

Folly Wood Members' Meeting, 9 February 2025

Present: Tom Sykes (chair), Dominique Shead (minutes), Mark Harrison (treasurer), Ben Spencer, Paul Sheridan, John McLellan, Andy Freedman, Ruth Illingworth, Martin Benson

Apologies: Richard Keating, Graham Russell, Jackie Rowanly, Wendy Gerard, Nick Mills, Gabriel Kaye, Simon Arundel, Nigel Westaway

Beech tree

Jason will be arriving at 10am tomorrow to make a start at felling the beech tree. We will only be felling what we know we can clear away by the end of the day. Gloria (landlady) has given her OK and wants some of the wood for her fire. All members will be entitled to wood for their own fires if they want to help themselves. We are planning to pile it up along the boundary wall.

There was a lengthy discussion about how to fell the beech. Martin introduced a new idea of keeping the shape of the beech as a kind of totem pole, with a long bare trunk about two-thirds of the way up, then keeping the branches at the top. The other option, as discussed previously with members/directors, is to follow Simon Pickering's suggestion of leaving the trunk standing at approx. 9m high, and scoring some marks with a chainsaw to make habitat for bats and insects as the wood slowly rots.

In the end we decided to go with whichever option Jason is happiest with. If he says he can do either, we will go with the 'top off' option to be on the cautious side.

Larch

In view of the fact that several larch have come down or are hung up as a result of the recent storms, it was agreed that we need to set up a programme to take down those that have the potential to cause problems, e.g. if they're near the pond. There are also several trees that are hung up and need dealing with by Jason. It was agreed to talk to Jason tomorrow to see if he has any time before the start of March (when bird nesting starts) to fell some trees. Those that are hung up could be dealt with during the summer as they won't be affected by birds nesting. Martin suggested that removing ivy from standing trees would lessen the chance of them toppling over, something that has been done in the past, and could be done by members on a work day.

Rosie's Wood (aka Slade Wood)

Ben, Mark, Paul and John had a very positive meeting a few days ago with the people in Summer Street involved with Rosie's Wood. There was a sense of enthusiasm that we would be a good fit together. The Stainer-Hutchins family want to sell their wood for £62,000, though we'd be aiming for a fund of £66,000 to cover extra costs. They want to sell soon, but still have to register the final boundary with Land Registry. Pledges from the Summer Street group, together with our unofficial poll of Folly Wood members who might like to buy an extra share, comes to £38,000. It is hoped the difference could be raised by selling more shares, with a loan as a last resort.

The principle of expanding the ownership of Stroud Woods to owning and managing both Folly Wood and Rosie's Wood was supported. The next step is to draw up a set of FAQs explaining the process, fundraising strategy and structure, and a marketing plan, to be shared with members. Alongside this, a walk around Rosie's Wood and an evening meeting to answer members' questions was suggested.

AOB

Richard Keating and SVP will be planting a living hedge by the pond on Sat 8 March and would welcome help from members. Reminders will be sent nearer the time. He and Simon Arundel will be finishing the dead hedge soon.

Andy reported on the Growing Places exhibition (currently at the Museum), which features Folly Wood. An artists' directory is being compiled as a result of the exhibition, and It was agreed that FW should be part of it.

Ben explained about the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's HabiMap project, where local areas are mapped for wildlife habitats, and the meeting agreed that Folly Wood could be part of this.