

OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
28TH JULY 2021

PRESENT: Councillors Campsall, Fryer, K. Harris, Parsons and Smidowicz, and Tillotson.
RE, and GM.

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

APOLOGIES: Councillors Bailey and Morgan, PB, CN

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR / 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 2021-22.

AGREED that RE be appointed as the Vice-Chair of the Outwoods management Committee for the period of 2021-22.

2. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

Disclosures of personal interests were made as follows:

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

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th April 2021 were agreed.

4. TREE FELLING PROGRAMME

A report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces was submitted (item 5 on the agenda). The Senior Green Spaces Officer explained that the outsourcing document was almost ready to go out to tender and that lessons had been learnt from the previous tree felling. The planned felling programme in November 2021 was likely to be less challenging than before as less infrastructure (paths, new gates etc) would be required and the pockets of trees to be felled were adjacent to each other.

Summary of discussion:

- it was anticipated that over 1000m³ of stock would be felled, resulting in possible returns of £30K. The timber market was buoyant at present, but prices were dependant on the quality of timber removed. The income would offset costs of replanting and windrowing activities.

- trees used for re-stocking would be British grown and planted in accordance with Natural England's policies. From the previous programme it was noted that Birch and Rowan would grow quickly
- depending on the quality of timber felled, this would result in it being used either for chip, pulp, pallet wood or planked by a saw log site. As the Midlands did not have the capacity for sawing logs, the wood felled from the Outwoods which included good quality larch would be transported south to saw log sites there.
- some of the Scots Pine and Norway Spruce trees, although not native to the woods, would be saved as specimen trees in homage to the history of the site. These trees would be identified during a site visit with the successful contractor.
- it was anticipated that the lorries would be transporting the wood away from the Outwoods carpark during the end of the second and third week of the programme. The maximum load of a lorry was 40 tons so approximately 30 lorry movements could be expected.
- concerns raised during the first felling programme regarding the route the lorries would take to transport the felled timber away from the Outwoods was still an issue. Leicestershire County Council had been notified that the signage on Snells Nook Lane was inadequate and that turning onto the Motorway was not possible. It was important to identify the route clearly before the work was carried out and this would be discussed with the successful contractor. It was noted that the contractor who had carried out the tree felling in 2019 had ensured routes for transporting the timber were safe and legal.

AGREED that the Trustees noted the contents of the report.

5. OFFICER UPDATE REPORT

During this item the meeting became intermittently inquorate due to a Trustees' internet dropping out. Notes here are provided for the quorate sections of the meeting.

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 salient points in the report and noted that the Visitor Centre Café construction was nearly finished and that the operator for the café had been selected. The paperwork was in its final stages of completion and once finalised the Trustees would be notified of the successful tenant.

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces also provided a verbal update regarding the following:

- sculptures by ArtSpace from the recent Timber Festival were now located in the Outwoods near the Charcoal Burner.
- a weekly Yoga class was now being held in the Events Barn and that no charges were being made in accordance with the funding agreement.
- Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust would be setting up an information stand in the carpark over the next few weekends to recruit members.
- There were a number of interested parties wishing to start manufacturing charcoal in the Outwoods.

A tour of the Visitor Centre and Cafe would be held for Trustees before it officially opened, and it was hoped that the next Committee meeting could be held at the Visitor Centre.

AGREED

1. That delegated authority be given to the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces in consultation with the Chair and Vice-chair to consider proposals of the Edible Forest Festival;
2. That once further details regarding the Edible Forest Festival are received, that these be circulated to the Committee;
3. That Trustees are notified of the successful tenant once details are finalised;
4. That information on the interpretation boards, once agreed with the Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership, would be circulated to the Committee;
5. 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). The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces noted that it was the first quarter of the financial year and no issues had been identified.

Summary of Discussion:

- the report was encouraging considering the last 18 months.
- the carparking income for May 2019/20 reflected the increased number of visitors during the Sculpture Trail 2019-20 event.
- carparking income for Oct - Dec 2020 indicated high visitor numbers during the winter pandemic period.
- the car parking bays still required clear marking before the Café was opened. This would be temporary and replaced with more long-term markings after the felling programme had been completed.

AGREED 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 8 on the agenda). Still image cameras had been installed to capture wildlife in the woods and it was noted that photographs of wildlife could be displayed in the Visitor Centre. It was hoped that, in the future, a live feed camera could be installed in an occupied bird box and installed in the Visitor Centre.

Trustees welcomed the increase in biodiversity seen in the Outwoods and noted that the bird hide could be improved to provide better observation of birds.

In response to a query by a Trustee, the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces agreed to check whether volunteers of the Green Gym had seen this report and would ask for it to be circulated.

AGREED that the contents of the report be noted, and that the report be circulated to all councillors.

7. A.O.B

A Trustee requested an update regarding the Lottery Heritage funding Award. The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces explained that the project was progressing, with new staff being appointed. The National Forest Landscape Partnership (NFPL) were also planning to apply for UNESCO Geo-Park status.

The Committee asked the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces to thank the Rangers and volunteers for their work in the Outwoods.

AGREED to invite Julie Attard and Dr Jack Matthews to the next meeting of the Committee to provide a further update on the NFLP projects.

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
