

Minutes of Stroudwoods AGM, 12/4/26

Present: Ben Spencer, Mark Harrison, Nigel Westaway, Tom Sykes, Chiz Harward, Nick Weir, Carol Mathews, Andy Freedman, Ruth Illingworth, Jackie Rowanly, Grace & Rob Bermingham, Dominique Shead

Apologies: John McLellan, Wendy Gerard, Julia Wade, Nadine Smykatz-Kloss, Bob Hilliard, Ruth Schamroth

Annual Report

This was read out by Dom and approved. A copy is attached.

Accounts

Mark presented the accounts (attached). Putting to one side the £68,450 raised for the purchase of Slade Wood, we made a loss this year of £913. 50% of members gave a donation to the wood this year, down from last year. It was suggested that Helen Keating email everyone asking for £25 (per household member) this time, emphasising the fact that we have to undertake felling and safety work in order to keep the wood healthy and safe for people to use, and please could they pay what they can, or input in other ways, e.g. helping out on work days. We can send round a reminder once Slade Wood is purchased. £650 was raised in grants by Richard Keating for hedging round the pond. The accounts were approved (prop. Nick, sec. Nigel) and it was agreed an audit was not needed (prop. Nigel, sec. Tom).

Review and agree job description for directors

Nigel put together a job description for directors, particularly with the aim of recruiting some from amongst the Slade Wood shareholders once the purchase has gone through. This was emailed to everyone recently. The wording was approved.

Election of directors

According to our rules, a third of the directors (i.e. two people) have to stand down each year and stand for re-election. Ben and Dom did this and were re-elected (prop. Nigel, sec. Carol). Grace and Chiz might join as directors once Slade Wood is finalised. Adam Biscoe (prop. Ben, sec. Carol) is also a possibility, having said he was interested but wasn't present (Mark will chase).

Roles: Ben is stepping down as chair but will carry on working with solicitors on Slade Wood. Nigel was elected as chair (prop. Ben, sec. Dom). Mark will carry on as treasurer, and Dom as secretary. The meeting gave a big thanks to Ben for all his work over the past year, also to Dom and Mark.

Slade Wood update

1. **Solicitors.** Ben explained two recent updates:
 - a. The solicitors have identified existing covenants on the land and restrictions on building structures there. We have yet to find out who holds these covenants, and whether they would apply to building, for example, a compost loo or a storage shed (though if this was prevented by the covenants this would not be a deal-breaker for our purchase of the wood).
 - b. Access. The solicitors are concerned that the land is landlocked, with no formal access to the highway. Martin Jakes (Sladebank Wood) has previously arranged agreements with SDC and the Town Council for pedestrian/vehicular access at the bottom (north) end of his wood. The directors (Ben, Nigel and Mark) will talk to Martin about this and find out whether we can adopt similar agreements ourselves. It was agreed that the Town Council would be the best place to start (Tom has contacts there). At the top (south) end of the wood at Langtoft Road,

Martin has already said he'd be happy to agree an easement over the top bit. However, there is also a strip there which may be owned by someone else, and this needs to be checked with Land Registry. Nigel said he would be worried if we could not secure access top *and* bottom. We agreed that if access at both the north and south sides of Slade Wood couldn't be arranged then a decision on whether to go ahead with the purchase of the wood would be made at a members' meeting.

Nigel thanked Ben for all his work with the solicitors.

2. **Slade Wood plan.** Chiz and Martin have put together a plan for Slade Wood, which has been distributed to Slade Wood shareholders. It covers the first year of the wood and aims to connect people and nature, and to offer different projects that might appeal to members of all ages and abilities. It will be discussed in more detail once the purchase is finalised.

Ben confirmed that HabiMapping (organised by the GWT) will be happening in Folly Wood in April, and that Slade Wood is also on the list to be mapped.

Health & Safety

A working group of Ben, Mark and Chiz have put together a policy on health and safety in Folly Wood. The idea is that a director will be appointed to oversee this – Mark will ask if Adam could take it on. Mark has done 3 risk assessment templates. One is for Stroudwoods work parties, one for simple social events such as a birthday party around the fire, and one for more complicated social events using outside equipment. These will be sent out by Dom to anyone booking an event and would need to be signed and returned before the event (and would cover us re insurance). The policy and templates will be up on the website soon.

Follywood Plan

It was agreed that this should be updated, but when is still to be decided. Chiz suggested that income could be made from felled trees in the wood, and that this could be explored if infrastructure, i.e. access, was in place for a car and trailer to come and collect the wood or even for a portable mill to be delivered. Andy suggested the old plan should be used as a foundation, and the meeting agreed to start thinking about the plan now but finalise it next year in parallel with a Slade Wood Plan with the help of a grant.

AOB

There was no other business.