

BURSLEDON WOODLAND PARK COMMUNITY GROUP

ANNUAL REPORT June 2023 – June 2024

The Woodland Park Community Group is a registered charity (No 1089740) which owns and manages the area of woodland situated between Pilands Wood and Hungerford in Bursledon. The group has now been going for 23 years since its inception in 2001.

Initially the group was established through formation of the multi-agency group involving Pilands Wood Residents Association; Pilands Community Association; Eastleigh Borough Council; Itchen Hamble Countryside Project; Housing Associations on Pilands Estate; Bursledon Parish Council; Eastleigh Community Services; Hampshire Wildlife Trust; local tree wardens and some residents. Over the years after redevelopment of Pilands, various parties left the group and some local trustees had passed away. At the AGM on 28 October 2016, most of the remaining local residents who were trustees decided to give notice of their intention to leave the group before the 2017 AGM. However rather than leave the charity to collapse, the WPCG committee decided to approach local councils and groups to appeal for new trustees to come forward. There was very little response to this appeal except from members of Bursledon Rights of Way and Amenities Protection Group, spearheaded by Mrs Diane Andrewes who stepped forward and attended the 2017 AGM.

The BROWAPG members were elected to join the group and now it is mainly the same members who have continued with the group and help to keep it running with some newer trustees. More new and younger helpers are now needed for the future.

2023-2024 Activities

Since June 2023, work and activities in the park have been pretty much a repeat of previous years. The quarterly working party meetings have dealt with issues such as overhanging trees and bushes, rotten planking on boardwalks, maintaining ditches and litter clearance.

Trustee meetings have generally been held following the work sessions but other work sessions and meetings have taken place to undertake tree inspections, do boardwalk repairs and meet with other organisations about woodland maintenance.

The exceptional weather this past year, with very heavy spells of rain, seems to have made the woodland glade area and paths particularly wet and muddy. The glade did not dry out in the way it has in previous years, rendering grass cutting very difficult and was only part completed.

Four bird boxes were acquired and erected, but sadly two were subsequently vandalised and have not as yet been replaced.

Two bat boxes were also installed.

Work to combat non-native plant species was undertaken with the pulling of Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed. Cherry laurel has been tackled with clearance of areas particularly along the northern boundary.

A boost to the Group income was achieved by the passing over of funds from the disbanded BROWAPG to WPCG. Also a small income stream has been gained by WPCG helpers taking over delivery of the local Scene magazine every two months in parts of Bursledon. We are grateful to those deliverers for their efforts supporting WPCG.

Most notably however was the successful application made to EBC/BHH Local Area Committee for funding to upgrade the main linking footpath through the woods from the boardwalk to the Fox & Hounds car park, together with renovating the two bridges. The bid for funding was made in Spring 2024 and a grant approved just after the Group's financial year end at the LAC meeting on 6 July 2024. More on this will be reported at next year's AGM.

We have reported our efforts on the Group's Website and Facebook page.

The aim of our community group is to try and engender a sense of community ownership and engagement with nature, so that urban neighbours can gain an appreciation and benefit from nature close to their homes. Unfortunately occasional vandalism and ongoing litter are a recurring annoyance. However raising the profile of the Group with announcement of workdays on 'Bursledon News and Views' and other social media has attracted 'likes' and participation on workdays by a few more local residents, for which we are most pleased and grateful.

So it is thanks to the current Trustees and other helpers for the time and effort in maintaining the park and keeping the social media side operating. Existing group members have agreed to continue on the committee, so we look forward to ongoing care of the woodland and further opportunities for improvements which help safeguard this woodland space and wildlife haven for the benefit of its users.