trust (mentioned 14 April on the BBC news) that woods were at crisis point and more native species should be planted. All trees to be planted as part of the Tree Felling scheme would be native species.

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces noted that a video had been shared by the Council on its social media by a previous occupant of the Ranger's Cottage, which he would share with Trustees.

A walk could be arranged for groups of six to meet and walk around the Outwoods in time to see the bluebells and progress on the visitor centre.

Trustees considered that the Outwoods had coped well with the increased visitor numbers and were pleased that it had not received any negative press for overcrowding.

AGREED

1. that the previously agreed times of opening and closing of the proposed gates be circulated to the Committee;
2. that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces check on the possible fly tipping of garden waste along the walls of the Outwoods and report it to the appropriate authorities;
3. that a preview tour of the Visitor Centre be arranged for the Committee before it opens to the public;
4. that an update regarding Tree Felling programme, volunteers and green gym be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee;
5. that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces and keep the Committee informed of matters discussed during this item.

6. FINANCE UPDATE REPORT

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

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces highlighted the following:

- due to the closure of the Outwoods and not charging for carparking during some months last year the original budget for income had been revised from £29K to £14.5K. although approx. £20K had been received.
- the report data did not quite cover the year end but the figures reported were not expected to change.
- £142K of the £167K budget had been spent. It was noted that this was partly due to a cautious approach and a pause in discretionary spending across all service areas due to the uncertainty created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

AGREED that the report be noted.

7. 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).

Trustees noted the photographs included in the report were good and that the snowy scenes could be possibly be used for a calendar or Christmas cards.

AGREED that the report be noted.

8. Any Other Business

A Trustee sought clarification on whether bird boxes as mentioned at a previous meeting had been installed and whether Owl boxes could also be included. The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces stated he would check and confirm with the Committee.

The Committee were informed of suggestions from a member of the public and the response provided by the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces in consultation with the Chair of the Committee.

It was noted that there would be a visit arranged for the Trustees to visit the Café before it was opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony.

The date of the next proposed meeting was 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 at this meeting.

OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 28TH JULY 2021

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CLEANSING AND OPEN SPACES

ITEM 5 TREE FELLING PROGRAMME

Purpose of the Report

To update Trustees on the Felling Programme for 2021/22.

Recommendation

That Trustees note the contents of this report

Introduction

Approximately one quarter of the Outwoods comprises of coniferous plantation, mainly Scot's pine and European larch. Recently the Outwoods entered a Countryside Stewardship (CS) agreement with Natural England (NE) for 5 years. Integral within the agreement is to gradually remove the conifer and restore these areas to acid oak woodland, by planting and managing natural regeneration.

Phasing – 2021/22

Three parcels of plantation are to be felled in November 2021 (6A, 6B and 7B - see tender document). The tender is being worked on at the moment and should be available for companies to see within the next couple of weeks. All parcels would be worked at the same time as they are all adjacent to each other, with the whole operation taking approximately three weeks. For the duration of the works, the car park would need to be closed to the public for safety reasons. Details of the amount and type of timber can be found in the tender document.

Regarding supervision of the contract, there will always be at least one member of Charnwood Borough Council present for the duration of the contract. That will be either myself or another member of my immediate team for the first week in order to make sure that the operation is running smoothly and the right trees are being selected. Prior to commencement of the operation, areas of rocky outcrops/geological interest will be clearly cordoned off as 'no-go' areas, although the areas don't appear to contain these. Prior meetings will be held with the contractors to discuss all aspects of the contract and to make them aware of any sensitive areas identified. Any conifers adjacent to these areas must be extracted carefully and instantly removed from the area of interest.

Logistics

All Compartments. Felling and extraction will be undertaken with specialist forestry machinery. A mechanised harvesting head will fell and cut the timber to length. This will then be forwarded to the stacking area which will be within the car park. From the car park, lorries will be loaded with timber and removed from site.

The extraction route for the timber will be on the southern fringe of compartments 6A and 6B so as to minimise disturbance to the footpath. Some trees may have to be felled in order to construct the extraction route. 'Lop and top' from the felling of timber will be used on the route to minimise ground disturbance. A short section of the footpath will to be used next to the car park, adjacent to the toilet block. Any excess lop and top will be 'windrowed' over the felled compartment and left to rot down in situ. This is a mechanical operation that rakes the brash into lines in order to facilitate planting.

Communications

The Comms team at CBC will be kept informed at all times and their advice will be sought as to how best to manage this. FC approved signage will be placed on site at least one month prior to works starting. It is likely that a press release and a video clip would be part of how this is managed. The two main contentious items are:

- a) Large numbers of trees are going to be felled in a short space of time. This will have a significant, short term impact on the areas.
- b) For the duration of the works, the Outwoods car park will have to be closed. It will not be possible to keep part of the car park open next to a timber stacking area and large, working machinery.

A Comms plan is in progress and will be rolled out in line with the tender.

Restocking felled areas

Restocking of the felled areas will take place immediately after the areas are felled. For details of the restocking, see the restocking specification document. Species mix and density have already been agreed with Natural England and the Forestry Commission as outlined in the management plan.

Broadly speaking, it follows a similar pattern to the last planting with 70% being oak and 30% mixed broadleaf. Past experience shows that species like silver birch regenerate well. There will be a 3-year aftercare programme delivered by the successful company.

Appendices: Appendix A – tender document
 Appendix B – Restocking specifications for the Outwoods

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James Lee
Senior Green Spaces Officer
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APPENDIX A

FOR SALE BY TENDER

Three valuable parcels of standing timber comprised of an estimated :

1007 cubic metres over bark

Of

European larch with some Scots Pine and Norway Spruce situated at :

The Outwoods

Woodhouse Lane, Loughborough,

Leicestershire

LE11 3YG



Particulars of Timber for Sale at The Outwoods

Location Woodhouse Lane, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 3YG

Inspection Inspection may be undertaken at any reasonable time. Please take a copy of these particulars with you. The Outwoods are open to the public and there is a pay and display system in operation. Viewing by appointment can be made by contacting James Lee on james.lee@charnwood.gov.uk.

Please ensure that all clothing and footwear is clean to avoid the transfer of disease.

Description

A quality stand of European larch planted approximately 60 years ago, with particularly high sawlog content and excellent form. Access is via an established stone footpath from the main car park, with an extraction route created through the plantation. The terrain is relatively steep but may suit mechanised harvesting.

Compartment	Species	Nos/trees	DBH(cm)	Vol/tree (cu.m)	Vol/total (cu.m)
6A	European larch	685	33	0.63	430
6B	European larch	685	33	0.63	430
6B	Scots Pine	72	40	1.00	75
7B	Norway spruce	17	61	1.26	21
7B	European larch	37	52	1.38	51

The estimates given above of the numbers, sizes and volumes of the trees are given without warranty of any sort as to their accuracy. Persons offering for the timber must satisfy themselves as to the exact size and nature of the trees offered for sale. No responsibility will be accepted for any discrepancy whatsoever for any reason at any time.

Constraints The whole of the Outwoods is a SSSI for oak woodland and geological interest. The coniferous areas are PAWS, so felling and extraction need to be done sensitively in order to safeguard this interest. The area is open to the public at all times and is well used. Careful provision will need to be made to ensure the safety of the public at all times.

Extraction The timber is to be extracted into the main car park which is near to the felling area.

Lop and Top All of the lop and top from the felling must be cut into lengths and used to create suitable access tracks. After extraction, arisings left on site should be windrowed in order to facilitate planting. The use of static de-limbing machines, or harvesters, will be subject to agreement on the disposal of lop and top.

Wayleaves There are no known services in or around the area to be worked.

Basis of the Sale The timber is offered for sale on a volume basis per cubic metre over bark and Offers should be priced accordingly. The contract sets out the system for measurement as

Sale of standing timber at The Outwoods

follows: *“The method of measurement of the timber will normally be that agreed with the Recipient of the felled timber and used on the relevant delivery notes. Where the quantity of timber is described by weight, or by volume, this unit of measurement will be the cubic metre with one metric tonne being deemed equivalent to one cubic metre by volume, providing always that measurement of the timber takes place within six weeks of felling. Where measurement is made over six weeks from felling, by the piece, or by any other agreed system the weight/volume conversion factor, the average volume of each piece or other agreed measurement will be determined by reference to Forestry Commission Booklet 39 and the appropriate tables therein.”*

Contract Period All timber must be felled and removed from site by ????

Contract Terms This timber is offered for sale subject to contract and all persons offering will have been deemed to have satisfied themselves as to the Contract terms beforehand.

Date for Offers All offers should be submitted to the Vendor's Agent by ?????

Acceptances The Vendor reserves the right not to accept the highest or any offer.

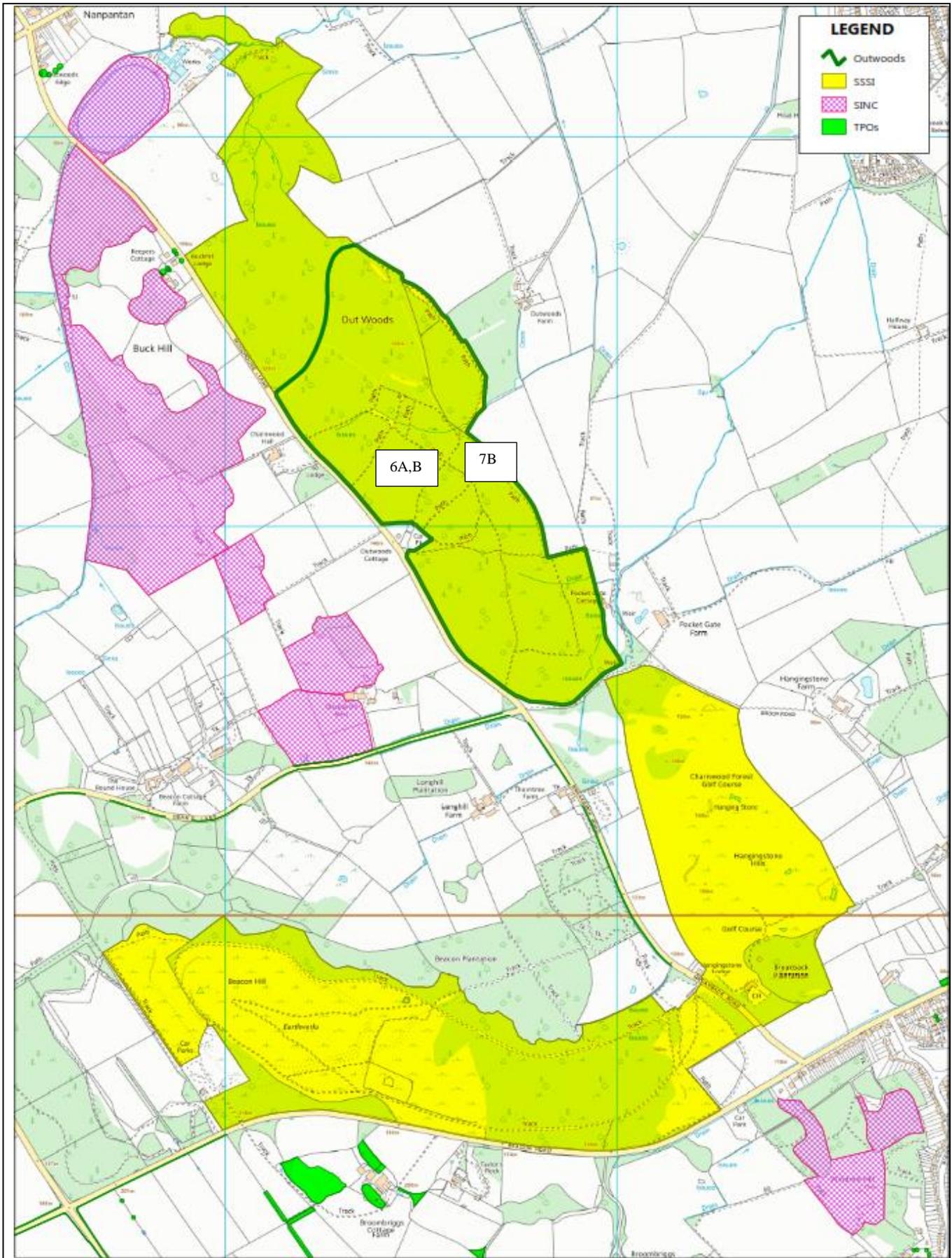
Subject to Contract This timber is offered for sale subject to contract. These particulars are provided purely for the information of prospective purchasers and do not form any part of an offer to sell, nor of a contract. Likewise, whilst all reasonable care has been taken in their preparation, neither the Vendor nor his Agent can accept any responsibility for any inaccuracy in or omission from them. Prospective purchasers must satisfy themselves as to all material facts prior to offering.

Windrowing After extraction, the site must be windrowed in order to facilitate planting. Any prospective purchaser should submit a cost for this operation. With mutual consent, this sum would be subtracted from timber sales.

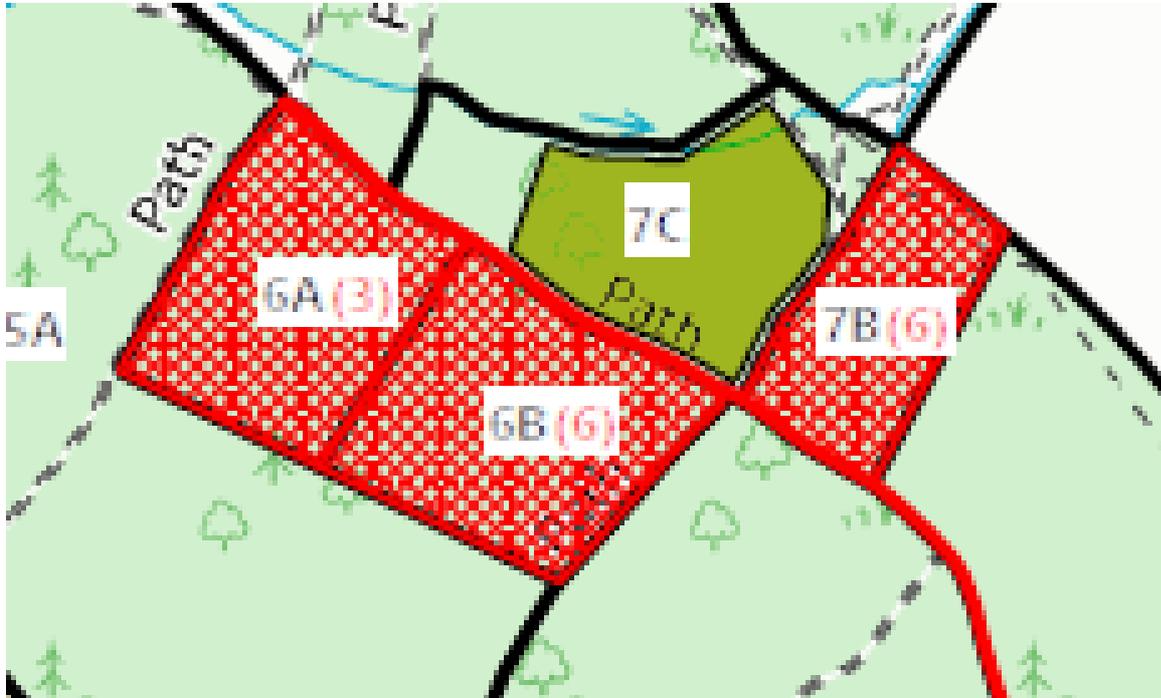
Planting After windrowing, the site must be planted up. Please see attached restocking schedule for exact figures and specification. Any prospective purchaser should submit a cost for this operation. With mutual consent, this sum would be subtracted from timber sales.

Sale of Standing Timber at The Outwoods

Outwoods Location Map



Please note – Maps are indicative only.



APPENDIX B - Restocking specification for the Outwoods 2021/22

General details :

Comp.	Area (ha)	Density/ha	Open space(%)	POK (%)	MB (%)
6a	0.65	1100	0	70	30
6b	0.65	1100	0	70	30
7b	0.3	1100	0	70	30

NB : POK - Pedunculate oak

MB - Mixed broadleaf (SOK, ROW, SBI, HOL, HAZ)

SOK - Sessile oak

ROW - Rowan

SBI - Silver birch

HOL - Holly

HAZ - Hazel

Planting details :

Comp.	Trees (total)	POK (no.)	SOK (no.)	HAZ (no.)
6a	715	500	45	45
6b	715	500	45	45
7b	330	230	20	20

Further points :

- i. Species totals have been calculated from area, stocking density and percentage totals required.
- ii. Totals for MB in compartment 6a and 6b is 215 and 7b is 100.
- iii. As there are 5 tree species identified for MB, the overall MB figure was divided by 5 to give the number per species.
- iv. Planting numbers have been rounded up to the nearest 5.
- v. From past experience it appears that ROW, SBI and HOL regenerate readily at the Outwoods. For this reason it is not proposed to plant these species, but to manage the natural regeneration that should hopefully occur.

Planting design :

Stock will be whips and planted with tubes and stakes as appropriate.

This will need to be looked at in the context of each felled area, taking into account : existing paths, ground conditions, operational access tracks and future management of the areas.

Whilst the stocking density roughly equates to 3m spacings, it is NOT proposed to have a uniform planting scheme across the felled sites.

Some parts of the site will be planted at shorter spacings, whilst other parts may have greater spacings. This is to replicate more natural conditions within the wood where there are areas of increased competition. It would also give us the opportunity to monitor how natural regeneration occurs within different areas.

Maintenance

Maintenance of the planted stock is required for a 3 year period after planting. This is to include two herbicide applications and replacement of losses each year (based on 10% losses).

James Lee – April 2021.

OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 28TH JULY 2021

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CLEANSING AND OPEN SPACES

ITEM 6 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.

Recommendation

That delegated authority be given to the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces in consultation with the Chair and Vice-chair of the Outwoods Management Committee to consider proposals of the Edible Forest Festival.

The Outwoods Visitor Centre Café

The construction of the Outwoods Visitor Centre/Café is nearing completion with the contractors finishing off the second phase of fixtures and fittings. It is hoped that the building will be handed over in the next couple of weeks. There was a canopy on the left-hand side of the building in the original plans, however, this had to be removed to keep within the original budget. The foundations for the canopy have been installed under the decking to allow for this to be added later if budgets allow.



Tenders have been completed and a café operator has been selected. Officers are going through the stages of finalising the lease. Once this is completed an email will be circulated to let Trustees know who the tenants will be.

The café operator will have a 50% rent reduction for the first 12 months of operation with 100% of the rent and a turnover share being payable thereafter. The rent reduction will allow the business to establish itself within the first year. The full income from the lease is expected to be the region of £18k to £20k per annum. This will be shown in the Outwoods revenue budget and will offset the costs of managing the site going forwards.

Officers are working with the Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership to install interpretation materials relating to the woods and the wider Charnwood Forest.

It is suggested that the facility has a soft launch, with an official opening happening after a few weeks of operation. A plaque with a dedication to David Slater is being commissioned and will be displayed on the building alongside the existing plaque (previously discreetly displayed by the entrance) commemorating Alan Moss and Harry Bowler.

Remaining works to be completed include modifications to the site entrance, car park lining and the installation of a parking barrier.

Car Park Opening Times

At the Outwood Management Committee's meeting on 9th October 2019 it was agreed that the car park opening times would be as follows:

British Summer Time: 6am to 10pm
Greenwich Mean Time: 7am to 8pm

Edible Forest Event

Officers have been approached to host an event at the Outwoods in support of the Edible Forest Festival. Details of the event are a little vague at the moment, but it could take the form of a forest themed gin pairing or cocktail and canapes type evening. The festival is taking place between 10-19th September this year. Delegated authority for the committee chair and Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces to approve the event is sought, once all of the proposals have been finalised.

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OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 28TH JULY 2021

Report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces

ITEM 7 FINANCE UPDATE

Purpose of the Report

To update Trustees on finance issues relating to the Outwoods.

Update

The year to date 21/22 figures (up to 15th July 2021) are as follows:

Account (T)	Total Spend Inc Commits	Current Orig Budget	Variance	
Buildings-R & M	750.00	5,000.00	4,250.00	
Car Park Machine P/R&M	210.00	1,900.00	1,690.00	
Grounds General Maint	5,800.00	4,000.00	-1,800.00	
Fencing/Gates	0.00	400.00	400.00	
Seats	358.33	400.00	41.67	
Mtc of Trees, Shrubs	370.00	4,800.00	4,430.00	
Electricity	44.76	300.00	255.24	
Metered Water Charge	61.42	700.00	638.58	
Unmeasured Water Charges	0.00	300.00	300.00	
Equipment Etc P/R&M	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	
Signs	0.00	800.00	800.00	
Printing,Stat&Copying	0.00	300.00	300.00	
Security Services & Charges	857.79	800.00	-57.79	
Promotional Activities	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	
Cesspit Emptying	0.00	4,900.00	4,900.00	
MOS Contract - Basic	32,047.20	128,200.00	96,152.80	
MOS Contract - Variations	367.20	1,500.00	1,132.80	
Grant Contribution	-6,311.65	-4,000.00	2,311.65	
Fees & Charges Misc	0.00	-10,000.00	-10,000.00	*timber sales
Car Parking Charges	-9,096.68	-29,000.00	-19,903.32	
Controllable	25,458.37	113,300.00	87,841.63	

Car Parking Income

See the table of car park income paid through the machine at the Outwoods. The machine is now linked to the Council via a SIM card and lets officers know when there are any problems (ticket replenishment, out of service etc.).

Income from Outwoods Car park				
	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	820.70*
August	2,738.10	Machine out of order	2,956.40	
September	1,879.70	973.20	3,177.30	
October	2,097.60	2,170.35	3,106.30	
November	1,655.85	1,814.40	3,761.90	
December	1,715.70	1,820.50	3,192.85	
January	2,980.70	2,268.25	2,533.35	
February	1,559.20	1,164.80	2,364.40	
March	2,199.05	1,650.60	3,039.75	
TOTAL (£)	27,431.65	23,938.70	24,132.25	9114.45

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

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**Outwoods Management Committee
Rangers Report
April - June 2021**

April 2021



The Outwoods-Litter Picking

After another long break from volunteering due to Covid restrictions, the Green Gym was thankfully able to resume their valuable services for the first time since before Christmas 2020. Due to the sensitive time of year, from a conservation and social distancing point of view, the groups activities were restricted to litter picking.



The Green Gymer's and Ranger team have not been left wanting for litter. Many of our green/open spaces have suffered excessive amounts of man-made waste, particularly during this pandemic period when lockdown restrictions have limited access to indoor venues, but allowed takeaway service and outdoor exercise. Even such areas of natural beauty (unofficially titled) as the Outwoods, levels of litter have at a minimum tripled in volume. Each morning, the Rangers attend the car park to find, what, on occasion, seems to have been a mini festival overnight! So much more litter has been generated at the Outwoods, that the need for a larger 'bin bay' was identified and a new construction with twice the capacity was constructed in order to contain the extra bags of waste.

Fortunately, to allow our green spaces some respite, on April 12th, restaurant and pub gardens were allowed to serve outdoors and more shops were able to welcome customers back for the first time this year. The knock on effect was immediately noticed in the drop in the amount of cars in the Outwoods car park. The increase in litter levels has also dropped, but we are still playing 'catch up' to remove the unprecedented amounts of plastic waste on all of Charnwood's green spaces including the Outwoods.

All over the country 'Womble' groups are popping up to tackle the by-product of the pandemic; the act of littering itself proving somewhat of an epidemic. Fortunately, whilst the good people of Charnwood, as well as other parts the country come to together to take part in the mass clean up, we have our best opportunity of reducing the levels of litter to the cleanest we have seen in decades.





Following woodland closures during storms, the Rangers carry out a safety inspection and remove any imminent threat to the H&S of visitors. Much of the time, the path is cleared by removing the section of tree across the path in order for the woods to be reopened as quickly as possible and the remainder left to be 'tidied' at a later time. Over a period of time, these remainders of the trees left on either side of the path builds up.

April is a good time to catch up on these jobs as our woodland management has come to a stop due to birds nesting. So, for the first half of April, the Rangers spent time clearing the remainder of windblown trees from the edges of footpaths.



The area around the rock face was tidied as there was still sections of tree and brash left from the February 2020 storm which saw the old oak removed from the rock face fall. Unfortunately, there is no way of getting a chipper anywhere near to this location due to the camber of the footpath from one side and the uprooted beech from the other, so brash had to be stacked nearby. This isn't quite the finish that we desired, as it slightly distracts from the attractive feature of the rock face.



As we were working in this area, we took a Tramper and a spirit level with an angle gauge down to the eroded footpath to obtain readings. Although we were aware that the angle was more than 15° , we were surprised to obtain a reading of 21° .

Travelling on the Tramper along this stretch of footpath was daunting and did not feel safe even for the able-bodied. Following this finding, we have installed signage along the path and updated our Tramper users on the restriction of using this stretch of footpath. We have also updated the Tramper induction for new users and included a laminated map of the Outwoods highlighting the location where the Tramper is unsuitable to use.



An unusual place to spend ones evening.

On arriving at the Outwoods on a Saturday morning, the Rangers discovered that, in the yard, outside of the garage, a small group of people had deemed this the most suitable place to have a campfire. Fortunately, no damage was done.

Around the same time, a member of the public reported that there was a fire in the more usual location of the small 'basin' behind the rock face. Fortunately, the fire had not spread from its use the night before and the Rangers fully extinguished the embers by dousing with water.



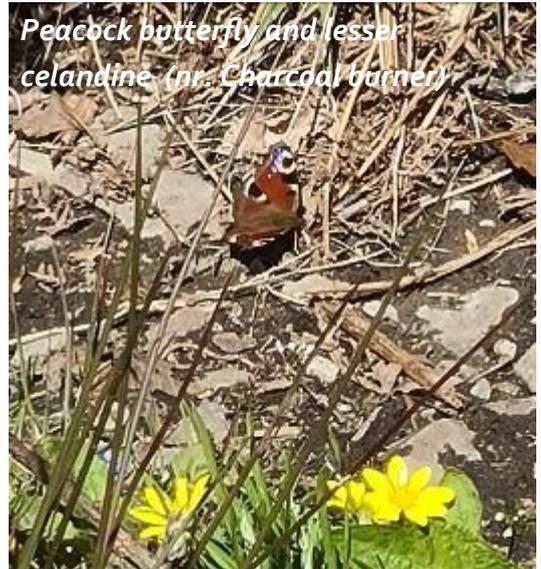
The Outwoods play area was prepared for reopening for Easter weekend. A safe entry/exit system was designed by the Rangers in order to protect users as much as possible from vehicles in the car park and commercial vehicles entering/leaving the yard area. Hopefully, there will be a more permanent solution of how to keep visitors safe in the near future as this isn't the most attractive of welcomes to the Outwoods.

As well as this, the bark was raked over and checked for hazards and surfaces of the equipment were sanitised.

Outwoods Wildlife Observations



Bluebells on north side of wood



Peacock butterfly and lesser celandine (nr. Charcoal burner)



Forget-me-Nots (nr. Charcoal burner)



Bluebells in conservation area (view from car park)

May 21



Whilst our eyes have been on the prize of rhododendron removal in the Outwoods, it seems that the sycamore have been taking advantage of our focus. The number of sycamore saplings in the Outwoods has hugely increased over the last couple of years, so we have sent in the Green Gym to correct this.

Due to the amount of rainfall over the last couple of months, the volunteers have also been rectifying some of the water erosion down the footpaths.



The Outwoods - General Maintenance

A brief evaluation of the glade

The current Outwoods Management Plan states the importance of open glade areas and the need to manage bracken, especially in these areas, in order to improve biodiversity



In October 2018, idverde sprayed the bracken in the glade area with asulox, a chemical which targets the bracken. Unfortunately, this was not successful. In April last year, during the first lockdown, the Ranger team scraped off the dead bracken from the previous years growth and also removed rhododendron growing in the area.

The team then spent a day a month strimming off any new bracken growth to keep it at bay.

The photograph above was taken in April 2020, belows was taken in May 2021. The immense increase in biodiversity is a pleasing success. However, we won't get complacent yet. More strimming off of stubborn bracken is required and this year, we plan to extend our glade out further after our 'test' sample has demonstrated that our hard work has paid off.



Footbridge Maintenance/Replacement



Bridge 1. The stone footbridge has always been difficult to maintain due to its width. No tool seems to be sturdy, as well as long enough, to reach through to clear blockages. When we came across a severe blockage in May, the only way to clear the blockage was to remove the large stones to access the blockage which was, of course, in the middle.

The stones were in need of resetting due to shifting over time and a large stone which prevents the structure from slipping had also moved downstream a few metres by the shear force of the overwhelming flood water. The bridge is as good as new again but work around the edges needs to be carried out to reinstate the footpath which has eroded into the watercourse.

Bridge 2. The small slabbed bridge near the charcoal burner had failed to function properly over the last 12 months. It's failure to allow the water to pass at the required rate through the pipe built in under the slabs had also caused the stream to start to via off course and create a new

path around the bridge. This was causing erosion issues to the footpath around the bridge and leading up to it.

As with the bridge that was replaced last year, we made the decision to remove the concrete and replace with a timber structure, which is more in keeping with the site.





Before installing the bridge, a low level retaining dry stone wall was built to keep the water on course. The timbers could then be placed onto large stones buried into the footpath to prevent slipping and allow water to run off.



The finished bridge is much more in keeping with the woodland setting and the Rangers have received many positive comments about the improvement to the aesthetics to the area.

Since taking this photograph, a handrail has also been introduced, however, its more of a leaning rail to rest on and enjoy watching the stream make its journey through the woodland as well as observe the abundance of butterflies and bees enjoying their new improved glade.



The Ranger team have experienced some challenging times in May. Mostly because of inclement weather! Due to a flash flood on the 11th May, not for the first time, the garage was flooded. The primary concern is the mixture of water and electricity, but the bulk of the tools and equipment is stored in the garage and there was very little warning to salvage what we could off the floor!



The bin store, which houses the bin bags collected from the litter bins, had become rotten and a bit of a concern for the Serco operatives when collecting the waste as there had been rats seen in the store. The main point of entry was from underneath where there had been insufficient stone placed at the base so the rats could tunnel in.

We had also struggled for space to fit the waste, especially since lockdown restrictions were lifted and the number of visitors seems to have vastly increased. Therefore, a larger construction was created to ensure all waste could be housed as squirrels and crows will 'raid' any bin bags left outside of the store.

The store was also located in a more convenient location for Serco to collect from as, especially in the wetter months, the area around the store can be very muddy. So, this was placed next to the hard standing within easy reach of where the Serco vehicle can access.

The Serco guys are very happy.



Playground Re-opening and Maintenance

The playground was reopened for the Early May Day Bank Holiday weekend. The Rangers

prepared the playground and made adjustments for safe access for children and families to and from the car park.



June 21



Throughout June, the Green Gym volunteers have been busy uprooting sycamore saplings from around the 'bus stop' area. There has been a very large number of saplings developing over the last couple of years. As there were no Green Gym sessions last year due to the lockdown periods, this issue has got away from the Rangers due to the multitude of various tasks that took precedence.

In addition to the Green Gym, The Conservation Volunteers have also attended the Outwoods, bringing a group of 22 volunteers to remove a vast amount of sycamore from the area.

The task is far from over, but a great deal has been cleared and waste has been placed, or is scheduled to be placed, into habitat piles to increase biodiversity.



General Maintenance

2021 is proving to be a great year for plant growth! The Ranger team have increased the frequency of their usual maintenance regime such as mowing, path strimming and bracken 'bashing' in order to keep the Outwoods safe and, of course, looking its best for our





A new bench has been installed to replace the rotted memorial bench near the kissing gate. This has been set back slightly from the footpath to allow more space from passers-by and to offer a more aesthetically pleasing view of Loughborough.

In the car park, around the old oak, the Rangers have started an unofficial 'memorial garden' from the collection of items left by visitors within the woodland. As we have no indication of who is leaving them, we are unable to communicate that leaving these items is not appropriate on a SSSI site. However, out of respect, we can temporarily leave them in this area as it is not included in the SSSI.

Plans for next year include improvements to the bedding around the tree's in the car park and entrance. We hope that setting appropriate wildflower seeds will improve 'first impressions'.



Further Work and Information

Daily:

- Patrol the primary paths
- Litter pick car park (high volumes of litter a.m.)
- Outwoods play area checks and application of disinfectant (also pay machine x2 daily)
- Visitor facilities cleaned and restocked

Weekly:

- Litter pick and empty bins in Outwoods (twice weekly)

Monthly:

- Liaise with CBC and BioMarsh to arrange emptying of cesspit

Weekends:

Litter management

Other:

Female toilets fully opened to accommodate demand.