

Friends of Selsdon Wood

Working to conserve our wood



Minutes of the Meeting of Friends of Selsdon Wood held on Monday 19th May 2025 at 8.00pm 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, John Bickerstaff, David Debenham, Neale Fox.

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from Jim Dunning and the committee wished him a speedy recovery.
2. The **minutes** of the previous meeting were approved. There was just one matter arising – the QR code link to the BB plant list that Valerie had prepared – item 7 below.
3. **Financial Report** – Karen confirmed the current balance in the bank was £6035 and that she had written to some of the Friends who had ‘forgotten’ to pay their subscription this year. She would provide the current membership total at the next meeting but felt we had sadly lost many of those who had joined during Covid.

She had had to resubmit the GA claim as the original was not accepted as she had changed the contact details from Sandra to her, but this change was not authorized by HMRC. That has now been done and so she hopes to get the GA money before too long.

4. **Walks and Work Reports - FSW walks** started again on April 5th. That walk and the one on May 5th were led by Neale and Karen Fox, for which the committee thanked them. Reports of all walks are on the website.

Work sessions – Ted reported on recent work sessions which had mostly concentrated on clearing intruding vegetation around the seats, along the edge of the car park and entrance. All the wood carvings had had a further coat of preservative and the hose (Jubilee Pond) and tap for the Linden Glad pool had been set ready for use by Neale. He understood Steve Budd might continue to deal with the water supply as necessary in dry spells. Jim had set up the new racking in the tidied store room and fixed sturdy hooks to hang the electrical tools safely. Full reports and photos of all activities are on the website.

Valerie had continued to tend and water the BB. She welcomed the help in the filling and transport of water containers to her store places near the BB and Marjoram sites.

Trees – Ted was pleased to discover one Wild Service tree out of those planted some years ago seemed to be surviving in Middle Gorse and he believed that an older one in the Jubilee Plantation was still growing well. He had asked Steve Budd for photos of this as he could not get there himself. Heather commented in the large number of tree saplings now growing in the fields, presumably because the council did not cut the fields at all last year. Linda agreed to write to the council to try to ensure the policy of a single cutting in the autumn is continued in Selsdon Wood apart from the areas we specifically wanted cut e.g. field edges (see also separate item below) and the lower half of Field 1.

5. **Seats and benches** – Linda reported, on Jim’s behalf, that he had sent off for the plaque for the John Hilton seat and the small notices to be added to the wood carvings to remind visitors that they were funded by donations to FSW. He is expecting the delivery in about two weeks. Neale had loaned him the sander to prepare the seat but due to Jim’s ill health it was uncertain when /if he would be able to do this.

Bird and Bat boxes – Heather agreed to remind Steve to tell her and Jim when and where he fixes any new bat boxes so the map can be updated. It was noted that at least one bird box (on Greenhill Way) is being used by blue tits. There was a suggestion this was being preferred as it was ‘clean’ after being repaired and refixed. Views were mixed as to whether all the boxes should be cleaned but it was agreed this was too big a job to do them all every year. It was suggested that the cleaning should be done mostly to those that needed repair and maybe a few others on rotation each year.

6. **Council liaison - Insurance** – Linda reported she had not yet had a reply about the reimbursement of the insurance payment we made in November. She reported that Alice would be commencing maternity leave in September, probably for a year and that it was unlikely there would be cover for this. Until then, it was unlikely she would have much time to deal with Friends matters as she was having to concentrate on completing the Council biodiversity plan drafted by Meike.

John Bickerstaff confirmed he was still willing to read the small print of the insurance as necessary.

Field grass/hedge cutting - There was committee discussion about how much the field edges should be cut back. Although there is large scale encroachment of the shrubby borders, it was generally felt that FSW should deal with this as much as they could and as they thought necessary e.g. by surveying to identify further points to cut 'bays' into the hedges e.g. around seats or possible future seat positions. It was considered the cutting back of bracken and large areas of bramble could be done by the council when grass cutting. Otherwise, the field edges should be cut routinely by the council simply to create a perimeter path in each field.

Linda would write to the council to reflect this discussion, emphasising that the fields (other than the lower half of field1 and all the field edges) should not be cut until September as previously agreed.

7. **Projects – a. Entrance name board** – Linda agreed to take photos of the silhouettes on the top of each green space signpost and map that has been set up in Selsdon to help complete the draft design for our board.

b. Butterfly Bank – Neale apologised for not making the QR sign yet as he thought the QR code currently displayed for the plant nursery was in fact the required one for the plants guide. He agreed to provide and fix the plant guide one as soon as possible. Heather confirmed that all the information is now on the website.

Valerie was thanked for her hard work, and it was noted there is now a good display of flowers again.

c. Linden Glade – It was reported that two mallards had discovered the pool so it was hoped that they would not devour the tadpoles, which are now clearly developing into frogs. It was hoped that some would survive and not be affected by the rhinovirus that previously decimated the frog population in the Jubilee Pool.

The plants in the floating containers are blooming and some have already sown seed naturally in the pool itself. The water lilies and the iris are growing well.

Sadly, it seems there is evidence that some people have been climbing over the fence but there seems little that can be done to stop that other than perhaps to allow the bramble etc. to grow over it more.

It was agreed that it would be ok for a trickle of water to be allowed to run into the pool and Steve Budd had been given access so he could manage this for us.

d. Wood carvings – It was agreed that Lorcan should be asked by Heather to start work on a 'tree seat'. Two possible locations were considered – Bluebell Grove or in a small glade off the Wend. Although there was some concern that the more secluded spot could encourage 'improper use' of the seat, it was generally thought the suggested spot was probably the most favourable. Committee members were asked to look at the sites and let Heather know their views by 27th May so she could then contact Lorcan. It was suggested that, after that, another 'statue' could be carved - maybe, an acorn, chestnut or cone would be possible to add variety to the collection.

e. Car park potholes – Neale was unable to proceed with his plans to repair the potholes as the car park was too busy when he was there. He would still try to do this (with some other help if Jim is unable to assist) as soon as he has a free weekday to do so.

f. Stones not mud – SES had indicated they were no longer currently able to help with this project due to a company takeover and financial constraints. There was discussion about how FSW could manage to get the ballast to the neediest sites themselves. It was thought that a lorry could perhaps deliver two ton

bags as far as possible along Vale Border and maybe another two by the Cascades gate. FSW could then either use the trolleys to shift it to the required spots or hire a small dumper truck to do this. Neale and David will look into this further as it really needs the ballast to be delivered whilst the ground is dry and hard. Paul Winter might also be asked to help but it was thought he could not provide the correct ballast. In any event, it was agreed that there were sufficient funds for 4 bags plus hire of dumper truck of around £150.

8. **AOB – a. Greenvale Bookshop invitation** – Linda explained that FSW had been invited to attend the 5th anniversary opening of this on 24th May from 10-4. SRA, FoLW and FSW were sharing a table mainly to raise their profiles, give out leaflets and collect subs as there was no time to plan a large display. She would be there in the morning and hoped for some support from FSW for an hour or two during the day.

b. Jubilee Pond Project - Neale proposed that the Jubilee pond should be renovated in the same way as the LG pool. He suggested it needed clearing out, cleaning and then fibre glassing. This was discussed but there was some feeling that we need not embark on this project until all other projects mentioned above were completed, particularly as, although the level drops, presumably due to leaks, it rarely (if ever) completely dries out.

c. SRA Community Day – 7th September – Neale asked if this was going ahead. Linda confirmed that it was being organised by Peter Underwood (SRA) and that he had allocated a stall space for us for a rectangular gazebo to house our info display and membership table. Linda felt it was for the FSW person dealing with the stall now she had already stepped back from this to decide which of the gazebos to use – the 6x4.5 m pop up or the original 6x12m ‘slot together’ one. The first needs four people minimum to erect and the larger one needs 6. Linda stated she would help on the stall at some point if available on the day but would not know until nearer the time. Neale offered to help on the day if not on work duty but was unable to take on from Linda the stall organization. Heather offered to do a photo display if there was no photo competition: to date, she had had very few entries so might have to cancel that.

9. **Date of next meeting** – 28th July 2025