Prospect Community Wood Report for the 2018 AGM

After the last AGM in March 2017, work on Prospect Community Woodland slowed considerably as the new Chair and Management Team took over the reins. Proposed landscaping and planting was delayed until early autumn, as the Trustees reviewed the purpose of the woodland amongst Malvern Community Forest's (MCF's) other projects. Although the relationship with Prospect Medical Centre remained good, there seemed little enthusiasm for involvement from the staff teams there, and we then temporarily lost our main ally in the Centre to long-term sick leave. On-going vandalism including fire-setting and rubbish dumping was morale-sapping over the summer, but reduced once some members began to use the exercise equipment regularly.

The woodland had principally been seen as a return-to-health and well-being resource to the Medical Centre and as a green space for the local community, whilst not directly promoting woodland, wild-life activities, or woodland crafts. A whittling workshop held on-site in July had been enjoyable for its few participants, but also highlighted the need to make the space more inviting; for shade and shelter to be more easily set up; refreshments more easily provided; and the space needed to feel more wood-like until the young trees planted on the banks have grown big enough to be more obvious. It was important for access to be easier for whichever of its uses, and its open spaces needed to be level, and made safer to walk and run on. Beyond this need for basic landscaping, though, it was felt a lot of woodland skill and craft opportunities were being missed by contracting out the work, for example, grass needed to be mowed, hedges planted and created, revetments made and installed, all of which could provide training and experience for members and volunteers.

Prospect was therefore firmly re-centred on providing resources for training opportunities and events that meet MCF's, its members' and volunteers' needs as well as the surgeries' potential need for green exercise opportunities for their patients, and the local community's access to a variety of green spaces. Working parties were planned for working on opening up more space; providing safe seating and shelter for both good and bad weather activities; establishing a tree nursery; planting a variety of hedgerows; establishing a wood-store for training activities; and further tree planting. Training courses in using scythes for mowing and hedge-laying are planned, as well as regular drop-in craft sessions. Once this higher level of activity has been established, we will explore providing Green Gym sessions for local GP surgeries to support through social prescribing.

Craig Hughes, Project Leader and his team showed great forbearance e in waiting for the Trustees to come up with this approach, and they then had to dig even deeper as three working parties were cancelled because of snow! However, they are now off to a good start in making Prospect Community Wood the public's gateway to MCF and its activities.

Ken Timms
Chair
28th May 2018