

Notes of a quarterly site meeting at Chilswell Copse, Thursday 13th February 2020

Present:

Andy Gunn, Berkshire Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)

Christine Chater (South Hinksey parish councillor)

Maggie Rawcliffe (South Hinksey Parish Council Woodland Committee)

Geoffrey Ferres (Clerk, South Hinksey Parish Council).

1. Before the start of the site meeting, Andy noticed a roe deer among the trees, yet another reminder of the issue of protecting trees from deer that the Forestry Commission's Sam Riley has highlighted. With Ted's assistance, the deer was chased away.
2. Andy had circulated a written report shortly before the meeting and copies were available.
3. No parishioners attended the work party Andy called at short notice on 18th January 2020. Three volunteers from Wild Oxford helped to fell several small ash trees for two hours.

Replanting

4. Andy proposed a work day for 14th March 2020 to fell an area of ash which will then be replanted with a mixture of Lime, Birch, Alder, Oak and Hazel that he would source from Murray Maclean in Frilford.

Action: Andy

5. Andy's plan is that the diseased ash will be felled and the woodland restocked with a native mix over the next three years. Andy will mark the trees to be felled this year.
6. Andy has discussed this with Forestry Commission officer Sam Riley and he is happy with this proposal: 100 trees will be planted this year and protected using cardboard tree guards (an alternative to plastic).
7. Maggie Rawcliffe suggested White Poplar and Andy said Black Poplar might be a good idea too. Maggie also suggested some fruit-bearing trees to benefit birds and Andy said he would investigate appropriate varieties.

Action: Andy

8. The Clerk asked whether Andy considered it necessary or appropriate for the Council to inform the woodland's other major funder of the plans, the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE).

9. Andy said he did not think TOE would regard it as necessary but there was a discussion about when and whether to inform them to maintain good relations. It was eventually agreed to do it now. Andy confirmed Fiona Danks is still TOE's Director.

Action: Clerk to write to Fiona Danks

10. Andy estimated that the cost of replacement trees (whips) and cardboard guards would use approximately £200 of the funding to be provided by the Council.
11. The work day would also be used to replace damaged tree guards and collect up discarded ones. Some existing trees may need to be re-protected.
12. The work day will run from 10am to 3pm and people will be able to drop in and help at any time.
13. Andy will help to promote the work day and also advertise more widely with The Wild Oxford Group.

Action: Andy

14. Maggie offered to write a "save the date" message to be circulated via Shinfo.

Action: Maggie

15. Andy suggested a poster to advertise the work day. As no one else volunteered to design one, Andy said he would do it.

Action: Andy

16. The new trees will need watering as they are being planted close to the start of summer. There was a discussion about how this could be done and whether a bowser might be lent by a neighbour.

Action: Maggie to speak to neighbours to find out if anyone would be prepared to lend a bowser

17. Andy recommended the Council share information about Ash Die Back with the local community and put up signs in the woodland to let people know that the ash trees will be lost.
18. Maggie suggested another article in Echo. The Clerk suggested that the report Andy had circulated for the site meeting would make an excellent article with little editing. The deadline is Saturday 15th February.

Action: Clerk to submit an article based on Andy's report

19. Andy will ask Sam Riley about the need to clear the brambles because they are currently the trees' only protection against deer.

Action: Andy

Other matters

20. The Clerk asked about the Council's invitation to BBOWT to extend the agreement for a further five years.

Action: Andy will check with colleagues at BBOWT

21. The Clerk informed Andy of the delay to the Council's 2019-20 grant being paid from the Rural Payments Agency by an issue about whether the whole of the land in Compartment 1 is registered with the Agency.

Action: Clerk to resolve

22. Andy and Maggie had met with Sanny to discuss mowing and it was agreed that he would keep footpaths open but reduce mowing of the wildflower meadow and edges to twice a year – once in early spring and once in early autumn.
23. This should allow for wildflowers to spread and for long areas of meadow during the summer months which will be beneficial to invertebrates and small mammals.
24. It was agreed that the great crested newt idea and the erection of a sign would not be pursued in the near future.

Geoffrey Ferres
Parish Clerk

Wednesday 26th February 2020