

## **South Hinksey Community Woodland Management and Development Plan**

Established in 2008, the community woodland in South Hinksey is thriving. The following plan is an opportunity for the Parish Council to revisit the original objectives and plan and assess how best to manage the woodland as it matures, in order to maximise its potential as an ecological, social and recreational resource.

The report will outline

- the context behind the woodland and its original objectives
- a maintenance plan for the upkeep of the woodland
- a development plan.

### **Background**

During the formulation of the Parish Plan for South Hinksey in 2005, parishioners were consulted on a number of proposed developments in the parish, and one proposal that gained support was for a woodland to be planted on Parish Council land.

The scheme was included in the Parish Plan and Clive Briffett championed the scheme, in his role on both the Friends of South Hinksey (FoSH) steering committee and as a parish councillor, and all work on the woodland, as well as all the finances, was controlled by the Parish Council.

The grant from the Forestry Commission was for 2015-2016 £240, for 2016-17 £220.

Work planting the woodland was undertaken in the summer of 2008 by JAG Timber.

Sadly, Clive Briffett died in 2011: the Parish Council continued running the woodland, now with help and guidance from Prof. Riki Therivel from Oxford Brookes University.

## **Objectives**

In the original business plan, the following objectives of the woodland were identified:

### **1. Ecological**

Increasing woodland cover and connection of existing hedges to enhance opportunities for a greater range of wildlife species and a more diverse range of flora.

### **2. Recreational**

Providing safe, healthy, diverse and accessible natural open space for all local communities

### **3. Social**

The planting, maintenance, care and eventual timber products providing social benefits to the community e.g. volunteering working parties/picnics

### **4. Aesthetic**

Improving the current landscape of monoculture crop agriculture with tree, shrub and hedge planting, creating a heterogeneous mix of natural structures and species.

### **5. Emotional**

Providing a place for rest, relaxation and reflection.

### **6. Educational**

Providing a variety of natural habitats and species for use in by schools and universities.

## Maintenance Plan

Below is a list of the currently identified maintenance tasks that need to be undertaken to keep the community woodland in a good state of repair and ensure that the Council's landowner obligations are met.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Periodic health and safety and maintenance inspections	Regularly before Council meetings – all meetings or some?
Risk assessment review	Once per year in March
Re-staking of trees	Once per year in spring
Mowing path around trees	Once per year in late spring or early summer
Ragweed control	Once per year in late June or early July
Bramble clearing	Autumn and Spring before 30 <sup>th</sup> March
Weed around trees	As necessary following maintenance inspections
Replacement of dead stock	As necessary following maintenance inspections
Regular survey of fence line for breaches	Once per year with risk assessment review
Cutting back hazel to ankle height and harvesting for pea sticks, etc.	Revisit in 2017 from then on probably annually
Thinning – removing c.25% of worst performing trees	Revisit in 2020

## **Development Plan**

As well as maintaining the woodland, work also needs to be undertaken to meet the long-term objectives of the woodland, as detailed above, and maximise its value and use as a community amenity and resource. Below are the projects the Council wishes to undertake:

### **1. Erect memorial bench**

Installed .....2012.....

### **2. Erect signs**

Objective: Recreational and Educational

At present there are no signs. Signs could give more information about the project and information about the ecology of the woodland.

### **3. Renew / erect fencing around woodland**

Objective: Aesthetic and Ecological

There is currently fencing on three sides of the woodland, but there is none on the SW side, or at the entrance to the woodland. Completing the fencing, repairing existing fencing and putting in stiles / signposting for walkers would improve the aesthetics of the woodland, and help to define the area. Discuss Riki advised that fencing to prevent deer and rabbit damage too expensive and probably not worth the cost.

### **4. Erect entrance**

Objective: Aesthetic and Risk Management

The land is at risk of being used illegally by free-campers and travellers, and a defined entrance on the SE corner would help deter this. Discuss

However, it should be noted that access of at least 36 feet is currently needed for the tenant farmer of the adjacent field for a combine harvester. Discuss.

### **5. Walkway over bog**

Objective: Recreational and Risk Management

There is access to the woodland via the Hinksey Heights footpath, on the NW side of the woodland, however, the ground can become very boggy: a walkway over this area could improve this and encourage access.

### **6. Pathways through trees**

Objective: Recreational

As the woodland matures, access through the wood may become increasingly difficult and it has been suggested that a pathway(s) should

be identified and regularly mowed which would be most easily done whilst the trees are young, and could perhaps use paths through the trees created by dead trees.

## **7. Planting flora**

Objective: Ecological

The initial business plan suggested planting native woodland ground flora as the woodland matures, which would increase biodiversity and improve the habitat for wildlife. Given the rich flora that has grown naturally around the trees, this may no longer be needed.

## **8. Volunteering schemes**

Objective: Social and Educational

Volunteering schemes could be put in place to use the woodland for social occasions, as well as providing a resource for local schools, universities, scout groups, etc. This might have the added benefit of reducing maintenance costs.

## **9. Establishing links with trails**

Objective: Recreational

The woodland is ideally placed to provide a link between existing nature trails through Happy Valley and Hinksey Heights, possibly even promoting links to the Devil's Backbone and to North Hinksey.

## **10. Wildlife survey**

Objective: Ecological

As the woodland matures, it has been suggested that a wildlife survey be carried out to assess the impact of the woodland on the promotion of wildlife. It would be good to do one soon and again in 3-5yrs to see progress and change.

## Implementation

In order to carry out the management and development plan, I propose that:-

The Parish Council:

- a) Cost and prioritise each of the development proposals
- b) Discuss and decide on a budget
- c) Appoint a woodland warden / volunteer co-opted by PC to monitor the growth and maintenance of the woodland, implement longer-term projects, including budgeting.
- d) Ask Andy Gunn re support and advice. Possibly link with BBOWT (Berkshire Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust)
- e) Consider Tyff Williams as advisor and for regular work
- f) Keeps the Community Woodland as a regular project update on Council meeting agendas so that work is continuous and the woodland isn't neglected.

Note: Prof. Riki Therivel is happy to give occasional advice, she is too busy to do more than this.

Maggie Rawcliffe  
May 2017

With thanks to Clive Briffett and Sheridan Edward for the original plan.