

Folly Wood Members' Meeting, 13 July 2025

Present: Ben Spencer (chair), Dominique Shead (minutes), Mark Harrison (treasurer), Andy Freedman, Ruth Illingworth, Ruth Schamroth, Jeremy Green, Nick Weir, Carol Mathews, Nigel Westaway

Apologies: Richard & Helen Keating, Paul & Clare Sheridan, Jackie Rowanly, Tom Sykes, John McLellan, Jason Dilworth, Chiz Harward

Slade Wood Update

About £56,000 has been raised so far, out of our target of £66,000. After a long discussion the meeting decided we should 1) tell the vendors in confidence that we will be buying Slade Wood, 2) keep pressing to sell more shares, 3) contact those who have offered loans to make sure those offers are still solid, 4) choose and instruct solicitors, 5) talk to the Woodside resident who wants to offer private loans to those who cannot afford £600 (see below), 6) publicize this loan model to those people who registered an interest via the website (with his permission), and to members in case others wish to follow his example, and 7) start a returnees list of those people who have given loans and need to be repaid or who bought multiple shares and want to return some.

These conclusions followed a long discussion about raising the last £12,000 to buy Slade Wood. Mark proposed calling in loans sooner rather than later. Ben said a Woodside resident who has already bought shares is thinking of offering personal loans to those who can't afford a share; Ben has asked to see his T&Cs and will discuss the proposition with him on Wednesday at the public meeting (7pm at Slade Wood). A press release will go to Stroud News & Journal about the last push – Andy has a contact there – and it has also been sent out to various organizations/groups. Ruth Illingworth wants to raise the shares issue with the Uplands hub. Andy wanted to make sure that those people in Langtoft Rd and Summer Street/Crescent (which abut the wood) were informed about the proposals, to avoid any 'us and them' situations.

Management Plan

The meeting felt that the management plan, which dates from about 12 years ago, should be updated in view of the pond being added since then, increased fire risk because of climate change and campfire use by often unthinking teenagers, and decisions needing to be made about future felling of the larch.

Tom and John are planning to count the number of larch in the wood and continue their research into the feasibility of milling the fallen trees. Ben will ask someone from Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to come and assess the wood from a biodiversity point of view, and will ask also for Folly Wood to be put on their 'HabiMap' list - 'HabiMapping', or habitat mapping, is a GWT project that involves conducting botanical surveys throughout the county. Ben, Mark & Dom will arrange a time with Jason to walk round the wood to earmark any areas for felling. Nigel suggesting adding a fire risk sign near the campfire that says 'keep fires small'. A working group (formerly the ecology group) of Ruth I, Nigel, Dom and possibly Jackie (and any other volunteers) will act as coordinators. Andy spoke on behalf of the social group to say that he and Beth Richardson are hoping to organize a concert by a folk singer in the bowl this summer.

Members are encouraged to book and use the campfire, particularly on Friday and Saturday evenings, in an effort to deter groups of teenagers. Ben and Mark have already approached groups in the past to explain about the wood and to ask them to keep it tidy when they leave and put out fires, and this seems to be the best method of improving their behaviour.