

## FOLW AGM – 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024 – Site Wardens Report

**1. This report covers the period since the 2023 AGM**– We have had six Site Wardens working as Greensand Trust Volunteers, along with two enthusiastic volunteer litter pickers, Gill and Andrew who also keep a watchful eye on the woodland. We welcomed Jan to our Site Warden team during the year. Unfortunately, we sadly lost two of our wardens last year. Ian Heath passed in September, and Malcom Cheney passed in December. Malcom was one of the FOLW founder members and active in the woodland. Ian and his dog Jazz were with us for many years. Both will be greatly missed. Between us we have made some 300 visits to the woodland taking approximately 630 volunteer hours. This has meant dealing with the very muddy conditions under foot due to the considerable wet period starting early last year. Rainfall figures are recorded on the FOLW website.

### **2. The Team Dealt with:-**

- a. Litter – Overall we collected around 48 black plastic bags of litter, including over 700 redundant tree guards no longer needed by the trees. 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. The mud has also reduced the number of visitors, see later.
- b. Signs of drug related activity have been found but fortunately we have not had any needles left behind. One site of activity has been reported to the police, and we keep an eye on it.
- c. Incidents we dealt with included:-
  - Eight bonfire sites were dealt with and tidied up around them.
  - Four 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 collapse onto them.
  - Many occasions of fly tipping in the Stoke Road laybys were reported to CBC by Gill.
  - The Wardens dealt with many incidents of small fallen branches or trees. There were several large branches felled by the winds and several storms which seem more frequent. Many large twigs were brought down by the winds requiring some tidying up to clear the footpaths.
  - Two steps leading from the Stoke Road Layby rotted away and Gary and his team replaced them.
  - Three noticeboards had their front panels damaged by possibly a catapult or ball bearing gun leaving holes in them. Gary will be providing replacements. Philip reported this damage to the police.
  - During the Bluebell season I found a professional photographer preparing to photograph a family group. She had three further groups booked for later, fortunately she was well aware not to damage the Bluebells unlike others we have found in the past.
  - While push bikes are legally allowed on the bridleway, and on the cycleway from Alwins gate to Stoke Road, we do still get the odd one causing a nuisance elsewhere, and Site

Wardens will on occasion speak to the people involved, although the signage in the woodland is still unclear, and needs re-visiting, some signs have been removed by visitors.

**3. Contractor Activity** - In March 2024 contractors worked over the northern railway tunnel entrance to control the tree growth, to avoid structural problems with the tunnel and embankments. Unfortunately, the very muddy paths were damaged by their equipment making them even more difficult to use. Hopefully they will soon be reinstated by levelling and resowing with grass.

**5. Wildlife** - The Rookery reached its peak of 54 nests in 2009, before the shooters arrived in the biomass field, which has since returned to farming. The number of nests then steadily declined, made worse by the loss of some of the mature trees that they had used. Currently there are five nests in a different part of the old wood and three nests nearby in the new wood. We continue to have reported sightings of Muntjac and Roe Deer, and Foxes, and some Badger activity continues. Butterfly and other insect numbers seem to have reduced over the years, hopefully they will increase in future.

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

Year	2007	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19/21	22	2023
Adults	2.7	3.5	6.4	6.0	9.2	8.7	8.4	8.5	9.2	9.1	9.3	9.0	15.5	14.5	10.6
Children	0.9	0.3	1.0	0.6	1.5	0.7	1.6	1.8	1.5	1.9	2.2	1.5	3.1	2.3	3.2
Dogs	2.0	3.0	3.9	4.5	5.7	5.8	5.4	4.9	6.5	6.0	5.1	5.9	8.4	6.8	4.6

The lower footfall is probably due to the weather and ground conditions. Although we still have more visitors than before CBC brought the woodland in 2009. Many of these visitors are found on the hard surface paths between Alwyns Gate and Stoke Road cycleway entrance.

**Overall, a busy if muddy year.**

Could I finish by thanking our GST Ranger Gary Peach for his patience and support through the year to all his site warden team. Also, our thanks go to John Creasey at CBC the woodland manager, for his continued interest and support.

**Compiled for the 2024 AGM by Dave Booth**