



10th Annual General Meeting of the Nettleham Woodland Trust

Chairman's Report

This report covers the twelve months since the previous AGM in May 2016. It is written at the end of another good year for NWT.

1. Events in 2016-2017:

The priority in 2016-2017 was again consolidation rather than expansion. We have not gone looking for new planting projects and none have been suggested. We have concentrated on Ashing Lane without any distractions in Nettleham itself, and the emphasis has been on maintenance, improvement and enjoying what we have done in the last ten and a half years. Arguably the most important moment was the tenth anniversary party late in August 2016 when friends and family gathered at the picnic tables and celebrated in perfect weather.

Public engagement:

The website and Facebook pages are proving popular. 'Hits' are monitored by Su, Rod and Julia. Our supporters' list, supervised by Elizabeth Hipgrave, currently includes 77 addresses in addition to those of committee members. These channels link different audiences to our occasional newsletter and key notices.

Many visitors have made their way to the Book of Oaks in South Glade. Many have enjoyed the two 2016 leaflets prepared with the sponsorship of the Lincolnshire Cooperative and the South Lincolnshire and Rutland Local Access Forum.

Plans are afoot to provide a small blackboard at the main entrance on which visitors will be able to record bird sightings

Competitions:

We have entered two in recent months:

- Royal Forestry Society for small community projects. Sara wrote the entry which led to a visit by two adjudicators from North Wales on Thursday 4th May. We were on a short list of five with competition from Cambridgeshire and the Black Country, and were 'Commended';
- Lincolnshire Environmental Awards. We were successful in 2009 and 2013 with an emphasis on "Creating the Conservation Area", and so entered the 2017 competition with an emphasis on "The Conservation Area in Use". Chris wrote the entry which led to a visit by an adjudicator on Friday 5th May. We were then placed on a short-list of three and Rod and Chris made a presentation to the judging panel at The Bentley on Thursday 26th May. We were awarded a 'Highly Commended' certificate;

Welton St.Mary's Primary Academy has recently expressed interest in developing the nursery bed. Pupils have drawn up plans including herbs and plants which deer apparently won't eat, but the Chairman hasn't been able to visit the school to look at them yet.

On the road:

On 15th November 2016, Rod made a presentation on NWT to a local U3A group, which will be visiting the Ashing Lane Nature Reserve in June 2017

Hosting:

In September 2016 the entire staff from Ellison Boulter Primary School used a training day to trek across the fields from Scothern to consider how they might use the Ashing Lane Nature Reserve for curriculum activities

Behind the scenes:

Ashing Lane – Monks Wood: The Lincoln Conservation Group has been helpful with several working visits in the last year. Drainage, trimming rampant willow, staining benches and spreading woodchip have been priorities. In October 2017 they will help out with hay-raking in our meadows;

Ashing Lane - All Abilities Area: at the 2015 AGM I mentioned the need to *“repair the leak in the pond. It seems as if this might have been successful, but the 2016 AGM will be a better moment to report this”*. At one glorious moment in the mid-winter, after months of rain, the water table was high and the pond was full. The level has dropped since then. Overall, if there has been steady rain, the water table is high, and the pond full, but then when there is drought, the pond drains through its sandy bottom or maybe that pesky pipe we still haven't completely isolated. Further work will be done on the pond during 2017

A second willow tunnel is being created on the 'desire line' created by users of the 'classroom'. It is directly opposite the tunnel laid on 29th February 2012

Ashing Lane – Coop Wood: mostly planted in 2012, it is growing well. Su Colman's willow world is developing well and one day soon we will run a course on willow coppicing and weaving. Hazel will be another another candidate in due course

Ashing Lane – Coop Wood. Two new benches have been gifted by the Coop and installed by the lake. Graham struck the deal here

Ashing Lane – Watts Wood. This is currently managed by LWT, but we would like to become more actively involved, especially in reducing the encroaching canopy effect in the walks. We now know that Watts Wood is in a Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme until 2021, so LWT is unable to sign it over to NWT. However, Dave Bromwich, the Reserves Manager, is going to look at other options for a management agreement with NWT. We should not do any work in Watts Wood without a formal management agreement.

Equipment and resources: we had to replace the mower after eight years valiant service . Dennis struck a good deal for us The Lincolnshire Co-op paid 50%

Dog waste bins were sourced by Julia and installed both in the main carpark and by the main entrance. They should be emptied by WLDC on a weekly basis

Drone view: Mark Johnson, a professional photographer who lives locally, has acquired a drone and taken some fascinating, beautiful and also very useful aerial photographs of the area in February and May of this year

Committee: members have continued to enjoy the reduction of meetings to one every two months. Much committee work is done by email, but major decisions are face-to-face

2. Looking into 2017-2018:

- The successful addition of a small wildflower meadow in the AAA is one possible change to report to the 11th AGM in May 2018;
- A stone base on the lake side of the vehicle gate into the Coop Wood would be a useful asset and reduce drainage difficulties;
- There is potential to develop the north-west side of Coop Wood towards Dunholme Beck, perhaps with a raised walk through more wet woodland. Alternatively there could be a project with the Lincolnshire Rivers Trust developed from their work in the Dunston and Metherringham area which was also presented and commended at the Lincolnshire Environmental Awards evening;
- As this report is being prepared, Su is working on an entry to the “Best Website” category in a Woodlands Awards competition later in the summer;
- More broadly, as part of our forward planning, I would ask that those present at the AGM should discuss the possibility of future entries to the Lincolnshire Environmental Awards in the forum after our formal meeting. We should consider whether we keep to our present four year application cycle, or perhaps go for 2019 having developed a number of new people –orientated community projects

3. Mentioned in dispatches:

3.1 Sustaining NWT:

In addition to the organisations and individuals I will mention in a few lines, I would like to highlight our anonymous, un-heralded volunteers who collect litter on a regular basis. There are also those many members of the general public, who tell NWT stalwarts that they have greatly enjoyed visiting the Ashing Lane Nature Reserve, and ask us to pass on thanks. At the present time we are also receiving a lot of positive comments on the installation of the two canine waste bins, both face to face, but also through social media. All these actions and words are greatly appreciated.

More precisely, I must now highlight the following organisations, supporters and friends for their active support since the May 2016 AGM:

Grant aid and sponsorship:

- The Forestry Commission for on-going financial support through the annual Farm Woodlands Payments (FWP) of £1700 per annum for Monks Wood to 2024, and £400 per annum for Coop Wood to 2027;
- Lincolnshire Co-operative Society, for continuing support, notably in part-funding our new mower;
- West Lindsey District Council for a "Large Community Grant". The money is being used to update three Interpretation Boards in the main entrance and the north-east corner of Monks Wood, make a series of "Sensory" boards to be placed around the All Abilities Area (AAA) and improvements to the AAA path and pond;
- Several anonymous donors;

In kind:

- Charles Pickering of Ashlin Farm, a really good neighbour;
- John Carcass of Woodpecker Tree Services for woodchip for paths;

In manpower and/or time and/or technical advice and support:

- Micky Watson, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust voluntary warden for sightings and advice;
- Mark Johnson, photographer, for sightings, great pictures, and now dronescapes;
- Nigel Kingston, Nettleham News, now sadly closed;
- Maurice Nauta and Brian Chapman, RSPB, for monthly bird surveys since June 2013, These are posted on the website by Su Colman;
- PCSO 2297 Ange Law for advice;
- Jonathan Hill and Lincoln Conservation Group volunteers.

6.2 People: Charitable trusts are totally dependent on a small band of brothers and sisters who give freely of their time. Nettleham Woodland Trust is no exception here. I wrote about the importance of volunteers at length in my report to the 8th AGM in May 2015. Nothing has changed. Without the graft and dedication of volunteers, groups like NWT would not exist and the community-enriching projects such as the Ashing Lane Nature Reserve simply would not happen.

In 2016-2017 the Committee was:

- Chairman: Chris Williams
- Secretary: vacancy
- Treasurer: Julia Ambrose
- Woodland Adviser: Rod Newborough
- Land & Business Adviser: Dennis Tate
- Minutes Secretary and Grants Officer: Susie Mendel
- Website and Willow Woman: Su Colman

General members: Sara Bright, Graham Reeve, Robyn Bright (*studeo nuper apud Dunelm*), Stuart Dallas

Outside the committee

- Supporters Secretary: Elizabeth Hipgrave

4.3 To conclude

Things are generally going very well. I hope that everyone will continue to enjoy what has been achieved by NWT in just over a decade.

Chris Williams Chairman

5th June 2017