

## FoLW minutes from AGM, 15 April 2026

Committee members:

John Creasey – CBC representative

Gary Peach- GST Ranger

Brenda Harvey – chair

Magdalena Cosgrave - secretary

Colin Porter – treasurer

Judith Knight – membership sec

Mike Sumpter – IT manager

Ken Barry – publicity

Dave Booth – historian and archivist

Wardens:

Philip Braybrook; Jan Roberts; Judith Knight; Gill King; Andrew King

Philip Braybrook and Mike Sumpter – Facebook managers

1. Apologies: Brenda Harvey, Magdalena Cosgrave, Ken Barry.

18 members attended.

2. The minutes of the previous AGM, 1/5/2025, were approved

3. Gary gave a review of activities

Rangers report April 2025-March 2026

Starting in April last year, work was carried out by the Thursday group to try and improve the drainage of the radio mast access track, in particular the section by the newly cleared wildflower/grassland area. I'm pleased to say that this has proved successful this year and will be monitored going forward.

Other work has seen volunteers coppice the Hazel above the Willow field and above the Hazel plantation at the western end of the new wood. The plan is to mirror the wild grassland area on the opposite side of the path here. A number of large dead Larch and Ash trees were felled and piled in this area and several others have been felled around the site where they posed significant risk (for example at path junctions or over paths or benches). Volunteers have also undertaken ride widening of the horse loop path from the newly cleared area round to the corner adjacent to the reservoir.

With regards Ash suffering from dieback, after discussions with CBC, permission was sought to remove a large area of dead Ash along the main ride near the 5 ways junction. This has taken a considerable amount of work and at times in some challenging weather and ground conditions.

Further benches have been installed in the gladed areas at the western end of the site and at Knaves hill entrance.

As with previous years several days were spent cutting back Brambles to encourage Bluebell growth in the old wood. Two youth ranger tasks have taken place in the early part of this year with work concentrating on widening the path between the main ride and the entrance to the old wood. The individuals involved did this off their own back and their enthusiasm showed through.

Unsurprisingly as with every winter the ground conditions have been challenging to say the least, that said. The hardcore that was distributed around the site courtesy of CBC did seem to make a difference in areas that had been troublesome in previous years.

And on that I should like to thank all of the volunteers who really have gone above and beyond with the time spent on site this year not just with me but also off their own back to create the areas I have just mentioned. Also a word of thanks to the site wardens who keep the place in such good condition and make my life easier meaning I can concentrate on the bigger jobs on site.

4 Colin distributed copies of the accounts. There has not been much change in either income or expenditure compared with last year, though the subscription income has decreased. Future subscriptions must be by bank transfer or cheque – not cash. (This will be noted on the subscription renewal form when sent.) We were fortunate in being selected as one of Waitrose's charities in their token scheme and will be receiving approx £1000. We should also receive money under the SANG scheme to fund the development of our website.

5. Mike reported on the progress of the new website and showed a mock-up of some of the new structure. It looks good and has been hard work. Once the new website design is finalised it can be modified/tweaked by the webmaster in the usual way. Thanks are due to Mike.

6. There was discussion regarding publicity. FoLW *events* are well covered by Facebook and on the website. It was decided not to advertise general information about the group in the "Bee Local" which seems rather costly. Many people join local voluntary groups by seeing posters; we should probably put more posters in community notice boards, supermarket local information spaces and try to get in LLTC's "About town" magazine. Anyone wishing to assist or with new ideas about publicity – *please* contact us.

7. Philip spoke about the usage of our Facebook site which has seen an increase in activity for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year: 90 posts up from 60 in 23/24, and Facebook membership has increased by 14%. In addition to updates on activities, action days and photographs, there are now weather/rainfall updates provided by Dave Booth who has also provided "Then and now" information, showing changes in and around the wood over time. The cover photos on our FB are not static; they are regularly changed to show the diverse

areas of the wood and the changing seasons. Some posts are shared with other local FB groups, such as the Leighton Linslade Grapevine and Everything Leighton Buzzard. In turn we have shared posts on our page from other groups such as the GST, CBC, LLTC, the National Trust and Butterfly Conservation. Our FB page also will direct people to the new website.

8. We have 63 people on the FoLW mailing list; these include three honorary Life members. Only 18 of the 63 are actually “paid-up Friends” – many of whom add an extra donation. It would be good to get more actual members as a greater membership can add weight to an organisation, especially when it is fighting a nearby development or pushing for environmental change.

Re flora and fauna: 63 species of bird have been recorded in the Woods since the last AGM, and 8 species of mammals. We need more plant records, and Judith will investigate sending out a plea to members to record the plants they see in May (with approximate site). If this trial goes well, it could be done regularly to get an idea of trends more scientifically. (NB Judith will be away from the 26 April for a week, so the plant request may need to be deferred till June – apologies).

9. Dave spoke about the compilation of the “Wishes for consideration by the CBC management plan”, which evolved partly as a response to increased footfall, and hopefully it will influence the CBC “Linslade Wood and Bluebell Wood CWS Enhancement Plan”

10. In the absence of some committee members, no changes were suggested for a new committee.

11. Gill gave a very informative talk on the Butterfly Survey which she has organised. Originally there were 6 transects and now 5, covered by regular enthusiastic recorders, usually once a week during the season. The early days of the survey tested methods, and the surveyors familiarised themselves with the butterflies and day-flying moths. For 2025 there are 30 weeks’ worth of data and a remarkable 26 species recorded. Thank you, Gill.

12. AOB. There was discussion of a possible suitable site for another pond; serious investigation needs to be done to ensure that any construction/digging would cause minimal disruption to all species of wildlife.

13. The date for the 2027 AGM will be arranged later in the year

The meeting closed at 9 pm