

OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
30TH JANUARY 2019

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

Nita Rao and Tony Thory – ArtSpace Loughborough
Julie Attard – National Forest

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

APOLOGIES: Councillor Fryer (Chair),

1. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

Disclosures of personal interests were made as follows:

- (i) by PB who farmed land adjacent to the Outwoods.
- (ii) by RE whose wife was a member of Artspace Loughborough.
- (iii) by JN who lived on land adjacent to the Outwoods.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th October 2018 were agreed.

3. SCULPTURE TRAIL 2019

Proposals for the Sculpture Trail 2019 event by ArtSpace Loughborough was submitted (item 4 on the agenda).

Tony Thory and Nita Rao from ArtSpace Loughborough attended the meeting and gave a summary of the proposals. Tony explained that ArtSpace had been successful in obtaining funding from Arts Council England. He stated that the trail would start from the main carpark and lead up to the foot access gate closest to Loughborough. Two entry routes to the Trail would be advertised.

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces noted that everyone had been pleased by the success of the Trail last year and that the timescales had been extended this year to help with traffic congestion in the Outwoods car park. Other car parks (e.g. Nanpantan Sports Ground) would be also publicised for use.

Trustees commented that signs would be required at the Nanpanatan Sports Ground carpark for the duration of the event. The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces explained this was possible and that the route from the car park to the Outwoods could be signposted with the land owner's permission.

AGREED that the report be noted.

4. CHARNWOOD FOREST LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP BID

An update regarding the outcome of the recent sub-committee meetings regarding the Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership bid was submitted (item 5 on the agenda).

Julie Attard from the National Forest attended to assist with the consideration of the item. The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces explained that the bid would be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund later this year. He summarised the position so far regarding the sub-committee meetings and then took the Committee through the three potential projects in priority order:

- (i) Project One - Walking/Cycle/Equestrian path from junction of Woodhouse Lane and Bridleway K19 to the Outwoods car park

Officers stated that:

- there were no opportunities to extend the main car park in the Outwoods so it would be beneficial to encourage more diverse means of getting to the woods other than by car.
- encouraging use of other car parks at Moat Road or the Nanpantan Sports Ground would reduce the pressure on the Outwoods car park.
- this project was linked to another project in the Bid to upgrade the bridleway on Woodhouse Lane.
- the path would follow inside the boundary wall and link the Bridleway K19 to the Outwoods car park.
- although the current byelaws would not allow this project to progress (no cycles or horses) the newly drafted byelaws would allow the Committee to authorise new paths.
- the Trust Deeds would not allow this project to progress as it stated that the Committee could only make new pathways for 'persons on foot only'. The deeds could be modified but this could be a lengthy and complicated process.

Trustees raised the following points:

- whether it was possible to use the road or land outside of the boundary wall for the path.
- whether there would be increased facilities for cycle parks in the car park.
- that it would be advantageous to create this path for cyclists, as it would then create a cycle path from Epinal Way in Loughborough along the Greenbelt, using Moat road upto the car park in the Outwoods.

Officers responded as follows:

- Using the road could be dangerous for less confident or younger cyclists.

- There were cycle racks by the toilet block in the car park but the number could be increased.
- The roadside by the boundary wall was the responsibility of the County Council who could be approached if modifying the Trust Deeds proved to be difficult and expensive.

(ii) Project Two - Accessible circular path from the car park towards the area south-east of the car park.

Officers explained that at present people with restricted mobility tended to park in the layby near Jubilee Wood to access the Outwoods by a relatively flat route as paths from the car park were challenging for the less able walker. The new path would have reduced gradients suitable for people with restricted mobility, wheelchairs and pushchairs.

In response to questions by Trustees, officers stated that:

- the surface of the path would be crushed gravel, which would be suitable for wheelchairs.
- the gradient from the car park along the new path could be lessened, particularly as work would be carried out to fell conifers in the area as part of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme which would leave areas for new planting and glades.
- the exact location of the path was still to be confirmed.

(iii) Project Three - Improved Car Park

Officers stated that the current car park was not well managed and if the spaces were clearly delineated the capacity could be boosted by 10-20%. The delineation would be in keeping with the area and would likely be created using wood or different covered stones.

In conclusion, the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces stated that the projects required detailed costings and it was unlikely that the £50K funding would cover all three projects. The detailed bid was required to be submitted to the National Forest within the next few months and the Committee were asked to agree the priority of the projects.

Trustees commented that Project three was possibly their first priority and that although Project one was beneficial it was limited considering the legal issues of the project. There was some discussion regarding how the priorities had been decided.

It was noted that all three projects could be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund with the proviso that Project one had legal issues to resolve and could be withdrawn.

AGREED

1. that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces investigates the legal issues with respect to altering the Trust Deeds to enable Project one to proceed and

presents his findings to the Outwoods Management Committee at its next meeting on 17th April 2019;

2. that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces provides detailed costings of the three projects to the Outwoods Management Committee at its next meeting on 17th April 2019;
3. that the two recommendations stated in the report submitted to the Committee at this meeting be considered after the two recommendations above are concluded.

5. ESIF FUNDING BID PROJECT UPDATE

A presentation regarding the European Strategic Infrastructure Fund bid was submitted (item 6 on the agenda).

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces shared with the Committee the information and comments on the Council's Facebook page regarding the ongoing building of the children's play area and covered event space in the Outwoods. He explained that the work had started after Christmas, was progressing well and expected to be completed by end March 2019.

In response to queries by the Committee, the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces noted that there would be a safety surface material under the play equipment. When the play area was officially opened, the Trustees would be invited.

AGREED that the presentation be circulated to the Committee and that the information provided be noted.

6. IMPROVEMENTS TO THE ENTRANCE GATES

A report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces was submitted (item 7 on the agenda) updating the Committee of the proposals to widen the access and improve the entrance to the Outwoods Country park.

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces explained that the entrance gates, although ornamental, were not wide enough for two-way traffic and posed a safety issue. He noted that the Council were investing in the woods and wished to improve the security of the carpark. The Senior Green Spaces Officer stated that the oak tree proposed for removal had been assessed and found to have extensive rot.

Trustees raised the following points:

- security of the car park was a concern.
- the widening of the entrance for cars could be against the Trust Deeds.
- were any of the trees in the area covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO).
- would new trees be planted and bird boxes put up to mitigate the loss of habitat provided by the oak tree.
- would the gates be closed by Wardens in the evening.
- how was ivy controlled when it invaded and covered trees.

In response to queries by the Committee, officers stated that:

- it was unlikely that the widening of the carpark was against the terms of the Trust Deeds,
- none of the trees in the Outwoods were covered by TPOs,
- new trees could be planted and birdboxes installed,
- the gates would be closed at set times (which had not yet been decided). One gate would be closed to cars entering the carpark at night but the other gate would be open, with crocodile teeth at ground level, to allow exit only.
- although ivy didn't kill its host and was beneficial to wildlife, it could change structural elements of trees by adding weight to its limbs. It was challenging to complete tree surveys when trees were covered in ivy, so certain trees had the ivy severed at the tree base.

It was proposed that the Outwoods Management Committee gives the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces delegated authority in consultation with the Chair of the Outwoods Management Committee to proposals and ensure the work is completed within the current financial year,

10 voted in favour

None voted against or abstained

The proposal was carried.

AGREED that delegated authority be given to the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces in consultation with the Chair of the Outwoods Management Committee to agree proposals and ensure the work is completed within the current financial year.

7. OFFICER UPDATE REPORT

A report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces was submitted (item 8 on the agenda) updating the Committee in respect of the following:

- (i) Edible Forest – it was noted that report attached as an appendix covered events across the borough, not just in the Outwoods.
- (ii) Outwoods Management Plan – the Senior Green Spaces officer noted that this was based on the previous plan and would be used to set the work programme with the Head Ranger. A Trustee noted that it may be a good idea not to identify companies by name in the Plan. Officers agreed but stated that as the plan was required to apply for Green Flag status the day after the meeting it would be amended next time.

AGREED

1. that the draft of the Outwoods Management Plan attached at Appendix B be approved by the Outwoods Management Committee;

2. that the final approval of the final Outwoods Management Plan be delegated to the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces and the Chair of the Outwoods Management Committee.
- (iii) Interpretation Boards – these had been installed and a further panel would be installed on the reverse of the board.
- (iv) Outwoods Cottage – the project had been approved by the Council and the money had been allocated. A small extension and covered area would be added to the existing structure. The Council were in process of getting detailed drawings completed for submission as part of the planning application. There were concerns regarding bats roosting which could change the plans but advice was being sought from ecologists.

Trustees mentioned that it would be appropriate to have a wood burning stove as part of the cottage amenities, particularly as the Trust Deeds mentioned wood management. Also that the extension should be in natural stone to fit in with the current building.

- (e) Compartment Felling – as part of the Countryside Stewardship scheme the Council were obligated to remove conifer compartments. The felling license was for 10 years, quarter of the trees in the Outwoods were conifer and the deforested areas would be re-planted with native species. A tender had been awarded, the first two compartments would be felled in September and the timber sold. There were challenges to get the timber out of the woods. The improvements to the entrance gate would enable access for the lorries and other modifications to the five-bar gate access in the layby would also be required. There could be some minor damage in areas of poor ecology, but the contract included a clause for making good.

AGREED that the report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces be noted.

8. FINANCE UPDATE

An update regarding finance issues for the 2018/19 year was submitted (item 9 on the agenda).

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces noted that the finances were on track and in response to queries by the Committee stated that:

- (i) the report detailed the financial situation a few months before year end. There was an underspend of the original budget of £133K. Most of the expenditure for the Outwoods was contractual and of a pre-determined amount.
- (ii) the car parking charges had provided an income of £22K for the first year with £3K for the purchase of season tickets. The fee for parking did not appear to negatively impact the numbers of visitors and numbers were expected to increase after the completion of the play area and events space.
- (iii) season tickets were not automatically renewed, but owners were being contacted approximately one month before the expiry date to ask if they wished to renew the ticket.

- (iv) generally there wasn't an issue with non-payers in the car park, however, if enforcement was required, the costs of the work would be recharged internally to Open Spaces by the Street Management team.
- (v) there had been some issues with the ticket machines running out of tickets, but this had been rectified with a SIM card which alerted officers to the machine running out.
- (vi) it was difficult to explain why there were negative values during late summer 2018 when the temperatures had been high, the increased numbers seen in Spring was due to events being held like the Sculpture Trail.

There was a discussion regarding the drystone walls in the Outwoods and that a plan to restore the walls in the wider area was part of a separate project in the Charnwood Forest Landscape bid. Julie Attard explained that research was being carried out on lichens found on stones that had used lime mortar to fix them into the walls. It was a particular practice in Leicestershire during medieval times to use lime mortar to fix stones into walls, whereas during later times the walls in the area were built in the drystone fashion. As the lime mortar had worn away in most cases, a survey would be carried out to determine the build style of each wall and that an apprenticeship would be sought to restore the walls in the Leicestershire style appropriate to their age.

AGREED that information be noted.

8. 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 10 on the agenda).

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces presented the report as a slide show to highlight the pictures included in the report. In response to a query he noted that some trees were lost due to the hot weather last year but new stock had been planted.

The Chair asked that all volunteers be thanked for their hard work.

AGREED that the report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces be noted.

9. A.O.B

Trustees stated that the Committee's views had not been sought before the new way markers had appeared in the Outwoods. Officers explained that the way markers had been installed to replace old worn way markers and that they identified a short walk for families. Trustees noted that the wooden sculptures were particularly obvious, although they may weather into the surroundings, and that the Committee should be consulted prior to the installation of any more. The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces apologised and noted their views.

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).

Item 6. IMPROVEMENTS TO THE ENTRANCE GATES

It was proposed that the Outwoods Management Committee gives the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces delegated authority in consultation with the Chair of the Outwoods Management Committee to proposals and ensure the work is completed within the current financial year,

10 voted in favour

None voted against or abstained

The proposal was carried.

AGREED that delegated authority be given to the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces in consultation with the Chair of the Outwoods Management Committee to agree proposals and ensure the work is completed within the current financial year.