

## FOLW AGM – 13<sup>th</sup> April 2023 – Site Wardens Report

**1. This report covers the period since the 2022 AGM**– We have had five Site Wardens working as Greensand Trust Volunteers, along with two enthusiastic volunteer litter pickers, Gill and Andrew who also keep a watchful eye on the woodland. We welcomed Philip to our Site Warden team during the summer. Between us we have made some 303 visits to the woodland taking approximately 530 volunteer hours.

### **2. The Team Dealt with:-**

- a. Litter – Overall we collected around 75 black plastic bags of litter. We are also aware that some of our regular visitors collect litter when they find it. So fortunately, with frequent patrols, the woodland usually appears free of litter.
- b. Signs of drug related activity have been found but fortunately we have not had any needles left behind. One site of activity has been reported to the police, but the local PCSO stated it was a low priority at present.
- c. Pumpkins seem to be increasingly left in the woodland as the years go by. Several were cleared away. They are heavy to carry away and take ages to rot down.
- d. Incidents we dealt with included:-
  - Eight bonfire sites were dealt with and tidied up around the area of them.
  - 6 tree shelters or dens, were dismantled by the Wardens. All these structures are deemed unsafe for other users. We do not want other young children to enter dens which may then fall down onto them.
  - The Wardens dealt with approximately 30 incidents of small fallen branches or trees. There were several large branches felled by the winds and storms, fortunately most of these fell away from the paths, but in June our Ranger had to deal with a larger branch of an Oak tree which had fallen onto the metal fence over the southern railway tunnel entrance. Many large twigs were brought down by the winds requiring some tidying up to clear the footpaths.
  - In April 2022 Ranger John Creasey was able to install a replacement board for the interpretation panel at Alwins Field entrance. In April 2022 the Knaves Hill entrance noticeboard had rotten posts and was pulled over by someone. Similarly in December the old noticeboard at the Stoke Road layby entrance was pulled over. Ranger Gary was eventually able to install new noticeboards at both locations.
  - While push bikes are legally allowed on the bridleway, and on the cycleway from Alwins gate to Stoke Road, we do still get the odd one causing a nuisance elsewhere, and Site Wardens will on occasion speak to the people involved, although the signage in the woodland is still unclear, and needs re-visiting, some signs have been removed by visitors.
  - Horses were seen in the woodland on more than one occasion and dealt with.
  - In January a motorbike was found abandoned in the woodland having been driven off the track and left amongst the trees. This was reported to the police who came and collected it with some difficulty.

### 3. Contractor Activity –

In April Contractors worked over the southern railway tunnel entrance to control the ground cover plants and improve the soil strength on the embankment with Hessian matting. There was some work carried out in October at the EE radio mast and a Portaloo was installed temporarily at the Stoke Road Cycleway entrance. No problems were encountered.

**5. Wildlife** - The Rookery reached its peak of 54 nests in 2009, before the shooters arrived in the biomass field, which has since become a field for sheep. After they left, the considerably reduced Rookery made a good recovery with 34 nests in 2016. Since then, it has declined again, but recently we have found 9 nests. So hopefully the Rookery will continue. However, the new nests are in tall trees more to the centre of the woodland. We continue to have reported sightings of deer, and foxes, and some Badger activity continues.

Seven years ago, I asked Steve Halton if Local Nature Reserve Status was possible for the woodland. It is hoped that both the Ancient Woodland and the new woodland will both gain Local Nature Reserve status this year to give it further protection. Steve Halton has been guiding it through the legal mine field, and it is now back in Steve's large "In Tray" for the completion of the final stages.

**6. Visitors**- My wife Sue and I have counted the number of people we have seen during our visits since 2007. The results in the table below show the number seen per visit averaged over each year:-

Year	2007	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19/21	2022
Adults	2.7	3.5	6.4	6.0	9.2	8.7	8.4	8.5	9.2	9.1	9.3	9.0	15.5	14.5
Children	0.9	0.3	1.0	0.6	1.5	0.7	1.6	1.8	1.5	1.9	2.2	1.5	3.1	2.3
Dogs	2.0	3.0	3.9	4.5	5.7	5.8	5.4	4.9	6.5	6.0	5.1	5.9	8.4	6.8

The increase in the number of adults and dogs visiting the woodland since CBC brought the wood in 2009, has continued, although slightly less than during the Covid period. Users are mainly dog walkers who seem happy to contend with the increasingly muddy paths. It is good to see children in the wood, particularly well-behaved ones. Unfortunately, this high footfall has increased the mud and seems to have reduced the wildlife being seen. There are a number of people who just use the Alwins gate to Stoke Road path as a means of reaching the canal or for walking or cycling into town.

### Overall, a busy year.

Could I finish by thanking our previous Ranger John Creasey for his continued interest in the woodland as the CBC woodland manager. Thanks must go to Ranger Jennifer Curtiss who was with us from May until the end of November 2022. Also, thanks go to Ranger Gary Peach who took over from Jennifer, for his patience, sense of humour and support throughout the period to all his Volunteer Site Wardens.

**Compiled for the 2023 AGM by Dave Booth**