

Friends of Sharphill Wood

2018 Annual Report

May 2018



Founded 22 January 2008: Tenth Annual Report

There were 9 ordinary meetings of the Friends of Sharphill Wood in the year to 8 May 2018. The Annual General Meeting on 8 May 2017 elected Phil Miller (Chair), Mike Rivett (Vice Chair), Chrissie Wells (Treasurer), Jo Miller (Publicity Officer) John Elwell (Work Party Coordinator) and Bill Logan (Secretary). In addition, the meeting appointed Richard Elliott and Ben Betts as Deputy Work Party Coordinators.

There were 106 Friends on the circulation list in May 2018.

Management developments

A major piece of work this year has been, together with Rushcliffe Borough Council (RBC) and the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT), the drafting of our next Management Plan covering the period 2018 – 2023 and special thanks must go to Ben Driver of NWT for revising and updating much of the narrative in the plan. The new plan, which includes new zones to more easily identify where work has been done or is required, will be launched at a special event on 12 May 2018 to mark the Group's 10th anniversary.

Much of our time has also had to be devoted to ensuring adequate measures be put in place to mitigate damage from the housing development next to the wood. There are signs that work will soon commence to erect a fence and buffer zone around the wood. Thanks to our intervention the fence will completely surround the wood rather than just face the development. We were less successful in persuading RBC to extend the community park from the wood to the Spinney, but we continue to believe this should be done.

We also have concerns that the artificial badger setts originally proposed have not now been projected and we are pursuing this with Natural England. We await the two interpretation panels agreed with the developers for the two main entrances to the wood. The developers have also agreed to distribute a 'Welcome pack' to new residents, but that has yet to be finalized.

Incidents of antisocial behaviour, mostly from parties, were reported to RBC including damage to a badger sett also reported to the police. There was an unusual incident when a World War I grenade was found by some youths in the wood and disposed of by Army Bomb Disposal.

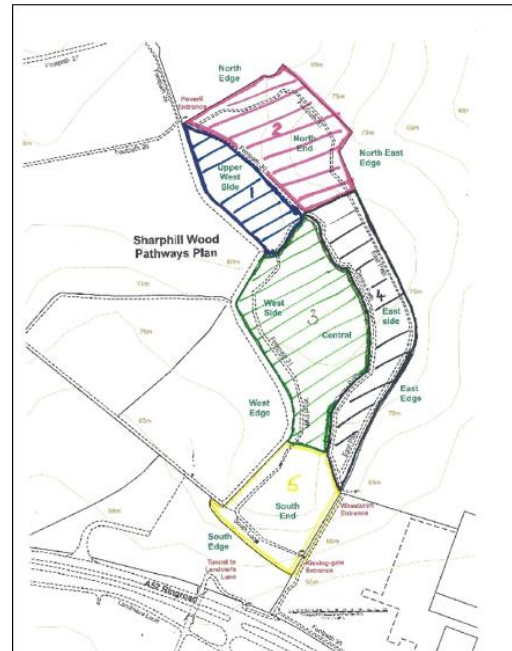
Work is also ongoing to ensure we comply with the General Data Protection Regulation due to come into force on 25 May 2018.

Publicity

This year we have had new website and lots of work has taken place in the background making sure the information from our old site is moved over. The website and Facebook page were regularly updated to make sure they remained dynamic and effective. Our Facebook page now has 140 people who like it and regularly view it. These people are not just from Nottingham but are from all over the world with our articles being viewed by 70+ visitors. New articles and pictures to keep interest in the Group have regularly been added. Articles for the West Bridgford Local News, outlining what we do as a Group, have been published. Maintaining the website involved keeping people informed about what we are doing, requesting their input and encouraging new volunteers. The group email box was also monitored and incoming emails forwarded to the relevant officer for action. We have regularly updated and replaced posters in the notice boards in the wood showing, for example, dates of work parties and walks.

Nature surveys

We conducted a flora survey in the wood during 2017, advised by Gordon Dyne and building on earlier surveys. The survey identified 70 species of wildflower, 25 species of tree and 6 species of grass, sedge, rush and fern (a total of 101 species), including both wildflowers and trees not previously recorded (10 and 7, respectively). 36 wildflower and 6 grass, sedge, rush and fern species which have been recorded in previous years were not identified in 2017. There are a number of



practical reasons why certain species may or may not be recorded in any given year, and there is no evidence at present to suggest these changes reflect any significant change in composition. A 2018 survey is currently underway.

It is some time since we have had a fungi survey and the Notts Fungi Group have been approached to ask whether they would kindly consider us for 2018.

As regards invertebrate surveys, we have never been able to commission anyone to carry these out. We therefore approached Chris Terrell Nield of Nottingham Trent University to see whether there is scope for work in summer 2018.

. Nest box inspections were carried out again during spring 2017 and results were submitted to the



British Trust for Ornithology nest record scheme. Without the bad weather that impacted the previous year, our tits had a more successful breeding season. Even so, only 4 boxes were successful (2 Great Tit and 2 Blue Tit) averaging 5 fledglings per box. Several boxes failed with dead chicks, again probably due to weather.

A single informal bird survey was carried out on 25th May, producing nothing of note, although Treecreeper was seen in zone 1 and Common Whitethroat was observed below the southern entrance.

Work Parties

During the period May 2017 to April 2018 we held 10 scheduled Sunday work parties, but had to cancel the December one because of bad weather. We did, however hold an additional work party in mid-January. Over the 11 work parties we had 87 volunteers (about 8 per work party) and clocked up 273 volunteer-hours (about 25 volunteer-hours per work party). Six visits for nest box inspections (5 in May/June 2017 and 1 in April 2018) and two visits in the autumn / winter for nest box cleaning and replacement involved a further 27 volunteer-hours, making a grand total of 300 volunteer-hours. This is down on last year and considerably down on previous years, partly because of fewer participants and partly because people often have to leave early and work parties have become shorter. We have benefitted at most work parties from young people doing Duke of Edinburgh awards.

During the spring and summer months we concentrated on the paths, deploying the remaining gravel that had been delivered earlier to help mitigate the mud in various places and trimming back encroaching vegetation. Once again we were fortunate in having the use of three scythes from Notts Wildlife Trust, kindly brought along and demonstrated by Nick Mills from Skylarks. As in the previous year, this proved to be an efficient, quiet and eco-friendly way of dealing with weeds along the sides of the main and west paths.

During the autumn and winter months the main focus was on fixing path edging around the north-east corner (zone 2), where the path has been particularly ill-defined and people have been taking short cuts. To do this we obtained material from coppicing some wych elm in zone 1, as well as felling some small sycamores in zone 1 and zone 2. We also continued using brash to top up the dead hedging along the western boundary and deployed some more posts to support dead hedging in a couple of additional places. Also during the winter we planted 100 whips (blackthorn, guelder rose, goat willow and dogwood) donated by TCV.

As usual there have been other ongoing jobs such as litter picking, attending to whips, and removing fallen branches.

Four new nest boxes have been installed, replacing ones that have gone missing or been broken during recent years. This brings the total of inspectable tit boxes back up to 25 (8 in zone 5, 8 in zone 3 and 9 in zone 4).

Community participation

Chrissie Wells regularly attended the West Bridgford Local Area Forum where she raised our concerns over anti-social behavior, the new housing development and other issues.

We no longer have a Boxing Day walk, but we continue with a Dawn Chorus Walk, which took place on 29th April 2018 led by John Elwell and joined by 2 other Friends and 8 guests. Most of the usual species were heard (including drumming Great Spotted Woodpecker), and there were views of Song Thrush and Mistle Thrush amongst others. Great interest was shown in the Early Purple Orchids, now in flower, and of course the Bluebells were also appreciated.

Finance

ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT 1ST April 2017 – 31st March 2018

The total asset balance at the year-end was £861.08. Our needs this year have been very modest, the most expensive item being Public Liability Insurance, at £196.00. However in our line of business this is a very important item of expenditure. We also acquired another very useful silky saw and spare blade. One payment of £45.00 to St. Paul's Church related to a room booking to host our 12th May 10th Anniversary event in the financial year 2017-2018 however the Church required upfront payment.

Councillor Khan was kind enough to respond to our request for part funding for 2 Interpretation Panels as required by our Management Plan. However after a longish wait the Developers confirmed that they would order and pay for Panels to our requirements and design. At the end of the financial year we were awaiting confirmation that we could allocate the £500 (included in the year-end balance) to other items. This was our only grant in this financial year.

Once again, thanks to the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Collins, room hire for meetings cost us nothing as we had the use of their front room together with refreshments each month. Many many thanks for this much needed resource.

Acknowledgements

The Group would once again like to thank Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, especially Ben Driver, Paul Phillips of Rushcliffe Borough Council and Gordon Dyne of the South Notts Group for their continued advice and support. Also, thanks to the many volunteers who helped at our work parties. Phil Miller (Chair), Mike Rivett (Vice Chair), Chrissie Wells (Treasurer), Jo Miller (Publicity Officer), John Elwell (Work Party Coordinator), Richard Elliott (Deputy Work Party Coordinator), Ben Betts (Deputy Work Party Coordinator) and Bill Logan (Secretary).

