

LOW CARBON LYMM (LCL)
Forum Meeting Minutes
17th July 2012

Attendees

Dave Ackerley	Keven Lester
Jill Ackerley	Andrew Morris
Beverley Bachmayer	Richard Pearce
Clare Burnside (Woodland Trust)	Peter Powell
Zoe Cohen	Alf Slattery
Angela Crowe	Pauline Slattery
Brian Davies	Marcus Swan
Maureen Dunford	Alan Turner
Pam Hunter	Rachel Waggett
John Johnson	Su Williams
Catherine Lester	Jo Yellen

This meeting was focussed on a visit to Spud Wood and a presentation on the Woodland Trust's work at the wood both past and present, 15 years after the wood was established.

1. Quick update on project progress:

Social marketing: the workshop at the last meeting run by Sandra Palmer of Corporate Culture was extremely well received with lots of useful information (more details in the notes of the last meeting, see website to download). We need ideas about how we put these insights into practice – please send your ideas to Zoe for raising at the steering group and the next meeting.

Recycling bins: Andrew Morris with the help of others has submitted a funding bid to Project Dirt's Timberland Earthkeeper's Grant to get recycling bins for the village centre. We should hear next week if this has been successful. [Post meeting note – we weren't successful this time but everyone please be on the look out for other funding opportunities].

LEAF energy efficiency in homes project: the report is completed and we have concluded that we need to be targeting energy efficient insulation and boiler replacements in Lymm, which are our main opportunities to reduce home energy use. The Government's Green Deal programme has been delayed so we are not sure how this will affect our future plans. Following on from the surveys some useful further action has taken place at the Youth & Community Centre.

Business energy use: Carbon Smart based in Alderley Edge have launched a new programme providing **free** advice to businesses with fewer than 10 employees. Places are limited so first come first served. Contact ecosmarter@carbonsmart.co.uk

MP meeting: Zoe and Richard met with David Mowat MP to talk about areas of shared interest and gain support for our initiatives. He was very interested in the energy efficiency projects and also expressed interest in the Plastic Bag Free Lymm project.

2. Spud Wood Walk & Discussion

Zoe welcomed Clare Burnside from Woodland Trust and thanked Cath Lester for arranging for Clare to come and talk to us this evening.

Find out more →

If you've never been to Spud Wood, you're missing a treat! Find out more at <http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/our-woods/Pages/wood-details.aspx?wood=4937>

Clare is the site manager for the Woodland Trust in Cheshire & Warrington, responsible for 58 sites. With regard to Spud Wood she is very interested to hear about any interest the community has in developing the site with community activities, such as coppicing etc. Since the 42 hectare Spud Wood was established 15 years ago it is evidently very well used and valued but there may be more ways that the community can get involved. This will be discussed throughout the evening.

Questions and answers during the walk around Spud Wood are summarised below.

Q: Timing of wood thinning?

A: The wood is still developing as a young plantation. Originally 1600 trees were planted on site which is quite dense. Woodland Trust are managing it for access and safety only as this is what their resources allow. They have been coppicing to allow views etc however most of the thinning is through self-thinning of pioneering species such as oak and ash. So as the canopy closes the smaller trees will start to die back and this process will thin the wood naturally. No official thinning is being carried out at this stage, however WT are very pleased with the development of the wood.

Q: Dog poo bins?

A: Two bins are provided, one at the carpark and one at the opposite end of the wood near the road/canal junction. More bins would be difficult because access for emptying them would be hard. The bins at the entrances are emptied by the council. There is no funding from Woodland Trust for continual emptying of bins as they are a charitable trust. Ideally people should be picking up dog poo and taking it to one of the two bins provided – or encouraging ‘stick and flick’ if necessary. It’s possible more signage could encourage this behaviour and this could be looked into.

Q: Have Woodland Trust been doing more planting? There are some smaller trees dotted about with bamboo canes to support them?

A: Woodland Trust haven’t provided these trees, it is likely that they are ‘guerilla planting’ – planted by others, often where a tree is getting too big for the garden or similar, people will uproot them and plant them in open spaces like these. However we have to be concerned about having trees with local provenance to make sure that we don’t get infestations of pests and diseases etc. In other areas there have been a lot of pests such as the oak processionary moth, but fortunately not here. Would encourage anyone who wants to plant a tree to contact WT first.

Q: Is there any evidence of wildlife on the site, and is it monitored?

A: 15 years on from planting the canopy is starting to close and some ground flora such as wood anemone is emerging. There is no basic monitoring of wildlife and flora but WT would love community volunteers if they have knowledge i.e. butterflies spotted etc. There is a website where anyone can record wildlife spots.

Q: How is the wood managed?

A: The wood is managed for access and safety. There is an array of habitats including poind, woodland and open glades. WT are very interested in cutting the open glades for hay – if anyone knows of a local farmer who would be interested in doing this then please ask them to contact us! A local contractor mows the paths 4x per year and the boundary trees are inspected along the path for safety.

Next year if funded WT want to install new and improved signage and interpretation, as the existing boards are a bit out of date and need refreshing.

Q: What type of community activities could Spud Wood support?

A: One suggestion is forming a Coppicing Group that would carry out ride-side coppicing in exchange for the firewood. WT have found that there is an increasing demand for wood – often wood gets removed from sites even when it has been placed there as a dead wood habitat! This type of group would meet twice per year to carry out coppicing therefore it wouldn’t be a huge time commitment.

Another potential is a ‘friends’ group, such as the nearby Friends of Gorse Covert who organise litter picking etc. To make this successful there would need to be a local person willing to act as a project manager for the group.

It would also be great to have volunteer wardens, this just involves keeping an eye on the place, looking out for and reporting evidence of misuse, camping, damage, sign damage, trees or boundaries down etc. This might be ideal for people who regularly walk dogs on the site, for example. Please volunteer!

WT are also keen to find people who would be willing to become voluntary speakers for Woodland Trust, to help promote their work.

Ideally on Spud Wood it would be great to see a local management committee or volunteer group that WT could work together with in the future.

Q: How do you make sure volunteers are doing the right things?

A: All volunteer groups work in accordance with the management plan for the site – there are benefits both ways. For example, the Bill Hogarth Trust (coppice workers) have a local worker who is interested in using Spud Wood for hurdle making materials. He has offered to help work with any volunteers to make sure they go about it properly.

Q: What about neighbouring sites?

A: WT do keep an eye on surrounding sites. Rhododendrons at Helsdale Wood are being kept an eye on to make sure they are not coming into Spud Wood, they can be a very invasive species. Clare is looking to speak to owners. Also the rabbit fencing is deteriorating on that boundary and may need to be removed.

Q: Have you looked into how much carbon sequestered at Spud Wood?

A: That's not been done at present though it has been looked at elsewhere.

Q: Are you intending to plant any more trees here?

A: It is not the intention as the plan is to keep the balance with open glades. However there was discussion about potential for planting fruit trees or similar which could be accommodated. Jubilee Woods project for planting 450 trees is one of Lymm Parish Council's initiatives, and there may be some surplus trees that could be used, depending on the type of trees that are being supplied. Clare will investigate this with Peter Powell.

Discussed the opportunities for foraging on site, there are some already i.e. blackthorn, crabapple, hazel but could be enhanced.

Q: (looking at the entrance signs) How do you plan to change the signage?

A: These signs were for the 'woods on your doorstep' millennium woods project. The signs were installed at the time and they are a bit old. New signage would look at perhaps waymarking paths through the woods, involving the local community in designing the signs. Depends on obtaining funding though. We agreed it would be great to have waymarked paths, such as good route for dogwalkers, children etc. Perhaps get local schools or groups involved i.e. woodland sculptures.

Back at the Community Centre, we discussed some of the opportunities for developing the wood further, using examples of community involvement elsewhere in Cheshire and Warrington, including Gorse Covert and Thorn Wood, Weaverham. Splitting into four groups, we discussed how we would like to see Spud Wood develop in the future.

Group 1

Family activities i.e. picnics, mown grass and signage to encourage 'stop and stay'. Clare noted that there are kids activity sheets and nature spotters links on the Woodland Trust website also.

Interest in the coppicing group – how do we get more people interested though?

Provide support to each 'friends of' group? Clare noted that each site has a micro-site that includes photos uploaded by local people. <http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/our-woods/Pages/wood-details.aspx?wood=4937> Events can also be added and edited, this saves on leaflet printing etc for the friends of groups.

Group 2

Coppicing group sounds like an excellent idea, because people get something out of it, this might be a soft start to getting others involved in more active support for Spud Wood. Ideally this should be done September to March each year.

Group 3

The majority of people who use the wood presently are dog walkers, so 'national dogwalking day' would be a good way to raise the profile of the site.

Signage would be a really good way to focus attention i.e. 'this is the only dog poo bin'!

Link future activities to Lymm Festival, so that it is in the brochure and will get enhanced profile.

Foraging opportunities – more nuts and fruit trees. There are already some but this could be expanded and have a foraging walk, perhaps as part of the Festival above?

Group 4

Keen to see Spud Wood relate more to the village centre – signage to link to open spaces, using the wood as more of an expanded trail, including signage from the canal?

Close of the meeting: A hugely enjoyable meeting – we all agreed that we'd learned a lot and enjoyed the walk (and it didn't even rain!)

Many thanks to Clare for taking the time to visit us and talk about how the local community can help to develop this wonderful local resource.

3. AOB

Note that forum meetings are held every two months, so if you wish to keep up to date with what is going on, please check the website/facebook/twitter accounts, and come along to the steering group, to which all are welcome! The date will be circulated by email and is on the website.

4. Date of Next Meeting

The next forum meeting will be held on **Monday 24th September, Oughtrington Community Centre at 7.30pm.**

The next steering group meeting will be held on **Monday 6th August.**