

Friends of Selsdon Wood (FSW)

Working to conserve our wood



Minutes of the Meeting of Friends of Selsdon Wood held on Monday 31st March 2025 at 8.45pm at the Forestdale Forum.

Present: Heather Govier, in the Chair, Ted Forsyth (Vice Chair), Linda Morris (Secretary) and Karen Hall (Treasurer). Other Friends attending were Valerie Baldry, David Debenham, Jim Dunning, Neale Fox, Frank Kippin.

1. There were no **apologies for absence** although it was noted that John B possibly had given a blanket apology for all future meetings.
2. The **minutes** of the previous meeting were approved. There were no matters arising.
3. **Financial Report** – Karen confirmed the current balance in the bank was £5....and that she would take action regarding contacting the Friends who had ‘forgotten’ to pay their subscription this year (and previously) as agreed at the AGM. It was hoped some of the missing subs would be paid at the SRA Community event on 7th September.
4. **Walks and Work reports - FSW walks** would start again for 2025 season on April 5th. Heather confirmed that she was no longer able to lead the walks so asked for Friends’ help in doing this if there was no outside leader booked. Neale agreed to lead the next walk and the one in May. Linda reminded FSW that the walks were being published as part of the SRA Centenary programme, so they might have increased numbers attending.

Work sessions – Ted reported on recent work sessions which had mostly concentrated on replacing signs and bird/bat boxes and removing Laurel. The small team of regular Sunday helpers were pleased to welcome back Harry and his son and to have the help of some boys working towards their DoE bronze awards. Grow Wild volunteers also assisted Linda and Jim on one Tuesday a month. Full reports and photos are on the website.

Valerie has started to extend the cleared area in the BB and will be tending and watering that periodically. She would welcome help if anyone would like to join her.

5. **Seats and Boxes** – Jim reported that he had had very few enquiries about dedicated seats in the past year and he would be quoting at least £500 as a cost estimate until he had a different figure confirmed. Linda had referred a query about a seat for Field 1 from Gill Hilton to him and he is awaiting further contact from her about whether the family wish to go ahead.

Heather suggested we might consider memorial trees being planted as cheaper options, but Linda thought that, from experience, it seemed quite difficult to get even trees larger than whips to survive without a lot of watering and care. She thought this should be made clear to potential donors and that they (and not the Friends) should be asked to take responsibility for the care of each tree provided. Linda also suggested that perhaps the cost of a memorial seat could be shared between two families if they could not afford the full cost.

A central memorial plaque (eg at Linden Glade) was suggested as another cheaper alternative with names added as and when a family requested this. The idea was not taken forward when Linda commented that this could make the place look too much like a memorial park or cemetery.

Several new bird and bat boxes have been installed and maps showing the location of all the boxes are available on the website.

6. **Council liaison - Insurance** – Linda will respond to the Council offer to reimburse Friends groups who needed insurance with chain saw cover. She will ask for the first payment to be made retrospectively as we renewed in November.

Graffiti – Linda agreed to contact the council to remove the graffiti on the noticeboard at the Quail Gardens gate. *Secretary's note: It transpired this was unnecessary action as the graffiti had been removed by John Z in the meantime.*

7. **Projects – Entrance name board** – Linda reported that the notice boards, maps and fingerposts were due to be put in place in Selsdon in the coming week. It was therefore agreed to wait to see the design of those before completing the draft design for our board.

Butterfly Bank – Valerie requested a replacement for the lost laminated notice about the BB. Linda agreed to provide this. Valerie was progressing the information details for the QR code and Neale agreed to make the QR perspex sign for this site.

Linden Glade – Linda reported that the pool is quite full of leaves and algae bloom, but it was agreed this was inevitable in a woodland pool and that it should not be skimmed or raked, especially as there is now an abundance of tadpoles.

The plants in the floating containers are sprouting and some have already sown seed naturally in the pool itself. Linda will watch that this growth does not become a nuisance and take very careful action to control it, if necessary, in future. One of the water lilies is showing a first leaf above the water and the Iris are growing, with two leaf spears there at present.

Neale and Jim agreed that it would be OK for a trickle of water to be allowed to run into the pool during this prolonged dry spell. Neale also offered to water the plants surrounding the pool as they are not yet showing much spring growth – except for the Celandines. There seem to be no Foxgloves surviving from last year.

Wood Carvings – Lorcan O'Byrne has supplied costs for the three carvings he had proposed - £500 for each stump and c.£1200 for the trunk seat. It was agreed he should be asked by Heather to start work on a Badger carved from the Ash stump in Avis Grove at a cost of £500. A decision on future carvings will be made in due course but it is still felt that the proposed Fawn would be too delicate to withstand the rigours of a woodland setting: maybe, an acorn, chestnut or cone would be possible to add variety to the collection? *Secretary's note: He agreed to do the work on 7th/8th April.*

Car Park Potholes – It was noted that the markings around the potholes were not made officially by the Council and so that source of repair remains unlikely. Neale therefore agreed to proceed with his plans to repair the potholes as soon as he has a free weekday to do so.

Stones not mud – Nothing more had been heard from SES about their help with this project. It is not clear if this is because we are waiting for more technical advice from them as to what they could do for us (and when) or if they are waiting for us to get back to them again. David agreed to contact the SES rep to ask her how the matter could best be progressed. It was generally felt that ballast deposited in the ruts and over the dried mud was probably the easiest way to achieve a relatively satisfactory result especially if a deeper layer of ballast than that previously spread was possible with SES's help. It was agreed that David should also discuss with her whether SES can provide the ballast for free or at a subsidised rate or if we need to buy it in again.

8. **AOB -Elm Farm** is being surveyed by Surrey Wildlife Trust and prepared to provide natural pasture for cattle and sheep as well as other steps to conserve the natural ecology of the area and, hopefully, to increase the flora and fauna of the area. The site manager, Scott Woods had already told Linda at a meeting she had had with him that he had visited Selsdon Wood and is keen to assist with woodland management here. She and Heather had explained to him about FSW and had invited him to the AGM and this meeting, but he felt there was little more he could add at present. He had agreed to keep in touch.

Dog Bowls – Frank Kippin asked about the bowls of water for dogs in the wood and Heather explained these were largely filled by the Budds but she also filled the one at the car park at times. Although the old washing up bowl there was unattractive it was felt that it was therefore less likely to be 'lost' than the stainless steel one at LG which had to be chained to the fence.

9. **Date of next meeting** – 19th May 2025