

**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.