

**OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**  
**24TH JULY 2024**

PRESENT: Councillors Campsall, A Gray, Smidowicz, D Taylor, Worrall,  
RB, RE (Vice-Chair), DG, GM and CN

Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment  
Senior Green Spaces Officer  
The Head Ranger  
Democratic Services Officer (NC)

APOLOGIES: Cllrs Fryer, B Gray, Infield.

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND 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 Cllr Fryer be appointed as the Chair of the Outwoods Management Committee for the period of 2024-25.

**AGREED** that RE be appointed as the Vice-chair of the Outwoods Management Committee for the period of 2024-25.

2. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

Disclosures of personal interests were made as follows:

- (i) PB who farms land adjacent to the Outwoods.
- (ii) Cllr Taylor as a Leicestershire County Councillor.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING & MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th April 2024 were agreed.

Matters arising:

The Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment noted that as a report on the position of the trampers and garages had not been submitted to this meeting, he would provide an update during the next item on the agenda.

4. OFFICER UPDATE REPORT

A report of the Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment was submitted (item 5 on the agenda).

The Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment explained that the completion of the double yellow lines on the brow of the hill near the car park had not yet been completed (as indicated in the submitted report).

He provided a summary as follows:

- a National Forest Survey had been agreed to be undertaken, on behalf of the Committee, as a quick response had been required.
- the Outwoods Management Plan was still at the draft stage and that comments received from trustees would be included. The comments regarding bracken had been particularly welcome as this had been missed in the draft.
- Green gym volunteers could help with managing bracken and it was noted that at present volunteers often came from corporate 'away days' or referred by Physical Activity officers. The 'away days' had been successful in the past and a recruitment drive for more volunteers was planned although it would be necessary to ensure that the number of volunteers could be managed within health and safety guidelines.
- updating the payment machine, notice boards and completion of legal notices for increasing car parking charges had been completed and the charge increase implemented on 1st May. A quote was in progress for the installation of a third payment machine. No adverse comments regarding the charge increase had been received.
- the installation of a gate and crocodile teeth across the entrance was being scoped and costed to prevent anti-social behaviour in the car park at night. There would be a revenue cost to open/close the gates each day which was not currently in the budget.
- a long-term decision was required for the replacement of the garage building and trampers. This would be capital expenditure and subject to approval by the Council.

Discussion of key points:

- the National Forest Survey would not include a survey of wildlife and birds. A survey of wildlife could be completed by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust (LRWT) who had performed a survey previously in 2017. There was a national shortage of wildlife recorders.
- the chemical spraying of bracken provided patchy results and was not favoured for large areas. It was used for small areas located close to saplings and enabled the contractor to manage bracken promptly after replanting of the felled areas. The preferred option was to cut the bracken back, but it was noted that this task required regular repeating and it had been challenging to maintain consistency in recent months due to changeover of staff.
- whether volunteers could be sought from fitness clubs, community service recruits and from the Carpenters Arms. It was important that the recruitment, training and supervising of volunteers did not detract from the work of the rangers and added value to the team.
- Social media could be used to advertise, and Trustees wished to see the advert prior to it being circulated. The provision of a separate website or Facebook page for the Outwoods was challenging to resource but that options would be investigated with the Council's Communications Manager.

- an automated gate could be more cost effective than installing manual gates that required opening/closing. It would be a 'one-off' payment and unlikely to require much maintenance although a service contract could be required. Council officer experiences with automated gates on other green spaces had been mixed and as it would require capital expenditure it would need Cabinet approval. Both options could be considered.

Mrs Taylor CC noted she would seek clarification on the installation of double yellow lines on the brow of the hill near the car park.

*POST MEETING Note: a combination of requiring traffic management to enable the work to be carried out safely and the need for re-lining following surface dressing had resulted in some delay but the work should be completed within the next two weeks.*

**AGREED that**

1. the Head of Contracts, Leisure, Waste and Environment contacts LRWT to investigate if a wildlife survey could be completed in the Outwoods.
2. the Head of Contracts, Leisure, Waste and Environment provides updates on the following at the next meeting of the Committee on 16th October 2024:
  - a. finalised Outwoods Management Plan
  - b. the recruitment plan for volunteers
  - c. costing options for installation of a manual or automated gate,
  - d. options for the replacement of garage and purchase of trampers.
3. that the report be noted.

5. FINANCE UPDATE

A report of the Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment was submitted that covered the revenue budget (item 6 on the agenda).

The Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment presented the report and stated that it was three months into the new financial year and there was no significant issues to report. He provided a brief overview, noting that the car park income had suffered from a wet Spring, fencing around the rangers yard was being replaced and that work with felling and restocking would progress this winter.

**AGREED that** the report be noted.

6. RANGERS REPORT

A report of the Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment was submitted (item 7 on the agenda). The Ranger presented a brief overview noting that the new rangers were getting to know the Outwoods and its seasonal maintenance requirements. In response to a question he confirmed that the rangers did wear uniforms so were identifiable to visitors of the woods.

**AGREED that** the report be noted and circulated to all councillors after the meeting.

7. A.O.B

Trustees discussed the importance of following up actions given to housing developers to increase biodiversity and mentioned examples where this did not appear to be occurring. The Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment noted that the County Council were developing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy which was still in its early stages and, if finalised, could be considered by the Committee at its meeting on 29th January 2025.

Trustees requested an update on the position of the GeoPark. The Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment explained that the five year programme was well underway and was expected to finish in 2025. As the programme had been interrupted by the COVID 19 restrictions, an 18 month extension was being applied for which would also enable the GeoPark team to organise legacy arrangements for continuing its work. The UNESCO park status application was ongoing and its submission to UNESCO was intended in 2025. Concerns were raised about the submission of plans for a solar farm near to its boundary, it was noted that the GeoPark was a partnership of local organisations and could only comment on planning applications on a factual basis. It was suggested that Julie Attard be invited to a future meeting to provide a status update.

It was suggested that the timing of scheduled meetings in late July could result in the meeting having no quorum so an earlier meeting date would be scheduled in July 2025.

**AGREED** that

1. Julie Attard be invited to attend a future meeting to provide a status update about the GeoPark.
2. the Local Nature Recovery Strategy be scheduled for consideration of the Committee to its meeting on 29 January 2025 subject to its availability.
3. the Secretary of the Committee schedule an earlier July meeting for 2025.

## **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 2017 refers).*

### **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND 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.

It was proposed that Councillor Fryer be nominated as chair of the Committee.

8 voted in favour  
2 voted against  
None abstained

It was proposed that Councillor Worrall be nominated as chair of the Committee.

1 voted in favour  
8 voted against  
1 abstained

**AGREED** that Cllr Fryer be appointed as the Chair of the Outwoods Management Committee for the period of 2024-25.

It was proposed that RE be nominated as vice-chair of the Committee.

7 voted in favour  
2 voted against  
1 abstained

It was proposed that Councillor Worrall be nominated as vice-chair of the Committee.

1 voted in favour  
8 voted against  
1 abstained

**AGREED** that RE be appointed as the Vice-chair of the Outwoods Management Committee for the period of 2024-25.