

Friends of Pitts Wood Report to Quinton Ward Forum September 2020

Certain activities restricted following introduction of Covid-19 lockdown in March:

- Cancellation of clean up session (as part of Keep Britain Tidy campaign) 29th March
- Postponement of proposed Bluebell Open Day (May)
- Display at Quinborne on hold
- Visits by The Nest Copper Beech Nursery forest school suspended

A small group of volunteers started conservation work again early May. The main focus was on cutting back excess holly and reducing the 'hedge' along the entrance which had become overgrown and was too high, and removing green waste.

Conservation sessions re-commenced in mid-June at weekends, two more volunteers were recruited. During the school summer holidays, sessions were also held mid-week. With the start of the autumn term, conservation work continues mostly on Saturday mornings.

There has been a lot of progress, particularly with re-establishing a path between two bridges on the far side of the wood, and clearing rubbish. Thanks to a generous donation from the GMB union we were able to arrange for all rubbish collected by July to be removed from site. There is more to follow!

Copper Beech Nursery forest school sessions resumed on 23rd July. The children were delighted to be back again.

An 'Open Day' was held on 8th August which proved very successful, we received many positive comments. Admission was through pre-booked time slots. Leaflets were delivered to all households adjoining Pitts Wood inviting them to the event. (The reverse side mentioned the amount of rubbish accumulated and the hope that the wood would not be used as a dumping ground in the future.) Posters were also displayed and the event promoted via Facebook and other websites. A local walking group were given a guided tour on 18th August.

Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust carried out a habitat survey in June and produced an 'Ecological Assessment and Management Brief' (paid for by the Academy). This will help us identify what work should be done to improve the wood for the benefit of plants and wildlife.

Accordingly, we are now focusing on removing cherry laurel and certain holly stumps, thinning out brambles and nettles (to encourage other species of woodland plants), clearing the two streams and cutting back overhanging undergrowth. We are particularly keen to enhance the ponds at the bottom of the site, to make the access safer, and to create a habitat which can be used for environmental studies. We are also thinking of approaching the Woodland Trust for tree saplings to improve the hedge line along the entrance track.

Over the months, the Friends of Pitts Wood group have been kept informed of developments and volunteering opportunities via brief newsletters, photographs and our Facebook page. Members of other sites posted information on our behalf. An article was published in the August edition of HEM Life. Clare (Chair, FoPW) has continued to make a lot of direct contact with local residents to engage their support.

We are about to start looking at fundraising for all the various aspects of work required (thankfully someone has come forward to help with this). We will need a lot of money, and more volunteers to carry out the projects we have in mind. Certain tasks such as tree safety inspection and thinning of the tree canopy will need input from professionals, but the majority of work will have to be undertaken by volunteers. Anyone interested should contact Clare on 0121 429 8221 or via WhatsApp 07811502970 or email cmsandercock@uwclub.net