

NEW ENGLAND WOOD TRUST

Chairman's Report April 2020

2019- a challenging year

It was business as usual in New England Wood in 2019- a lively mix of hard work by our volunteers, increasing visitor numbers and wood activities and the challenges that Nature always throws our way.

Good progress was made in extending and repairing the main footpaths. This is important as it encourages visitors to keep to the paths and minimises disturbance of our abundant wildlife. Not so positive is the arrival of Ash Dieback, a fungus infection that causes leaf loss, crown dieback and eventual death in affected trees. It has spread throughout New England Wood and on safety grounds will sadly require access to badly affected areas to be restricted.

We continue to monitor planning proposals in respect of the field to the west of the village between Ockenden Manor and New England Wood (plot 803 on the MSDC Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment Plan). In the latest Mid Sussex District report this was not included in plots identified for potential immediate development, which is good news for now. Were the field to be developed it would bring building close the boundary of New England Wood.

Also good news is that the vandalism of the past couple of years has largely diminished. We would ask visitors to keep an eye open and, when safe to do so, discourage any destructive behaviour.

As always, a great big thank you!

Our thanks to all those who have generously supported the Trust during 2019; The Independent State of Cuckfield (Leanne Knapman, Mayor), Cuckfield Parish Council, the Cuckfield Woodlanders donors and generous individuals. With your support the Trust finances continue to meet the essential cost of training, materials, tools and insurance.

A great big thank you to all the volunteers, to our Woods Manager Patrick Letschka for his energy and enthusiasm in maintaining the wood and keeping control of our unruly volunteers! Many thanks to Helen Crabtree for her painstaking and fascinating annual nest box survey and to Hamish Church for keeping our finances in good order.

A special place

At the time of writing we are in Coronavirus lockdown and for the first time our Annual Public Meeting cannot be held, but comments and feedback on our reports published on our website are welcome at cuckfieldwoodlanders@gmail.com. The wood is serving the people of Cuckfield as a special place of escape, relaxation and rejuvenation.

Ken Burgess

Chairman, New England Wood Trust

