

The PC have owned Stubbs Woods (SW) since 2015 (11 years).

When purchased the woodland was in a poor state with not much care given to footpaths, tree surveys, invasive species control and the rides were overgrown. So since 2015 a Woodland Management Plan was drawn up and work started in earnest. The PC applied for funding in the form of grants, and luckily received a donation from the Environment Agency which was a one-off donation.

The woods are an SSSI in the main due to its geology ie GreenSand Ridge, its diverse fauna and its high Weald broad leaved trees. The PC received its last grant for SW in 2024/25 from the Countryside Stewardship of approximately £4700. We have since been waiting to be invited to make a new grant application. I am pleased to report that this has now been received so we can go ahead and make application for funding for 2027.

The Woodland Management Plan has been extended to 2029 which is in line with our felling license. Now there is a little breathing space to create a new Woodland Plan for 2029. A meeting on site with the Forestry Commission and Natural England has taken place and we have listened to all their advice and input.

For the short term we will continue to:

- 1 Control invasive species.

- 2 Continue thinning and Coppicing in all that were specified in the existing Woodland Management Plan.

- 3 Continue to coppice where appropriate in line with The existing WMP.

4 Look at managing and highlighting our historical features

5 Maintaining all our footpaths, rides and bridle paths.

This year the PC have not received any grants from the Countryside Stewardship. A Tree survey had to be undertaken which is compulsory every three years. As a result of that we have an approximate bill for work of £29k. So what to do? No income and potential significant bill. The following decisions have been made by the Parish Council with the well being and longevity of SW in mind:

1. The PC are keen to look at the best options for Stubbs Wood and the Committee will be proposing that it remains in the Parish Council's control during this Council (i.e. to May 2027) at least.

2. It now have a specific Stubbs Woods Committee which will be made up of existing councillors and parish residents who bring with them many skills from Woodland management to fundraising. The Committee has been created specifically to assist with the complex challenges Stubbs Woods has. This is to ensure that the woods get continuity of care in perpetuity. This will be a dynamic group, meaning it may change as the needs of the woods may change over time.

The Stubbs Woods Committee will be setting up a dedicated Website, Instagram and Facebook page. This is to ensure we can have community cohesion. The committee would like you to know what is happening, when and why. This should hopefully answer any of your questions. It would also be a direct way to contact us with concerns or suggestions.

3 The SW Committee will be working towards a woodland management plan – looking closely at our funding and provide regular meeting updates to the Parish Council and our parishioners.

The PC has agreed that SW will get a payment from Precepts of £6,500 this year and has given SW an extra £6000 from

reserves. This is to deal with the most urgent work required post tree survey and I am pleased to report that it is now complete.

From 2027 we hope to obtain grants of approximately £4700 each year.

So with an outstanding amount funds needed to deal with the results of the tree survey, (medium risk trees) we will still fall short.

A concerted effort is being made to take costs out of this total by our SWVG (the volunteers). Without this wonderful willing group we would be between a rock and a hard place and may the PC take the opportunity to thank them for their hard work. Also many thanks to SWAG (advisory group) who again give their time and expertise to the PC so we can all make the right decisions. Long may they continue.

There are two ways to deal with our shortfall and these would both have to be agreed at Full Council.

1, Put up the Precept on ALL our council tax bills throughout the Parish with an amount specifically for SW which would be an extra £7 per household and means that the PC could give £12.5k per annum plus grants from Countryside Stewardship of approx £4700. This would ensure that works continue and that we can build up a reserve to make sure we can deal with a rogue tree survey, a storm or any other rainy day problem.

OR

2, The PC set up a Friends of Stubbs Woods Group to look at all fund raising options.
For example:

Invite legacy Donations

Regular Donations

QR codes so our visitors can make donations.

Possible Commercial link ups.

One off or annual events.

SW has already received its first donation from all the participants of BEAT THE COCK RUN. Thank you to Liz Easterbrook and all the runners.

This evening we would very much like to have your feedback on these two options.

Before we go to questions or breakout into groups the Stubbs Woods Committee want you to understand the mission for the foreseeable future of SW which are based on four principles and the original intentions for the Green Belt and that are underpinned in the covenant restrictions on Stubbs Woods:

1 Conservation

Preserve and bring back coppicing on a rotation basis in the appropriate lots.

- Continue to thin out trees, this gives us the opportunity to look after and nurture our new Veteran trees and also get light to the woodland floor. This encourages more Fauna and therefore wildlife habitat.

- Eradicate invasive species.

- Replant, High Weal Species where appropriate these are , Hornbeam, Whitebeam, Oak, Sweet Chestnut, Wild Cherry, Ash and Alder.

2 Preservation

- Look after our rides (wide open pathways throughout the woods).

- Care for our historical architecture.

- Maintain our wonderful viewpoints and seating.

3 Education

- Notice boards for our historical features.
- Possibility of woodland walks with our local schools to discuss, nature, ecology and conservation. This will be in line with the curriculum. Up to GCSE level.
- Look at the possibility of colleges using the woodlands to train arboreal trades.

4 Regeneration

- Creating joined up habitats for wildlife.
- Continued thinning for healthy woodland habitat formation.

Please feel free to ask questions or join me and Katie Wennick at our easel.

Thank you, I will now hand back to Martyn.