

HAUGHLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Virtual Gallowsfield Wood Committee Meeting held on

Wednesday 3rd March 2021 via VIDEOCONFERENCING

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| Present (by Video): | Gerald Brown (chairman), David Evans, Heidi Franklin, Geoffrey Kay, Lyndsey Harvey, Jo Ling, Richard Stacey, Terry Stopher, Judy Thomson and Denise Winder Alf Hannan (Chairman Haughley Parish Council) | |
| 1. | To receive and consider apologies for absence. Bill Green (unable to use link to join meeting) | |
| 2. | To receive declarations of Interest in any item on the Agenda Heidi Franklin, Lyndsey Harvey and Denise Winder in item 10, being involved in running educational sessions at Gallowsfield Wood. Jo Ling in item 10 being a Governor at Haughley Crawfords Primary School and periodically running educational sessions at Gallowsfield Wood. | |
| 3. | To consider written requests for any dispensations relating to disclosable interest Based on consultation with SALC via the PC Clerk, not required. | |
| 4. | To consider and approve the minutes of the Gallowsfield Wood meeting of 8th January 2021 (as circulated) and to agree that delegated authority be given to the Chair to sign the minutes outside of the meeting: Committee members confirmed receipt of the minutes of the last meeting and authorised the Chairman to sign the minutes outside the meeting. | |
| 5. | To consider proposed working party 1. To receive an update on the proposed planning meeting with Gary Battell, Suffolk County Council Woodland Advisor JL and TS met Gary Battell at the Wood Monday, the day before this committee meeting and gave an oral report on the productive meeting. JL summarised her oral report in writing – attached as an appendix. Gary Battell due to write a report with recommendations. It was agreed that significant tree work, including thinning, coppicing and pollarding, likely to be too much for volunteers. | |

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| | <p>2. To consider revised date for proposed for working party.</p> <p>It was agreed to endeavour to hold a working party say July, subject to Covid restrictions to include alterations to bridge near fire pit area to support wheelchair access and arrange a main working party to autumn / winter period.</p> | |
| 6. | <p>To receive a report on the progress of the pond</p> <p>Included in report on meeting with Gary Battell. Proposed site towards corner towards cycle path and the Travel Lodge, subject to Miles Drainage approving site as suitable, consider taking advise from SWT for size, design, panting etc.</p> | |
| 7. | <p>To consider proposals for grass cutting during coming year</p> <p>Considered a range of options, including to aim at 3 cuts during the year for main areas in the Wood as proposed management plan.</p> <p>Wildflower meadow – short grass to path x3 during year with longer areas to both sides of short grass – wider than last year to enhance greater flora diversity. Cut grass to be either removed or spread over remaining grass area to avoid build-up of nutrients due to vegetation decay. Main body cut alternate years.</p> | |
| 8. | <p>To discuss and agree any action relating to unwanted visitors and anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>No adverse behaviour recorded during recent months. Agreed to delete as routine agenda item.</p> | |
| 9. | <p>To receive an update on mapping</p> <p>To note plans in Gallowsfield Wood Woodland Trust guide; one plan in guide likely to be useful if additional information added to show features, including fire pit area, bridge, loo, Blue Bell area, etc.</p> | |
| 10. | <p>To receive and consider a report on the virtual meeting held with Haughley Crawfords Primary School</p> <p>Committee members confirmed receipt of written report circulated prior to the meeting. A range of options was appended to the report. JL stressed that school use of Wood still in early planning stages and the school is prepared to be flexible. It was agreed to 30-40 children using the wood as Forest School is likely to be excessive. It was agreed to support school use of the Wood and continue negotiations – the first such meeting between GB and Head teacher due to take place during the Easter holiday - date TBC.</p> | |

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| 11. | <p>To discuss and agree the use of premises by undertakings and organisations</p> <p>It was confirmed that the Wood is open to the public with the intention of being open to all. The condition and activities in the Wood to be monitored with areas segregated if and when appropriate to allow recovery.</p> | |
| 12. | <p>To receive an update on the current financial situation</p> <p>Current financial year to 28 February – balance as at end of March 2020 £7,043.11; receipts £1,320; expenditure £3,314.78. Balance £5,047.33</p> <p>DE suggested employing someone to undertake woodland management works – this would be inline in Gary Battell’s recommendation. Also to train volunteers. Reservations expressed at latter proposal unless as part of worked busines plan allowing for net income. SCC may be willing to provide financial support. Woodland management scheme with grant aid through Forestry Commission worth investigation. Matthew Allen thinned areas some years ago. It was agreed to consider Gary Battell’s report to help enhance the management plan.</p> | |
| 13. | <p>To discuss the proposal for a management plan and consider any action:</p> <p>1. To consider draft Management plan – draft document attached. To note the Gallowsfield Wood Woodland Trust guide, recirculated prior to the meeting, and as identified above. To note Small woodland management plan template from Forestry Commission.</p> <p>JL identified that draft management distributed with agenda was a previous version. Committee invited to consider the latest version and submit proposed amendments for consideration at the next meeting.</p> <p>Need to record risk assessments – to be undertaken several times per year, including after each storm. Agreed to investigate cost of attendance at Basic Tree Assessment course with intention of one or two attending (more if nil cost). RS confirmed risk assessment completed some years ago and needs updating and agreed to copy to Chairman if available in his records.</p> <p>2. To receive an update on GFW bookings.</p> <p>Dates for bookings on https://gallowsfieldwood.wordpress.com</p> <p>3. To consider proposed additional fire pit location.</p> <p>Gary Battell supported the proposed additional fire pit location.</p> | |

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| | <p>4. Extensive recent use and erosion</p> <p>Areas have significant erosion this year, in addition to the path and to and including the fire pit area, probably due to wet weather, snow and increased public access. The grass has been recovering during the last couple of weeks with drier conditions. The degree of erosion and damage to grass not expected to be long lasting. Agreed to monitor and reconsider as the need arises.</p> <p>5. To consider obtaining and laying wood chips to degraded areas of path and ride.</p> <p>The proposal was considered but not adopted at the present time.</p> <p>6. Proposal to employ a Wood Worker at Gallowsfield Wood (DE)</p> <p>Considered earlier in this meeting.</p> | |
| 14. | <p>To note correspondence received, other than as considered as separate agenda items.</p> <p>None</p> | |
| 15 | <p>Any other business</p> <p>GK proposed to hold event to celebrate the end of Covid-19 lockdown – possibly for 300-400 people. AH suggested consulting Kieren Palmer who organised the major event to celebrate 150 years of the family running the bakery business. JT said that there had been inadequate support for a proposed Hallowe'en event. It was agreed that a request to use GFW for such an event would be considered.</p> | |
| 16 | <p>To confirm date for the next virtual committee meeting Wednesday 5th May 2021 at 7pm. (The first Wednesday of the month, bi-monthly)</p> <p>This was considered together with the expect ending of the <i>Flexibility of Local Authority & Police & Crime Panel Meetings 2020</i> which have allowed Parish Council meetings to be held virtually. It was agreed to reserve this date, with an option to defer the meeting to another date in May if face to face meetings are permitted.</p> | |

Appendix to item 5

Interim information based on meeting held between Jo Ling and Gary Battel (Suffolk CC Woodland Advisor)

Interim Report recorded by Jo Ling. Formal report from Gary Battel to follow.

The meeting was held on 3rd March 2021, 12.30 - 2.30pm.

Overarching message:

The crucial message to the woodland committee is that there is evidence of stress affecting the trees (e.g. stem bleeds) but that there is also evidence that previous thinning is relieving this stress and resulting in a healthier woodland.

The importance of good woodland management, which includes thinning the whole wood, cannot be over-emphasised.

Thinning and coppicing will result in healthier trees plus the additional benefit of timber resources and will benefit other wildlife species leading to greater biodiversity.

Thinning/coppicing etc. - education and information

There is a difference between thinning and coppicing, pollarding or 'copparding'. All of these woodland management techniques should be employed in different areas of the woodland - more detail below.

Education and information to the public will be important. Thinning can look destructive. We need to ensure that the public is informed as to the **regenerative** purpose and results of thinning and coppicing.

Thinning

The last thinning was in late 2017/early 2018 - therefore, the next thinning is due October 2022.

Gary recommends we employ Justin Hardy to prepare a plan for this work, provision of a felling licence and also discuss a possible countryside stewardship application to give the community income for management and support the creation of the pond if feasible.

Justin would charge c.£500 for completion of a plan with thinning prescriptions for each compartment of the wood.

The thinning would then be carried out by a contractor (Gary can recommend three contractors). We can negotiate the fees etc for this based on how much wood we want to keep for our own community projects.

Coppicing

Alder - The alder coppice is growing well and does not need immediate attention. This area should be included in future plans for coppicing.

Hazels. There are lots of well established hazels which need coppicing. Gary recommends we employ Bradley Morse (woodland contractor) specifically for coppicing.

Arboretum

The thinning and coppicing of the arboretum will be carefully managed to highlight each specimen tree species and allow for more easy identification for visitors.

We discussed the possible ways educational signs could be used to help visitors learn more about what is growing and living here.

Rides/paths and Grass cutting.

Gary agreed with proposed grass cutting cycle from the draft Flora and Fauna plan already submitted to the committee. For the widest ride this means middle short for walkers, then different cycles of cutting for the edges.

Suggested creating more open 'glades' or 'lay-bys' with underplanting at the back and open ground for flowers and grasses.

The path circling the arboretum is being encroached on by saplings.

Working parties to be employed to take out the saplings, retaining the undergrowth and ground cover for butterflies etc.

Other areas of grassland can be managed to allow longer grasses and native flora to flourish - this will be subject to a separate grass cutting management plan.

Hedges

Recommended that a hedge be planted alongside the fence to the flower meadow. Not only will this be good for biodiversity but will also mean we don't have to replace the fence when it eventually falls down!

Forest School/communal use areas.

2nd proposed site is low risk.

Existing site - there is a dead elm next to the path which must be removed. The oak tree next to the fire pit is stressed and needs monitoring.

Suggestion to move fire pit away from tree, raise the fire pit and/or use fire bowl.

Risk Assessments

Good practice:

- have 'health and safety' as standing item on each agenda.
- at least one member of committee to attend Basic Tree Assessment course and be responsible for risk assessment and mitigation.
- High risk areas (e.g. paths) should have recorded risk assessment every 6 months and after every storm
- All hazards noted and mitigated should be recorded.

Car Park

The car park surface is in good condition. Due to low use there is moss and low growing flora, some of which could be removed if it was felt necessary. Low priority.

Pond

Agreed site of pond and recommended asking Miles Drainage to come out to see if the water table will allow a pond to fill.

Healing Woods.

Gary has asked for Gallowsfield Woods to become one of Suffolk's post-COVID healing woods.

(See <https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/suffolk-coronavirus-healing-woods-survey-launched-6529438>)