

Friends of Selsdon Wood (FSW)

Working to conserve our wood



Minutes of the committee meeting of the Friends of Selsdon Wood held on Monday 29th September 2025 at 8.00pm in the Forestdale Forum.

Present: Heather Govier (in the Chair), Ted Forsyth (Vice Chair), Linda Morris (Secretary), Karen Hall (Treasurer), John Bickerstaff, Valerie Baldry and David Debenham

1. Apologies for absence from Neale Fox, Jim Dunning, and John Zareba.

2. Minutes of the last meeting held on 4th August 2025, as archived on the website, were approved as a correct record of that meeting.

3. Matters arising – a). Grass was cut immediately before the Event day in Field 1, and elsewhere on 9th September. It was baled and removed. Thankfully, the cut seems to have avoided damaging VB's newly planted patches. The ride edges are due to be cut shortly. *(These were all cut in the following week.)*

b). More than 50 trees have now been marked for felling. The tree officer has offered to provide a map of these so we can check that none have a bird or bat box. It was pointed out that all nest boxes should be checked against Jim's map in the coming months in case some need repair. A box base has been rescued from Field 3.

c). The dripping tap had been dealt with in the office.

d). DD's recruitment posters are now displayed on the noticeboards. It was suggested that we should send copies to CVA, local churches and anywhere else we could think of who might be able to publish them, as we are in dire need of more active helpers. DD will draft an amended version to perhaps be used as a flyer.

4. Finance – Karen had circulated the recent financial details and reported a current credit of £6101 with proposed / planned expenditure of £ 2570

HG reported steady calendar sales – currently 35 by the end of this meeting.

5. Walks and work sessions – Ted reported on the walks held since the last meeting. Details of the walks are on the website.

All work session reports are also posted on the website, whether they are the planned FSW ones or any undertaken by one or more individuals on an ad hoc basis. Ted listed the tasks dealt with since the last meeting, the majority of which were the work by VB and her helpers weeding and watering the BB and planting small patches of plants in the fields. She suggested this work in the fields should become a separate project from the BB with a historical photographic record as the patches developed. This was agreed.

JD had made a seat using some wood he already had to replace the rotting Nicola Jane Bailey seat, as her family could not be contacted about a proper replacement. The plaque had been fixed to the new seat by CG.

DD and his wife had been spreading of some of the wood chips (provided free of charge by the Council) in a muddy path area along Vale Border. DD had also cleared a tree fall near the Courtwood Lane gate. A large fallen tree in Langford's Way had been reported for removal but it was felt likely that it was a Council job as too large for FSW. This would be checked and duly reported if necessary. *(After checking, the fall was felt to be within our capabilities.)*

Dog poo bins – HG had provided a replacement bin for one that was vandalised and had written to the Council to ask if an official Council bin could be installed at that site.

It was agreed that the work session on the last Sunday in September should be reinstated as the FSW volunteers were usually involved on a stall at the event earlier in the month.

6. Seats and Benches / Bird and bat boxes – Nothing further to note in the unavoidable absence of JD and no report of problems or requests from the Budds.

7. Council Liaison – a. Wood chips - Linda will ask if we can have more wood chips – possibly with them delivered to be left in a slightly more secure location e.g. on Vincent Avenue.

b. Possible building on green areas – JB raised concerns arising from a mailshot he had received about potential use of green sites for building. He was assured that SW remains as NT owned land and so is safe from building and that the SRA and others are keeping a watch on all green sites in the locality and any suggestions of developments affecting them.

c. Supervision of Friends groups - Alice has now started maternity leave and so Xabier is ‘holding the fort’ until a temporary replacement is appointed. Linda said that there should be no problem with what we do in the wood as long as it continues what we have already started. She will refer any new ideas, needing a quick decision, to Xabier.

d. Toilets and roof maintenance – Linda has received no response to her request via Xabier for the redecoration of the toilets to be considered within the local community budget spending now under consideration by the Council. Likewise, there has been no response to her report that we believe there could be holes in the roof, as broken tiles have been found on the ground around the building.

8. Community Event – 7th September - Linda reported that the event was seen to be a success by the SRA and they are prepared to carry on with it next year – exact date and organiser from them to be confirmed. She considered the extent of FSW participation this year – an information/membership stall with photo competition – was sufficient to arouse interest in our activities. It caused us much less work and storage problems than previous years with no white elephant and tombola stocks to house as they were collected. It was agreed that the single stall and a guided walk is enough for the active volunteers to cope with. Many thanks to Sandra Crapper for running her own white elephant stall and donating the proceeds to FSW.

9. Projects – a. Entrance notice board – Linda reported that plans to take a draft to Dave to ascertain if our ideas are practical and feasible for his special equipment to produce had to be deferred due to Jim’s ill health. Linda is now assisting Jim, although recognising it is his project, whilst he remains somewhat incapacitated.

Once Jim was hospitalised, he agreed to liaise by email with Dave. It has transpired that the equipment is not as sophisticated as Jim had been led to believe. Dave told us that it could not deal with photos or detailed drawings but, possibly, might manage to reproduce very simple black outline sketches. He would not recommend using colour on an outdoor board – even though he had used it on the example Jim had shown us. He did not, therefore, give us even a vague idea of cost, as this advice changed significantly what we had suggested.

Our plan now is to present a simplified version, with emphasis more on the words than pictures. Linda has advised her contacts that their drawings are unlikely to be used and is exploring some other ideas e.g., a sketch of the cairn and Linden Pool possibly to be a centrepiece of the board as it is probably regarded as the main landmark of the wood or perhaps just a ‘shower’ or border of tree leaves around the words. Alternatively, the board could comprise only words. The committee felt that perhaps a simple black ink outline sketch of the cairn etc would not be sufficiently attractive and so they favoured the leaves – or nothing. Linda agreed to take these comments back to Jim and probably continue along these lines, at least to get a possible quote so we know whether the cost is reasonable enough to continue drafting.

b. Butterfly bank – VB asked that the fence be repaired to keep dogs out and HG agreed that this is important to do. DD will prepare some stakes and assist with the installation.

c. Linden Glade Pool - Linda confirmed she had recently worked with Grow Wild in Linden Glade to cut down the summer growth and hoped to utilise them again to thin out some of the ferns and remove a Chestnut sapling. She will

try to replant the Chestnut as a field tree, possibly in Field 3. She plans, in the coming months, to add some suitable woodland and hedgerow plants around the fence of the glade to provide flowers for nectar and colour, and to skim some more duck weed from the pool. She will seek help from Grow Wild with this, as feels it more suitable for her to do with them than the heavier work which had been possible when Jim was fit and able to assist them.

Linda reported that she had obtained copies of Lt Col Wood's will of 1948 (and that of his wife) from the Probate Office. These confirmed that he would leave the residue of his estate to be shared when he died (1956) between RSPB and PDSA. The RSPB bequest was specifically for the maintenance of Linden Glade and their memorial stone and then for RSPB general funds. She will therefore write to RSPB to remind them of this and ask for help in funding the preservation of the Glade and stone. She has asked a local stone mason to advise about how best to deal with the stone.

d. Wood carvings – Jim had made a plea that someone might carry on with the spraying of the carvings with the oil mix he had already prepared before he became too ill to use it. Linda was not sure if she could manage this but might try. DD also offered some help although he is currently very busy at work. It was hoped perhaps CG might have a go.

It was agreed that the current carvings were still a focus of interest so we would refrain from ordering another one until that interest waned – maybe, sometime next year.

e. Car park potholes – Linda had asked Paul Winter if he could help to repair the potholes using the tarmac that Neale had bought but not had time to use before he moved away. DD thought that perhaps he and CG might be able to tackle this job but was aware that time was of the essence before the tarmac 'went off' and the weather broke. It was agreed this should remain on the to-do list.

f. Stones not mud – It was suggested that the ballast should still be ordered as planned and used to consolidate the infilling on top of the wood chips as well as filling other muddy places. This would be an ongoing job during the winter. DD agreed to obtain order details from Neale and to order the ballast, so we have it available when needed.

g. Recruitment – DD offered some more ideas (fliers, videos, brief talks to local groups eg Golden Ark etc) to expand on his poster as he felt we were now in urgent need of more active help as the original work team was growing older and less physically able. It was agreed this was a problem and needed further detailed consideration at the next meeting. In the meantime, Linda agreed to send a copy of DD's poster to CVA and any other groups who might muster some help for us.

10. AOB - a. Speaking up for nature – Linda had sent a notice about this programme to HG for consideration by the committee but now neither of them could remember the details so the matter was deferred to the next meeting.

b. Cycling in the wood – Concerns had been raised by a suggestion that there were to be formal designated cycleways through the wood. The committee confirmed that we should steadfastly resist this and remind all users and planners that cycling is prohibited in Selsdon Wood through the bylaws of Croydon Council and The National Trust.

c. Donations – JB said he would like to pass on a defunct charitable fund for which he had responsibility to FSW as he had been unable to identify any other suitable recipients. His offer was gratefully accepted. He will liaise with the Treasurer about this as necessary.

As an aside, it was noted he will be 99 years old on 10th August 2026.

11. Date of next meeting – 24th November 2025 – apologies from JB who will be away on a cruise.

The meeting closed at 10.00pm