

Update on Community Woodland

Geoffrey and I visited the Community Woodland on 2 December 2016.



- A - cleared previously
- B - trees largely died
- C - many brambles
- D - footpath
- E - mown path

1. **Area A:** the trees in this area are doing well. We need to keep an eye in case grass and brambles need to be cut back again.
2. **Area B:** a number of trees have died. I can't tell if these were ash trees killed by ash die back disease or were killed by something else. I have also discussed this with Sam Riley. He may be able to tell the cause of death from a photograph and can advise on replanting. We might also want to seek advice from Riki Therivel or Andy Gunn.
3. **Area C:** overrun by brambles, threatening the saplings.
4. **Area D:** the hedges along the footpath leading from the road need cutting back. The Parish contractors could do this alongside their regular work.
5. **Mowing:** Sanny is the volunteer who mows the paths. We confirmed with him where to mow, specifically:

- to leave the brambles around the pylon, to discourage anyone from climbing
 - to continue to mow the path (E), and possibly extend to the other side of area C
6. **Bench:** I will confirm with Hilary Briffett that she will continue to keep the area around the bench tidied.
7. **BBOWT:** Andy Gunn would like to talk to the PC about the possibility of more links between BBOWT and the PC regarding the woodland and Happy Valley. It may be possible to invite him to the February meeting.

Key issue

- In 2016, volunteers cleared around half the woodland of brambles (area A). Area C was not cleared. Here brambles are rampant and will kill the trees unless removed.
- It would be a disappointment to lose half the woodland given the time and money invested by the Parish to date.
- It is important to sort this before the Spring when the brambles will grow and birds will nest.
- I have spoken to Sam Riley (the Forestry Commission Local Officer) who advises that the only way to deal with brambles is by carefully cutting them back around each sapling.
- The task is too big to be completed by volunteers alone.

Suggestions for discussion

- I have obtained an estimate from Oxfordshears for bramble removal, see below. Tyff Williams, the director of Oxfordshears, has worked for us. She is qualified and reliable.
- The estimated cost is significant. Before proceeding we would need to get another two estimates.
- With the help of volunteers, the cost would be lower. I have spoken to Andy Gunn (BBOWT) who is happy to help and offered to involve BBOWT volunteers. I hope to arrange a site visit with him before the PC meeting. We would also try to involve volunteers from the Parish.
- We have an annual grant from the Forestry Commission. The grant is valued in Euros so fluctuates according to the exchange rate but for 2015-16 it was £240.68 and for 2016-17 it's more like £220.
- We have a Restricted Reserve for the woodland of £3,632.21.

I would like to propose:

1. We engage a suitably qualified person to clear the woodland of brambles. We are obliged to obtain a further two estimates. I will attempt to obtain these in time for the PC meeting on Monday. If I do not have them by then I would like the PC to agree in principle, so we can proceed asap. There are only 22 days between the Feb PC meeting and 1st of March after which hedge cutting is not permitted.
2. We amend the 2016-17 budget as it at present only provides for £500 to be spent on the woodland.

I reiterate this is urgent. If not done before spring nesting and growth spurt a significant part of the woodland will be lost.

[https://www.gov.uk/guidance/countryside-hedgerows-regulation-and-management:](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/countryside-hedgerows-regulation-and-management)

“You must not do any work which might harm nesting birds or destroy their nests. You’ll usually find nesting birds during the main nesting period from 1 March to 31 August”.

3. We add cutting back and clearing footpath D (on the map) to the work for the maintenance contractor.
4. We invite Andy Gunn to our Feb meeting. He has offered help and advice.

Maggie Rawcliffe
January 2017

Forestry Commission contact information

Sam Riley

Sam.riley@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Forestry Commission

South East and London Area Office

Bucks Horn Oak

Farnham

Surrey

GU10 4LS

0300 067 4420

General enquiries southeast.fce@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Oxfordshears Quotation

QUOTE

Date 12/12/2016
From **Oxfordshears Ltd**
To Maggie Rawcliffe
Pin Farm Cottage
Barleycott Lane
South Hinksey
OX1 5BB



Details

Quotation (seen on Friday 9/12/16)

Remove brambles from around the trees in the woodland (South Hinksey)
Waste will not be removed but will be stacked neatly for wildlife habitats
Max 4 days labour @ £175.00 per day.

NB: Maxium 4 days labour, if work is completed in under for days you will only be charged for the laboured hours.

Quote Total £700.00

Contact: info@oxfordshears.co.uk 07581 350 746

Oxfordshears Ltd 3 Farriers Road, Chipping Norton, OX7 7EU Company Reg: 10400895