

FOLW AGM – 1st May 2025 – Site Wardens Report

1. This report covers the period since the 2024 AGM– We have had eight Site Wardens working as Greensand Trust Volunteers, who also keep a watchful eye on the woodland. Health issues reduced the contribution from two of them. Between us we have made around 300 visits to the woodland taking approximately 500 volunteer hours. This has meant dealing with the very muddy conditions under foot due to the considerable wet period starting early last year. Rainfall figures are recorded on the FOLW website.

2. The Team Dealt with:-

- a.** Litter – Overall we collected around 55 black plastic bags of litter, including many old redundant tree guards no longer needed by the trees. Thanks to Wardens Gill, Andrew and Philip for collecting most of it. 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. The mud has also reduced the number of visitors, see later.
- b.** Incidents we dealt with included:-

- In October I came across a man who had fallen in the mud and was unable to get up. I was able to get him up and, on his way, uninjured. However, the question of someone without a smart phone being able to call for help and identify their location to the emergency services was raised. The idea of using What 3 Words App to identify any fixed object in the woodland which could be of use in an emergency. This resulted in Gill and Philip surveying the woodland locations and I obtained self-adhesive labels which Philip then installed. Thanks to Alltech Signs of Leighton Buzzard for a speedy production of the labels. Hopefully no such emergencies occur.

- Three bonfire sites were dealt with and tidied up around them.

- Ten 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 collapse onto them. Thanks to Warden Philip for dealing with most of them.

- Many occasions of fly tipping in the Stoke Road laybys were reported to CBC by Gill.

- The Wardens, again mainly Philip, dealt with some 30 incidents of small fallen branches or trees. There were several large branches felled by the winds and several storms which seem more frequent. Many large twigs were brought down by the winds requiring some tidying up to clear the footpaths. A large Beech fell behind Stoke Road layby which was removed by a CBC contractor.

- Two steps leading from the Stoke Road Layby rotted away and Gary and his team replaced them.

- The Conservation Sign at the entrance to the old wood from the radio masts path was vandalised by being smashed off its posts and required a new backing board being made and fitted by myself.

- The Stoke layby entrance to the old wood had paint sprayed graffiti all over the new noticeboard, the older noticeboard, the gate and the CBC Welcome sign. I managed to get John Connew from LLTC to clean as much as possible off with his cleaning method. This left the CBC Welcome Sign to sort out. This I arranged, fitted and donated a new self-adhesive vinyl face to, making it look original again. Thanks to Alltech Signs of Leighton Buzzard for a speedy production of the vinyl sign.

- The Stoke Road cycleway CBC Welcome sign has been graffitied twice recently, which I have managed to clean.
- There were two balloons stuck high in the trees which were recovered, by Gary and the team.
- There were several larger items collected including a supermarket trolley, a large tarpaulin with rope at one den site, and a large generator and fuel container, which was removed by Ranger Gary for re use no doubt.

3. Contractor Activity – During August and September 2024 we had Network Rail contractors working over the northern railway tunnel entrance to control the tree growth, to avoid structural problems with the tunnel and embankments. Unfortunately, the very muddy paths were damaged by their equipment making them even more difficult to use.

5. Wildlife - The Rookery reached its peak of 54 nests in 2009, before the shooters arrived in the biomass field, which has since returned to farming. The number of nests then steadily declined, made worse by the loss of some of the mature trees that they had used. In 2024 we had a total of eight nests, but this year no nest sites have been created yet. We continue to have reported sightings of Muntjac, Roe, and occasional Chinese Water Deer, Foxes, and some Badger activity continues. Butterfly and other insect numbers have reduced over the years, hopefully they will increase in future. Warden Gill and her team of vols are currently undertaking a new Butterfly survey to establish some new records to compare with previous records from 2007 to 2014. Efforts to develop new areas for wildlife continue. 18 species of plant life were counted by warden Judith at the Knaves Hill entrance triangle in June 2024.

6. Visitors- My wife Sue and I have counted the number of people we have seen during our visits since 2007. Philip and Gill are also now counting visitors too. The results in the table below show the number of visitors seen per visit averaged over each year:-

Year	2007	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19/21	22	23	24
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	10.6	6.6
Young	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	3.2	1.0
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	4.6	3.9

The lower footfall is probably due to the weather and ground conditions. Although we still have more visitors than before CBC brought the woodland in 2009. Many of these visitors are found on the hard surface paths between Alwyns Gate and Stoke Road cycleway entrance.

Overall, a busy if muddy year.

Could I finish by thanking our GST Ranger Gary Peach for his patience and support through the year to all his site warden team. Also, our thanks go to John Creasey at CBC the woodland manager, for his continued interest and support.

Compiled for the 2025 AGM by Dave Booth