

SOCCT

Sparrowgrove Oakwood Copse Conservation Trust

Chairman's Report **Years ending 31.5.2017 and 31.5.2018**

The Board of Trustees has always been aware that due to the timing of the AGM in July we have only been able to present the report and accounts 14 months after the May year end. At last years AGM it was agreed to delay the 2018 AGM until the autumn when we could review both 2017 and 2018, and in future only be 5 months after the May year end. Therefore, this report covers a two year period.

The Trust continues to operate in accordance with its charitable objectives.

- ✧ To promote the conservation, protection and improvement of the natural environment and biodiversity of Sparrowgrove and Oakwood Copse, in Winchester, Hampshire.
- ✧ To advance the education of the public in conservation and preservation of woodland and the natural environment

Management

In the year ending 31st May 2017 the trust was Chaired by Mike Southgate the other trustees were Colin Brook, Kerrin Qualters, Vicki Fletcher, Dave Steventon, Wendy Doherty and assisted by our treasurer Colin Hooper. In August 2017 we were joined by the welcome return of two of our founding Trustees Hannah Williams and Anne Morrison.

Formal board meetings took place during the year including the AGM. However, due to a reduced number of trustees and availability decisions were made by emails or smaller group meetings to agree decisions.

The Chair dealt with most compliance, finance and administration assisted by Colin Hooper and other appropriate trustees.

Colin Brook, Kerrin Qualters, and Dave Steventon are responsible for woodland management and fence issues. This team monitors the inspection of the trees notably those close to households, and roads and to agree how to deal with any necessary work.

Wendy Doherty has led on communication with assistance from Vicki Fletcher.

Regular volunteer working parties continue on the first Sunday of the month at 10.30 am. We need more volunteers, sometime only a few people have been able to turn up.

Specialists groups have met occasionally to work on areas like fencing and coppicing working parties. As always our thanks to all our volunteers and the team for organising

The trust managed to complete its initial program of tackling trees identified as requiring some work to be undertaken. This was funded by assistance from the two parish councils and a local

fund raising campaign organised by Wendy Doherty. It must be emphasised that Woodland Management never stops, we have a continuous rolling programme, with priorities established with professional guidance. This is why we so value donations through standing orders it helps us to plan our work. We have also secured grants from Hampshire County Council. The Chair agreed with the owners of Southern House to re-establish our boundary with them on the original fence line. A high security fence had been installed away from our boundary creating a 'no man' land which was causing confusion about maintenance of the trees in this area. The resolution by moving the fence clearly places the responsibility on the owners of Southern House and is one less concern for the trust. Southern House kindly agreed to pay for all the costs including our legal fees.

The new data protection regulations known as GDPR provided a challenge. The Chair consulted the the Information Commission's Office. As a result he organised an audit of all the personal data we hold, a review of why we hold it to ensure compliance with the new regulations. As a result many of our forms and web site have been modified to reflect the new regulations, our privacy statement and how members can withdraw.

Hannah Williams and Anne Morrison with support from Otterbourne Parish Council organised a very successful Easter Egg hunt on in Oakwood Copse. This was to raise profile notably with a younger audience but also to raise funds through donations and a raffle.

Network Rail asked for access through a small section of Sparrowgrove to repair a fence. As a result a new small section of path was created, and an exiting path widened by vegetation cut back.

On the 22nd May 2018 following an approach to the Chair in another capacity we welcomed around 30 volunteers on a corporate 'help the community day'. They cleared footpaths and painted a significant proportion of the Sparrowgrove's fence providing the paint and materials themselves.

We constantly refer to the need to undertake more work on the non trees aspects of our woods but lack the resources and volunteers. Late April and early May is a particularly colourful period with the Bluebells, other flowers and blossoms. The removal of so many trees during the underline clearance work in Sparrowgrove a few years ago has provided a rich abundance of flora, insects, butterflies and bees. It's another reason why tree management is so important to provide clear areas.

Membership

Our membership has remained largely constant, we had two members join in 2018. This increases our voting membership to 55 voting, 4 non voting members and two the Parish Councils as corporate members .

Financial Reserves

Our financial position remains stable. The Board has increased it's reserves have in preparation for the costs of further woodland management programmes and to provide a higher level of contingency to deal with unexpected fallen trees, and issues such as fence repairs.

Thanks

We would like to thank the two Parish Councils for their continued support and to all of those who have given their money, time and support over the last year to help us maintain these 35 acres of woodland for the community.

New Chair

In August 2018 (outside the period of this report) Hannah Williams kindly agreed to take over as Chair. I have exceeded my time by at least one term as the Chair and the role should be alternated with Otterbourne but we had no volunteers until Hannah. As one of the founders the trust is in very safe hands I am sure Hannah will also be able to encourage other new trustees as many of us are reaching the end of our terms.

It's always good to stand down when organisations are in a good state, and I believe we are, thanks to all your hard efforts. We're financially sound, on top of the woodland management programme and have re-established funding from the local community.

As I head off into the sunset may I thank all of our members for their support and for this to continue under the new chair.

Mike Southgate. Chairman
16.9.2019