

**OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
29TH JANUARY 2025**

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

Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment  
Contracts Manager  
Senior Green Spaces Officer

Charnwood Forest Programme Manager (GeoPark)  
Democratic Services Officer (NC)

APOLOGIES: GM

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING & MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th October 2024 were agreed.

Matters arising:

Final paragraph, page 3 of the agenda – query regarding bedding down of rocks on the footpath adjacent to Jubilee Wood and whether the laying down of finer aggregate had been agreed at the previous meeting. The Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment agreed to investigate the costs of using finer aggregate to remedy the difficulty of walking on the footpath and determine if within budget.

*CN joined at the meeting.*

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.
- (iii) RB who farms land adjacent to the Outwoods.

3. GEOPARK UPDATE

Julie Attard, Charnwood Forest Programme Manager, attended the meeting to give a progress update on the GeoPark and activities undertaken by the Landscape Partnership Scheme since she last attended an Outwoods Management Committee meeting (18th October 2023).

Her update covered three themes, 'Explore', 'Public Engagement' and 'Understand' and she noted that the scheme had obtained an extension for completion to December 2026 to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on project delivery.

*During this item Cllr D Taylor joined the meeting.*

Direct aspects of the projects highlighted that included the Outwoods were as follows:

- a new footpath created between the Beacon and the Outwoods was being well used.
- plans to improve the Moat Road footpath to the Outwoods were in development.
- public transport feasibility study planned to determine if seasonal buses could be employed around the GeoPark (including the Outwoods).
- creation of info hubs, repurposing of a notice board in the Outwoods carpark and using metal gabions for interpretation panels.
- Found Sound project inspired by the Charnia fossil and sounds within the Charnwood Forest.
- apprenticeship level 2 stone mason (drystone walls) to be redeployed to other areas of the GeoPark including the Outwoods.
- project by the Leicestershire Victoria County Trust looking at how Nanpantan and the Outwoods were tourist attractions in 19<sup>th</sup> century. Once data was available an update could be provided to the Committee.

In conclusion she updated the Committee on the progress of the application for UNESCO global GeoPark status. The Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment noted that the Council was working with partners and the Landscape Partnership to determine how the aspiring GeoPark could be financially supported once the Heritage Lottery funding had ended. One option under consideration was a collecting a small parking levy from honeypot sites to divert directly to the GeoPark.

Summary of discussion:

- public transport to the Outwoods had been raised previously and that the provision of a shuttle bus would be welcomed.
- the project by the Leicestershire Victoria County Trust would be of significant interest to relevant Ward borough councillors and residents could get involved. The County Trust were appealing for volunteers and contact details could be exchanged outside the meeting.
- the Walking Trails map was not available electronically but contact details could be exchanged outside the meeting to obtain paper copies.

The GeoPark website and social media channels could provide further information and included news, events and a monthly video update.

<https://www.charnwoodforest.org/>

**AGREED** that

1. the Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment liaise with the Charnwood Forest Programme Manager and Communications team to organise for the slide presentation be shared with all councillors and officers;

2. the Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment to provide updates to the Committee regarding financial / legacy schemes for the GeoPark once the lottery funding had ended with specific reference to any impact on the Outwoods.
3. The presentation and update be noted.

#### 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 provided a summary of key points in the report as follows:

- a scheme for installation of gates and crocodile teeth at the entrance to the woods was to be submitted to the Council for capital approval as it was not possible to fund this through revenue. The Council's capital programme was reviewed on a two-yearly basis, so the submitted scheme would be assessed in October 2025 and if approved, start in April 2026.
- using the Council's social media to publicise the issuing of parking fines would be followed up after the meeting. Enforcement wardens had been active on Woodhouse Lane, and although it was currently a quiet period for visitors, parking on verges appeared to be lessening.
- more robust signs to indicate the closure of the woods due to high winds were being investigated. The Outwoods had been closed relatively frequently during this Winter season.
- information regarding the frequency of motorcycles accessing the woods was pending. Once the frequency had been assessed, enforcement activities could be considered. Noted that enforcement would be limited, and the police would be the most appropriate agency to provide support for this.
- the Council's current fee schedule for holding events was mainly focussed on one-off events and the proposed art classes would be of a regular (albeit seasonal) occurrence. In consultation with the Chair, it had been agreed to charge as outlined in the report. It was noted that the Chair could contact the Bradgate Park Trust to compare charges as it was known that art classes were being held in the park.
- it had been necessary to make a quick decision to approve an application from Sharwood LDWA group for a 'Charnwood Marathon' which had been obtained through consultation with the Chair.
- the forestry company that had been engaged to complete this season's tree felling had not been successful at the waiver stage of procurement so this year's planned tree felling phase would not occur. A tender process would be initiated late Spring / early Summer to proceed with the next phase of tree felling in winter 2025/26 as the window for felling trees this season had now closed.

- an explanation of the planned local government reorganisation was provided, and Trustees were assured that the work of the Committee would continue but possibly under a different organisation. Future updates would be provided.

Summary of discussion:

- any charges for events held in the Outwoods would be reviewed regularly, possibly on an annual basis. The art classes were expected to be for a small number of delegates who would pay for their car parking and any charges made by the Council would cover its own expenses.
- the organisers of the Charnwood Marathon would not be charged for access into the Outwoods and any fees taken from participants by the organisers would be for supporting a number of charities. This would be the first time the marathon had accessed the woods, the event would be monitored, and the rangers made aware. Signs would be installed in the Outwoods car park on the event day.
- advice had been sought regarding the minimum wind speed at which the Outwoods would be closed; this was wind gusts above 40mph. The café also had to close which, although frustrating, was part of the café lease arrangements. The number of closures had not been historically monitored but anecdotally the number this year seemed high. The Council had a corporate responsibility to keep visitors safe.

**AGREED** that

1. the Head of Contracts, Leisure, Waste and Environment to update the Committee regarding:
  - a. the installation of the gates and crocodile teeth scheme prior to its submission;
  - b. new closure signs for the high winds,
  - c. frequency of motorcycles spotted in the Outwoods by rangers,
  - d. Charnwood Marathon event,
  - e. local government re-organisation.
2. the Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment to progress the utilisation of the Council's social media to publicise the issuing of parking fines at the Outwoods;
3. the artist be allowed to conduct art classes in the Events Barn, conducting 3 trial sessions at no charge, with a charge of £20 per session being charged thereafter;
4. the water from the fountain to be isolated to the tap from 1st November in future years;
5. 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 provided a brief overview, noting that the tree felling income included in the finances would not be achieved, the café rent had been underbudgeted for, and that the full year's draft outturn would be available for the Committee to consider at its next meeting.

The car parking income information was circulated at the meeting. There was a slight drop in income in the third quarter which could be due to several factors, including more walkers, higher parking charges and storms.

In response to questions the Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment stated that:

- the installation of a second pay machine was in progress. He noted that the team were aware of the time delays in card payment processing and that they were notified if the machine was out of order.
- payment for cesspit emptying would be followed up outside the meeting. The café also contributed towards the costs.
- further clarification for the cost of 'printing stationery and copying' and 'fees and charges miscellaneous' would be provided after the meeting.

**AGREED** that:

1. the Head of Contracts, Leisure, Waste and Environment clarifies the cost of 'printing stationery and copying' and 'fees and charges miscellaneous' (see *below*);
2. the report be noted.

#### POST MEETING NOTE:

Fees and Charges Miscellaneous -£1357.70

-£1357.70 – Compensation received for damages caused by the skip lorry incursion in the woods.

Printing, Stationery and Copying £834.08

£432.48 amendment of parking signs to show new tariffs

£236.00 printing of new parking permits

£145.00 car park ticket rolls

#### 6. RANGERS REPORT

A report of the Head Ranger was submitted (item 7 on the agenda). Members thanked the Ranger for a comprehensive report.

In response to questions the Head of Contracts, Leisure, Waste and Environment stated that:

- the fencing around the ranger's store opposite the café had been replaced.

- the garage was not fit for purpose and beyond repair. A bid would be submitted to the Council's capital programme to replace it as it was required for storage and a welfare facility for rangers and volunteers.
- the sheep that had accessed the Outwoods through the gap left by the removal of the Nanpantan kissing gate had first escaped from a nearby farmer's field.

Trustees discussed the need for a type of closure to be installed in the gap left by the removal of the Nanpantan kissing gate to deter motorcycles, dogs running into fields and sheep, but recognised the original purpose for its removal in allowing wider access from the Nanpantan footpath for buggies. Options included the installation of width restrictors, but as these tended to be urban, they would not fit the look of the Outwoods or some kind of self-closing swing gate.

**AGREED** that:

1. the Head of Contracts, Leisure, Waste and Environment investigates options for installing a gate in the gap left by the removal of the Nanpantan kissing gate for the Committee's consideration at its next meeting;
2. the report be noted and circulated to all councillors after the meeting.

7. A.O.B

There was no other business.

## **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**

It was proposed that the artist who wished to conduct art classes in the Events Bar be allowed to conduct 3 trial sessions at no charge, with a charge of £20 per session being charged thereafter.

12 voted in favour  
None voted against  
None abstained

**AGREED** that the artist who has proposed to conduct art classes in the Events Bar be allowed to conduct 3 trial sessions at no charge, with a charge of £20 per session being charged thereafter.