

FOLW AGM – 8th April 2022 – Site Wardens Report

1. This report covers the period since the last AGM back in April 2019 – We have had eight Site Wardens working as Greensand Trust Volunteers, but for various reasons patrols became more varied in frequency. However, we made over 870 patrols, involving around 1600 hours of volunteer time.

2. The Wardens Dealt with:-

a. Litter – Overall we collected around 130 black plastic bags of litter. 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. During the period we welcomed Gill and Andrew King as helpers, mainly as litter pickers but keeping a watchful eye on the woodland too. The Covid Pandemic saw a large increase in the number of walkers and an increase in the amount of litter collected, particularly during the lockdowns. A few canisters of Nitrous Oxide were found probably due to sniffers. Signs of drug smoking have found but fortunately we have do not seem to have any needles left behind. Pumpkins seem to increasingly be left in the woodland as the years go by, nine were cleared in 2021. They are heavy to carry away and take ages to rot down.

b. Incidents we dealt with included:-

- A few bonfire sites to deal with and tidy up around the area of them.
- 10 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 fall onto them.
- A couple of campers were found and moved on.
- The Wardens dealt with a few small fallen trees. There were several large branches felled by the winds and storms, fortunately many of these fell away from the paths, but our Ranger had to deal with a few larger trees and branches falling over paths. A tree surgeon had to visit to deal with a large Sycamore tree in the old wood near the bench at the top of the path from Stoke Road layby, the wind left a large branch hanging high in the tree, right over the footpath. Many large twigs and smaller branches were brought down requiring some tidying up to clear the footpaths.
- While push bikes are legally allowed on the bridleway, we do still get the odd one causing a nuisance elsewhere.
- A quad bike was observed by one Warden recently in the new woodland making a mess of the footpaths, but it was difficult to stop or photograph.
- Horse were seen in the woodland on more than one occasion.

3. Contractor Activity –

CBC had several French Drains installed in one part of the main ride in an attempt to reduce the mud. This has had very limited success. The mud became worse with the increase in footfall during the peaks of the Pandemic.

Contractors are currently repairing the sleeper wall at Knaves Hill Gate. The wall of sleepers was collapsing as the timbers were rotting.

4. The Interpretation Panel at Alwyns Gate was damaged and repaired in July 2019 and then wrecked in October 2021, a new replacement panel is awaited. At the same time, the Interpretation Panel at the bottom of the Bridleway was also damaged and repaired. The Stoke Road cycleway entrance Interpretation Panel was damaged in October 2020 and repaired. The timber panels are painted once a year by my wife Sue and I.

5. **Wildlife** - The Rookery reached its peak of 54 nests in 2009, before the shooters arrived in the biomass field. After they left, the much-reduced Rookery made a good recovery with 34 nests in 2016. Since then, it declined again, but recently we have found 19 nests after losing the remaining few nests in this year’s storms, so hopefully the rookery will continue. However, the new nests are in trees more to the centre of the woodland. We continue to have reported sightings of deer, and foxes. Some Badger activity continues.

Six years ago, I asked Steve Halton if Local Nature Reserve Status was possible for the woodland. It is hoped that both the Ancient Woodland and the new woodland will both gain Local Nature Reserve status this year to give it further protection. Steve Halton has been guiding it though the legal mine field, and it is now back in Steve’s large “In Tray” for the completion of the final stages

6. **Visitors**- My wife Sue and I have counted the number of people we have seen during our visits since 2007. The results in the table below show the number seen per visit averaged over each year:-

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019/21
Adults	2.7	3.5	6.4	6.0	9.2	8.72	8.41	8.54	9.15	9.11	9.31	8.97	15.5
Children	0.9	0.3	1.0	0.6	1.5	0.74	1.63	1.77	1.49	1.94	2.15	1.46	3.1
Dogs	2.0	3.0	3.9	4.5	5.7	5.76	5.39	4.9	6.54	6.0	5.08	5.93	8.4

The increase in the number of adults and dogs visiting the woodland since CBC brought the wood in 2009, has continued, mainly dog walkers who seem happy to contend with the increasingly muddy paths. It is good to see children in the wood, particularly well-behaved ones. During the Covid Lockdowns the number of people visiting the woodland on any day was frequently the sort of numbers we are used to recording on Bank Holidays. Unfortunately, this high footfall increased the mud and seems to have reduced the wildlife being seen, but with visitor numbers returning to near normal we hope the wildlife will return.

Overall, a busy and unusual period covering the Covid Pandemic.

Could I finish by thanking our Ranger John Creasey for his patience, sense of humour and support throughout the period to his volunteer wardens. We all wish him best wishes and good luck in his future role with CBC.

Compiled for the 2022 AGM by Dave Booth