

Stoke St Michael Woodland Group: Parish Council Report Thursday 21st April 2022

Presented by: Simon Clarke Chair of the Woodland Group CIO.

Following the successful scrub cutting and forest school activities undertaken in the winter of 2019 to raise the profile of the Wood as an asset for the village and communities around, public facing activity in the Stoke St Michael Wood was sadly then put on hold due to the covid pandemic. However, throughout the pandemic the woodland group (with support from the parish) ensured the site could be visited and used and valued by all. We are pleased to say that the woodland group is now fully up and running and looking at new opportunities to engage with the public and encourage the woodland to be used.

1. The CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation):

The CIO has now been established with key roles of trustees, chair, and treasurer in place. We welcomed our new treasurer Angela Crowley in September of last year.

2. Bank Account:

One of Angela's first roles was to complete the paperwork around a new bank account for the CIO. The paperwork for this has now been completed and submitted. We are awaiting account details. Once the bank account is up and running the CIO will be able to apply for its own grants and funding for activity within the woodland.

3. Health & Safety:

We continue to monitor the woodland monthly to ensure that all access routes and site furniture (e.g., gates) are safe and secure. There have been no issues identified. During January, a tree safety survey (with PC funding) was undertaken by Simon Scotting Tree Consultancy. No issues were identified within the woodland. It was advised that an Ash Dieback survey in the summer (when trees are in leaf) to assess the prevalence of dieback within the woodland. A cost for this additional survey work will be requested.

4. Footpath Maintenance:

During 2021 the woodland group was able to maintain footpaths through voluntary cutting. This was by a trained operator. We hope to continue this work over the next season again using trained volunteers and working in partnership with the PC footpaths officer. Western Power have also cut a ride through the centre of the wood below power cables, and this is now extensively used by walkers as well as a range of wildlife.

5. Improving biodiversity within the woodland.

To improve the age structure of the woodland a number of small trees have been identified for felling. It was originally planned to fell these in late February/early March, but this was delayed due to winter storms and will now take place in the autumn/winter. With generous support from the PC the woodland group were also able to purchase over two hundred hedging plants alongside wildflower seed and five hundred woodland plug plants. These were planted out in a village planting day on the 19th of March. As well as providing diversity, and food and shelter for wildlife the new plants (particularly a 50-metre section of hedgerow trees) will also lock up carbon as they grow, so beneficial to fighting climate change.

6. Community Events:

The woodland group are planning for a new series of community events over the coming year, we hope the first of these will be as part of the Queens Jubilee Celebrations in June.