



Buckenham Ancient Woodland Trustees' Annual Report July 2023- June 2024

Background

Buckenham Ancient Woodland Trust (BAWT) became a charity on 21st June 2023 and is registered with the charity commission: Registered charity number 1203670

As our constitution document states, our aims are to promote the conservation of the physical and natural environment of the central 7.4 acres within Buckenham Wood County Wildlife Site for the public benefit and to collaborate with the other landowners within the County Wildlife Site to encourage a holistic and sustainable approach to enhance biodiversity and maximise quiet enjoyment by the public.

BAWT was set up in response to the opportunity that arose for the local community to purchase the central section of the wood from its private owner. Nominated parish councillors from Strumpshaw and Lingwood Parish Councils worked together to organise a series of public consultations and meetings which enabled them to recruit appropriately skilled and experienced local people as potential trustees and volunteer officers. The group then set up a dedicated charity for purchasing and conserving the middle part of the wood. Information on our current trustees is available on BAWT's website <https://www.buckenhamancientwoodland.org/>.

We have since forming appointed a chair, vice-chair, secretary, treasurer and IT and governance leads, and nominated an auditor and solicitor. We have held monthly trustee meetings to facilitate speedy decision making and progress, and we have established separate subcommittees for developing recommendations to Trustees on specialist areas such as finance and governance.

The Trustees are committed to working with partners to conserve the wood for quiet enjoyment by the local community.

Initial Achievements

Once the charity was established, we focussed on four areas:

- **Obtaining information**
- **Fundraising**
- **Improving the site**
- **Communications**

Obtaining information

The first thing we needed to do was to commission an Environmental Survey (performed by Harrison Geotechnical Engineering), and this was kindly supported by funding from The Strumpshaw Trust and Yare Valley Rotary Club. We needed the survey for several reasons:

- to give information for the purchase;
- to support our applications for grants from other bodies; and
- to help inform future management of the wood

The report found that the site is suitable for the intended use but recommended removing areas of waste material.

Finance and Fundraising

In order to support our aims, we needed to raise funds for both the purchase and the ongoing management of the woodland. We started by using the JustGiving platform - this has raised just under £10,000 through generous donations from the public (we have of course applied for Gift Aid on these where we can).

As previously mentioned, the Strumpshaw Trust and Yare Valley Rotary Club gave us a critical early boost by donating money so we could commission the environmental survey we needed before proceeding with the purchase.

We held a very successful fundraising barn dance in March 2024 at Lingwood Village Hall, raising approximately £1500 – it was a fantastic evening of energetic dancing to amazing live music provided for free by local band YareFolk.

Significantly, we have also successfully applied for grants to enable the purchase of the land. These are part-funded by the UK Government and Broadland District Council through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and thanks to them the purchase is now in progress.

Looking to the future, we have applied for further grants for work in the woodland once we have ownership – and I should take this opportunity to thank our trustee Michael Green and support from Helen Sibley at Broadland District Council, who have put in so much work to identify and apply for relevant grant opportunities. Their work has been critical in ensuring the future of our woodland.

Woodland work

Our third strand of work has been to start work on maintaining the woodland. The private landowner agreed that we could start this before our purchase was complete, so we arranged for local BAWT volunteers, Lingwood and Strumpshaw 1st Scout Group and Yare Valley Rotary Club to meet on 2 days last winter to clear litter and non-toxic waste - they cleared over 100 tyres and other rubbish from the site.

In addition, BAWT has cleared some small areas of historic waste needing specialised destruction, and in July 2024 the private landowner kindly arranged to cover an area of rubbish left from the area's previous commercial use with soil from the base of a quarry area.

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Communication

The marketing and IT group have established an excellent website and started a presence on social media with regular newsletters to members.

We have held multiple engagement events such as attending Village Fairs in Lingwood and Postwick with our stall, as well as at the barn dance; and erecting a new sign in the woodland (with the current owner's permission) to explain our purpose and how to get involved. In the bluebell season, trustees and volunteers spent a day in the wood chatting to visitors about BAWT's work. These events have increased our charity membership considerably with current membership of just over 100.

A local photography company (Phil Barnes Photography) has filmed and produced several drone videos of the woodland showing the changing habitat throughout the seasons and these are available to see via the website

A note for the future

Although this Annual Report is principally aimed at looking back at the preceding year, it is appropriate to note that at the AGM we are sadly losing Hans (Charles Watson) as a trustee but he will stay on with us as a volunteer to advise on environmental aspects of our work. We are therefore looking to recruit one or two new trustees who would like to make a difference to the future of the wood. Please do talk to one of the Trustees if you would like to know more about our role.

We would also like to hear from a member who would be interested in the Trust Secretary role going forwards.

Charity's principal address	Address: Strumpshaw Community Hall Mill Road Strumpshaw Norwich NR13 4FS Phone: 07584938311 Email: info@buckenhamancientwoodland.org Website: www.buckenhamancientwoodland.org
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Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)

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Full name(s)

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Position (eg
Secretary, Chair, etc)

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Date

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