

OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 29TH JANUARY 2025 AT 5.00PM
COMMITTEE ROOM 2, Council Offices

To: Councillors Campsall, Fryer, A Gray, B Gray, Infield, Smidowicz, D Taylor, Worrall
RB, RE, DG, GM, CN,

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES
2. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS
3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING & MATTERS ARISING pages 2 - 8
To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 16th October 2024.
4. GEPARK UPDATE
An update by Julie Attard, Charnwood Forest Programme Manager. -
5. OFFICER UPDATE REPORT pages 9 - 10
An update from the Head of Contracts, Leisure, Waste & Environment
6. FINANCE UPDATE pages 11 - 12
An update regarding finance.
7. RANGERS REPORT pages 13 - 24
8. A.O.B

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Dates for 2025 are: 16th April 2025, 2nd July 2025, 29th October 2025.

**OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
16TH OCTOBER 2024**

PRESENT: Councillors Campsall, Fryer, A Gray, B Gray, Infield, Smidowicz, D Taylor, Worrall,
GM and CN

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

APOLOGIES: RB, RE (vice-chair)

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING & MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th July 2024 were agreed.

Matters arising:

The Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment noted that he would contact Julie Attard to invite her to attend the next meeting of the Committee to provide an update about the GeoPark.

2. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

Disclosures of personal interests were made as follows before relevant items:

- (i) Cllr Fryer and Taylor as Leicestershire County Councillors.
- (ii) Cllr Taylor as a Trustee of Bradgate Park Trust.

3. OFFICER UPDATE REPORT

A report of the Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment was submitted (item 4 on the agenda).

The Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment provided a summary of key points in the report as follows:

- the advice from the Health & Safety Officer with respect to the High Winds Policy was to keep the limit at 40mph. Noted that the car park was currently left open at night when there were high winds.
- he was discussing with the relevant council officers about quotes for the installation of the gates at the entrance to the woods.
- the garage had been broken into recently and equipment stolen. It was in very poor repair and the installation of a gate could improve management of access to the woods at night.

Summary of discussion – Management plan (*changes made since the last meeting review had been highlighted in red*)

- it was hoped to update the Wildlife Survey appended to the Plan before 2029. Noted a shortage of wildlife recorders for Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, it was challenging to recruit volunteers, but the survey could be added to their waiting list.
- the interlinking footpath to the east of the car park where the gradient of the footpath would be decreased, taking a zigzag arc, would be funded by the GeoPark. It could involve the thinning of some trees and removal of any diseased specimens, but it was hoped to avoid the removal of healthy trees. A consultant would be employed to determine the route of the path.
- the Forestry and Woodland Policy seeking to expand the woods could be included as a firm statement in the Management Plan - expansion would only be possible through the acquisition of adjacent land, the Nanpantan Reservoir and Jubilee Wood. Discussions were progressing with Severn Trent to obtain the reservoir for flood mitigation; the Environment Agency were required to arrange biodiversity offsetting. Due to the cost of maintaining Jubilee Wood it was unlikely that this would be progressed by the Borough Council. Other adjacent land was in private ownership and unlikely to be available for purchase and discussions to develop public footpaths linking the Outwoods to the reservoir were unproductive. A non-binding aspirational statement could be included in the Plan in future.
- whether management aims could be reviewed in year 1/2 rather than year 3/4. The felling programme would start this winter, and areas felled would be monitored for regeneration over the following years. Other areas of the woods could be reviewed earlier but it might not be beneficial to do so. Noted that the Management Plan could be updated at any point during its five-year period and regular reviews would be submitted to the Committee. Trustees could review work carried out during the 'walk arounds' arranged before meetings of the Committee.
- concern over the management of bracken particularly in areas not subject to clear felling. It was impractical to hand clear the bracken from felled areas so limited use of sprays would be required. Other non-felled areas had not been maintained as well as expected but noted that there had been a rapid change of Head Rangers over the last 12 months, so this was hoped to improve with the new rangers in post. In addition, a checklist could be supplied to the contractor so it would be clear where bracken had been managed.
- concern that primary paths would be maintained with similar sized stone - noted that the path adjacent to Jubilee Wood consisted of large rocks which was difficult to walk on. The larger rocks had been added by the contractor during the previous felling period to improve path strength for lorries removing the timber. This would be required for this year's planned tree felling, but after the work had

been completed the rocks were anticipated to bed down and not be used again in any future tree felling operations.

- secondary paths would be improved as they fell into disrepair. Work carried out on paths was reactive, dependant on footfall and difficult to predict when required. A footpath survey could be carried out every two years and included in the Management Plan. Drainage improvements were identified by the Ranger team and flood drainage work carried out by the Canal & Rivers Trust would support this.
- plans to fell certain compartments had been previously agreed by the Committee to finish in 2026 – 2027 with certain sections being left in situ, but the Management Plan suggested a completion date of 2026 and there was a discrepancy of the number of compartments to be left in situ. It was confirmed that compartments 7A and 7B would be clear felled during this winter season, with 1B and 1C being felled the following winter season and that compartments 12A, 12C, 9B and 9C would be left in situ – the Management Plan would be updated accordingly.
- a drystone wall builder had been employed by the GeoPark to train volunteers in drystone walling across the National Forest area and was currently working at Bradgate Park. Some walls in the Outwoods were falling into disrepair so the builder could be asked to work in the woods and teach volunteers. Noted that it was complex to support volunteers due to the resources required (equipment, safety gear, supervision), that Bradgate Park was a popular volunteer destination and although funding could be obtained through community grants it was difficult to recruit volunteers to commit to working in the Outwoods.
- social media could be used to advertise for volunteers. It was necessary to understand how many volunteers could be sustained by the contractor and what skills gaps there was before using this platform.

AGREED that

1. the Head of Contracts, Leisure, Waste and Environment submit a brief 6 month and full annual report to the Committee on progress of 1 year and 5 year maintenance programmes as detailed in the Management Plan. The first 6-monthly report would be submitted to the Committee's meeting on 16th April 2025.
2. the Head of Contracts, Leisure, Waste and Environment agree wording of an aspirational statement to obtain land in future with the Chair and Vice-chair of the Outwoods Management Committee for inclusion in the Outwoods Management Plan.
3. the Head of Contracts, Leisure, Waste and Environment agree wording of completing a footpath survey every two years with the Chair and Vice-chair of the Outwoods Management Committee for inclusion in the Outwoods Management Plan.
4. the Outwoods Management Plan be updated to reflect the Committee's decisions regarding felling at its meeting on 31st January 2024 that compartments 7A and

7B to be clear felled during this winter season, with 1B and 1C being felled the following winter season and that compartments 12A, 12C, 9B and 9C would be left in situ.

5. the management aims included in the Outwoods Management Plan would be reviewed in year 3/4 in order to inform future planning.
6. the Outwoods Management Plan be approved, subject to the inclusion of amendments agreed during this item and recirculated to the Committee.
7. the Head of Contracts, Leisure, Waste and Environment investigate the use of signs to indicate that the Outwoods was closed in the evenings when high winds.
8. the report be noted.

4. FINANCE UPDATE

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

The Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment provided a brief overview, noting that the financial situation was as expected at this point in the year. He noted that the car parking charge had increased in April and that there had been a slight drop in income which was likely to be due to wet weather. With the sale of season tickets the income generated was anticipated to be around £70k.

Members clarified that £10k for 'fee and charges miscellaneous' related to expected income from sale of timber this season and that the cesspit emptying had been completed but the Council had not yet been charged for the work.

AGREED that

1. the Head of Contracts, Leisure, Waste and Environment clarifies to the Committee (by email) details of expenditure for the following:
 - a. printing, stationery and copying – what this referred to
 - b. security services and charges - related to collection of cash from the car park machines and whether the overspend was due to the frequency of collection.
2. the Head of Contracts, Leisure, Waste and Environment includes season tickets income in future 'Finance Update' reports submitted to the Outwoods Management Committee.
3. the report be noted.

5. RANGERS REPORT

A report of the Head Ranger was submitted (item 6 on the agenda). Members welcomed the update and inclusion of pictures.

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

6. A.O.B

Trustees raised the following business in relation to information received from members of the public.

a) Kissing Gate – discussion

Issue raised with motorcycles entering the Outwoods through the gate. The gate had been modified to allow visitors with pushchairs to enter the woods.

- it was a balancing act between enabling access and managing access, but safety of visitors was paramount. Other access gates to the Outwoods were under consideration for being modified.
- the gate could be changed to an open/shut style which would prevent dogs running out and motorcycles entering easily but this would also limit access for wheelchair users. Noted that the footpath from Nanpantan Road was virtually impassable. Examples given of motorcycle barriers being installed but not preventing access in some cases.
- law enforcement options could be considered. Under the existing byelaws dogs should be under control and fines could be levied but this would not be a top priority for the Police.
- CCTV could be implemented. This would require justification that it was proportionate, would be challenging to act on evidence obtained and was not considered appropriate for the Outwoods.
- it was necessary to understand the frequency that this was occurring before considering a resolution.

AGREED that the Rangers be asked to monitor motorcycle access in the Outwoods and that Trustees to collate and share any further reports received from members of the public.

b) Car parking on Woodhouse Lane – discussion

Issue raised of cars parking on the verges and double yellow lines outside the car park on Woodhouse Lane hill.

- it was still a parking infringement if cars parked on verges inside the double yellow lines.
- more enforcement was necessary. This task had been delegated by the County Council to the Borough Council; wardens could be requested to patrol the area, particularly at busy times and issue parking fines, and this could be highlighted on the Council's social media channels.

AGREED that

1. the Wardens be requested to patrol the area more frequently, particularly at busy times and issue parking fines.

2. the Head of Contracts, Leisure, Waste and Environment ask the Communications team to use the Council's social media channels to publicise that parking fines had been issued and to ask visitors to park responsibly.

c) Art Classes – use of the covered outdoor space – discussion

A local artist had asked if they could provide art lessons using the covered outdoor shelter (Barn).

- the outdoor space had been funded by the EU and, as part of its contract, the Council was not allowed to charge for its use in the first five years. It did not have a scheme of charges currently available. It had originally been intended for use as a wedding venue.
- further information was required from the artist as to whether they would be charging for lessons, whether it was a commercial enterprise and what expenses they would incur.

AGREED that

1. the Chair to follow up with the local artist regarding their intentions as detailed above and to circulate the information to the Committee for agreement.
2. the Head of Contracts, Leisure, Waste and Environment to consider a scheme of charges with the possibility of exemptions and to submit options to the Committee at its meeting on 29th January 2025 for agreement.

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).

OFFICER UPDATE REPORT

A. It was proposed that the management aims of the Outwoods Management Plan continue to be reviewed in year 3/4 in order to inform future planning.

7 voted in favour
3 voted against
None abstained

AGREED that the management aims of the Outwoods Management Plan be reviewed in year 3/4 in order to inform future planning.

B. It was proposed that the Outwoods Management Plan be approved subject to the inclusion of amendments agreed during this item and recirculated to the Committee.

10 voted in favour
None voted against
None abstained

AGREED that the Outwoods Management Plan be approved, subject to the inclusion of amendments agreed during this item and recirculated to the Committee.

OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 29th JANUARY 2025

Report of the Head of Contacts, Leisure, Waste and Environment

ITEM 5 OFFICER UPDATE REPORT

Purpose of Report

To update the Outwoods Management Committee on issues raised at previous meetings of the Committee and to bring new issues to the attention of the Committee.

Gate Installation

Officers are intending to design and cost a suitable scheme for submission in line with the Council's Capital Programme deadlines (October 2025). If approved, the funding will be available to complete the works from April 2026.

Communications on Parking Fines

At the previous meeting it was requested that the Council's social media channels be used to publicise issuing of parking fines - this item is outstanding, and an update will follow at the next meeting.

Installation of Signs for High Winds

At the previous meeting it was agreed that the Head of Contracts, Leisure, Waste and Environment investigate the use of signs to indicate the Outwoods was closed when high winds - this item is outstanding, and an update will follow at the next meeting.

Motorcycles Accessing the Woods

Rangers have been asked to monitor the frequency of motorcycles using the woods.

Art Classes

In response to the enquiry to conduct Arts Classes in the Events Barn. It is proposed to allow the artist to conduct 3 trial sessions at no charge, with a charge of £20 per session being charged thereafter.

Charnwood Marathon

In consultation with the Chair, officers have approved an application from Sharwood LDWA Group (Long Distance Association) for a 'Charnwood Marathon' event to traverse the woods on its outbound and inbound route on 22th March 2025. The number of entrants is limited to 300. It is estimated that the participants will be through the woods shortly after 9:00am on the outbound route. They will be dispersed to small numbers on the inbound route.

Drinking Water Tap

The water fountain at the Outwoods regularly suffers from burst pipes when it freezes. When this bursts, the water goes straight into the drain next to it and into the cesspit. This last burst resulted in an additional request to empty the tank. Officers will wait until we're out of the below freezing temperatures, and then make sure the water is isolated to the tap from 1st November in future years.

Felling Update

A verbal update to be provided at the meeting.

Local Government Reorganisation

A verbal update to be provided at the meeting.

Officer to contact: Matthew Bradford
Head of Contracts (Leisure, Waste and Environment)
(01509) 634695
Matthew.bradford@charnwood.gov.uk

OUTWOODS MANAGMENT COMMITTEE – 29th JANUARY 2025

Report of the Head of Contacts, Leisure, Waste and Environment

ITEM 6 FINANCE UPDATE

Purpose of the Report

To update Trustees on finance issues relating to the Outwoods.

2024/25 Year to Date (20/01/25)

The table below provides details of the spend for the year up to 20th January 2025.

Account(T)	Total Spend Inc Commits	Current Orig Budget	Variance
Buildings Repairs and Maintenance	£3,750.00	£5,000.00	£1,250.00
Car Park Machine Purchase, Repairs and Maintenance	£406.00	£1,900.00	£1,494.00
Electrical Work Regulations	£1,125.00	£0.00	£-1,125.00
Grounds General Maintenance	£485.00	£1,600.00	£1,115.00
Fencing and Gates	£0.00	£400.00	£400.00
Seats	£0.00	£400.00	£400.00
Maintenance of Trees and Shrubs	£5,000.00	£4,800.00	£-200.00
GF Electricity	£236.09	£600.00	£363.91
GF Metered Water Charges	£212.16	£500.00	£287.84
GF Unmeasured Water Charges	£0.00	£300.00	£300.00
Equipment Purchases, Repairs and Maintenance	£0.00	£1,000.00	£1,000.00
Signs	£225.00	£800.00	£575.00
Printing, Stationery and Copying	£834.08	£300.00	£-534.08
Security Services and Charges	£1,265.87	£800.00	£-465.87
Promotional Activities	£211.80	£400.00	£188.20
Cesspit Emptying	£0.00	£11,900.00	£11,900.00
MOS Contract - Basic	£105,646.40	£145,100.00	£39,453.60
MOS Contract - Variations	£1,222.74	£1,700.00	£477.26
Grant Contribution	£0.00	£-4,000.00	£-4,000.00
Fees and Charges Miscellaneous	£-1,357.70	£-10,000.00	£-8,642.30
Car Parking Charges	£-49,071.95	£-70,000.00	£20,928.05
Rent General	£-14,950.00	£-14,000.00	£950.00
Controllable	£55,240.49	£79,500.00	£24,259.51

Car Parking Income

Parking Report to follow

Officer to contact: Matthew Bradford
Head of Contracts (Leisure, Waste and Environment)
(01509) 634695
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The Outwoods Quarterly Report

October-December 2024

October



The Green Gym spent the whole of October at the Outwoods, assisting with car park, café and play area improvements as well as light vegetation management.

The first two sessions of the month were assisting the ranger team in their improvements to the fencing around the Café and work yard area, the Green Gym volunteers nailing on rails and digging holes for the 8x8 gate posts, of which saved the ranger team much time and energy.

The 16th saw a big tidy up around the café and events area, new woodchip spread on the path created in the spring, litter picking and scrubbing clean of the outdoor furniture. Due to high numbers of volunteers a small group also went off and took part in Sycamore control within the woodland.

The Green Gym were tasked with shifting 40m³ of play bark from the drop off location in the Outwoods car park to the play area, once offloaded at the play area the bark was then spread around to a depth of between 100-200mm. While shifting bark the volunteers also assisted in removing Fungi from the timber surrounding the play area, this was an almost constant morning task during the month.

Two Fungi Foray walks took place during the half term week, around forty members of the public attended with the Green Gym generously invited to attend.

While a few members joined the walk, others chose to split logs and sever Ivy around the café and play area.



October saw the implementation of the improvements to the car park and café.

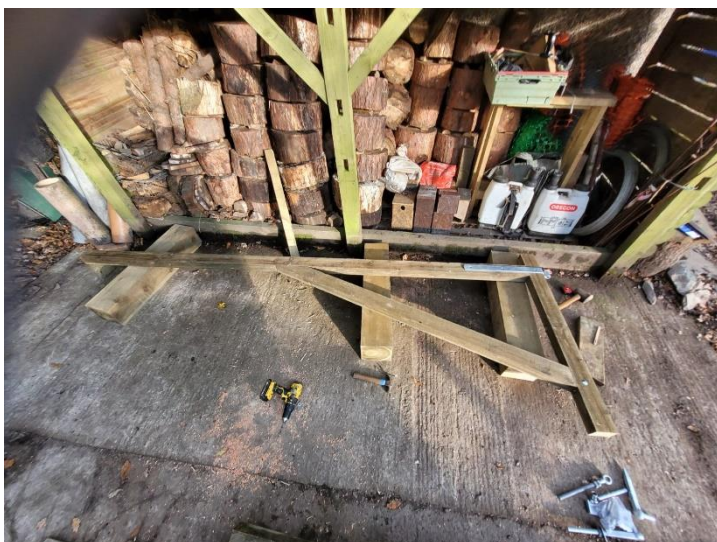
The first point of call was replacing the temporary Heras fencing with new round posts and half rails, this style of fencing is intended to be uniformed with further fencing projects both at the Outwoods and sites throughout the borough.



The metal yard entrance gate was replaced with a timber forester, the angle of this was changed to firstly allow better access to work vehicles but also to 'take out' a parking space and make the gate more visible to the public. Another forester gate was installed behind the rangers shed, this addition, along with the fencing has created a ranger compound between the café space and woodland.



Two timber 'pole gates' were created and installed at the opposite end of the car park, the purpose of these gates is to stop vehicle access to the woodland, either accidental or otherwise but still allowing foot access for the public. These gates are also to stop the public from parking in front of entrances to the woods, improving access for both emergency services and the ranger team.



Stump posts were replaced in front of the ticket machine, with additional posts extending to include the entrance to café and woodland. These posts are in place to protect members of the public while using or queuing for the ticket machine, with their backs to the car park. Additionally, these stump posts stop vehicle access to the café area, unauthorised vehicles were parking up to the café entrance. As well as making the area look untidy, parking in and around the play area and picnic benches was causing a health and safety risk, mainly to small children and dogs who roam freely in what should be a pedestrianised area. Further to this, larger delivery vehicles were causing trip hazards by creating ruts as the ground isn't fit for large vehicles turning, drivers had been seen forcing members of the public to squeeze in between their vehicle to be able to enter/exit the area.



This photograph illustrates how the new bollards have affected the site, without the option of having marked spaces, the bollards have helped to stop cars from parking up to and across the pedestrian entrance. Creating a more defined and safe space to enter and exit the woodland and events space.

The photograph on the right is one example of vehicles parking and blocking the entrance.

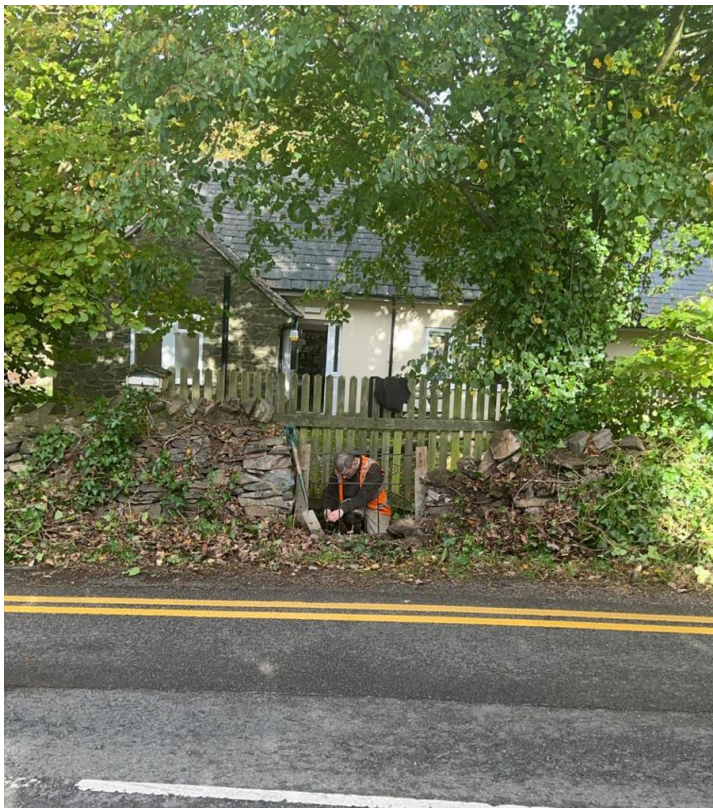


The team also took time to replace damaged or missing stump posts at the opposite side of the car park.

Two further additions have been made to the area, the ranger team creating a covering from recycled material to house the unsightly metal electricity box and the Geopark team have added interpretation panels to the back of the notice board at the opposite side of the car park.



Feedback from the public and café ground staff has been overwhelmingly positive, with the changes making the site tidier and safer. The ranger team exposed the old iron foot entrance gate to the cottage (café), removing Ivy that had smothered both it and the wall, the loose bits of wall either side will be repaired in due course.



While the digger was on site helping to move woodchip, the opportunity to dig out old stumps behind the toilet was too good to miss. The area around the shed and toilets has been tidied up quite considerably, with chip and stone drying up the muddy ground allowing for a better surface to park vehicles if need be.

One final job for the digger was to expose the stone pile behind the toilets. It was thought this area could be levelled to become an orchard, however as the digger moved through the pile it was full of nice building stone! Apparently, the stone was from the previous dry-stone wall at the entrance to the car park/cottage, this pile had unfortunately been lost in the undergrowth but can now be used in future dry-stone wall and culvert repairs.



Despite positive changes there has been some anti-social behaviour, possibly due to the pot hills being filled, car park has been used numerous times during the evenings for 'drifting' but more seriously the rangers shed was broken into with several pieces of machinery stolen and so far, unrecovered.



Sunday the 20th of October the Outwoods closed from 1pm in the afternoon until the following morning due to high winds. No major damage to report, several trees were reported damaged in the depths of the woodland, but thankfully they were away from high usage areas.



November

The Green Gym started their woodland management programme in November. First point of call was Rhododendron, Holly and Sycamore removal in the Outwoods, carrying on where the team left off the previous season in the conservation area. Vegetation is dug up and burnt on small, controlled fires close to where the plants are removed, eradicating need to transport material around the woodland.

Whilst much of the month was woodland management, the team did mix things up by undertaking Ivy control near the café. Ivy being cut, cleared and then severed along the wall line to reduce stress and sail effect on trees around the café and playground. Whilst clearing away the tangle of Ivy, damaged Hawthorns appeared and were then dealt with by the ranger team.

November was another busy month for The Outwoods, high winds closing the woods on the 23rd and 24th. No major damage was reported, however as usual with high winds in The Outwoods, many of the Birch that are abundant throughout the woodland snap or fall. The ranger team, operating within their skillset, making trees safe that are in high usage areas. As there are many unofficial but highly used areas of the woodland, the team must assess what can be left to become habitat and what must be dealt with.





A windblown Silver Birch was spotted over a main path during weekend patrols, the area was taped off until the Arb team could attend and deal with the tree safely during the week.

The ranger team gave the car park and café area yet another tidy up. This time focusing on fallen leaves, high use areas such as the toilets, machine and play area are kept on top of during late autumn but once most remaining leaves have dropped by late November, a team effort is required to remove these from the other areas. If left to build up the leaves will eventually rot down, whilst in this process the leaves themselves will be a slip hazard until they eventually make a muddy mess in areas that benefit from being kept tidy, from the play area and café to the bin compound and ranger's yard.

Thinning of Silver Birch started in the woodland, around 30% of the Birch felled, including haloing Oak and creating small glades/open areas where appropriate. Majority of the brash created is being burnt on site whilst some is being left as habitat piles within the compartment. Recommended deadwood to be left in the area is 23m³ per hectare, timber has been cut and piled with a view to potentially being used as post and rail fencing to prevent desire lines from being used.



December

December brought more unstable weather to The Outwoods, with storm Darragh gusting at 60mph for around 48 hours. The woods were closed from 4pm Friday until around 9am Monday morning, despite the car park gates being closed it was known that public were persistent on using the site for their daily walks. Jubilee footpath is a right of way, but it is thought that adding gates to the other two pedestrian entrances as well as adding adequate signage will reduce the amount of people within the woodland and therefore reduce risk of an incident happening.

'Not as bad as we thought' was the saying of the day from both staff and public the following Monday. Having said this, it was a day's work for the ranger team to either tidy and make safe several trees, mostly Birch or standing dead wood that had previously been left to stand close to main paths. It was noted that some Birches and an Oak had been uprooted and knocked over within the woodland, thankfully these were in low use areas and can

be left to create new habitat. Fallen trees will open the canopy, thus allowing light to the woodland floor and the cracks created in the timber will make potential roosting habitat for mammals such as the Brown Long Eared bat that was found looking for a home in the gent's toilet during the summer.



There was yet another weekend closure for high winds, gusting over 40mph across the weekend of the 21st and 22nd, the woods reopened on the Monday morning, safety checks resulting in another morning clearing debris. This time a tree falling and smashing itself through the conservation area fencing. The fencing was repaired on a foggy Boxing Day by the team.



December also brought a flock of sheep to the woods, the ranger team alerting the farmer who herded them back to his land, the team were informed that the herd most likely either escaped through weak winter hedges or a member of the public had left a farm gate open. Entrance to the woods themselves was through the gap left by the Nanpantan kissing gate which was removed the previous winter.

A deer was reported to the café as being in distress, the ranger team located the deer and found it to be a deceased Muntjac Fawn, this was removed by the team.

The year was seen out with one further high wind event, New Years Eve saw the woodland and café closed for a final time in 2024.

The Outwoods closed to high winds for 7 days total this quarter.