

Malvern Community Forest Annual General Meeting, April 2019-March 2020

Prospect Community Woodland Report

We started the year with working parties concentrating on clearing the small rubble mound, and getting any larger stones off-site as they were being used in vandalism. We hoped to complete this over the summer, to prepare for more works over the autumn/winter to make the site accessible and interesting as well as less vulnerable to vandalism.

It took a long time for the Medical Centre to remove the stones and debris, as they had agreed. The metal fencing was commandeered by a group of wood-elves over the summer holidays, to defend their den in the woods. It seems they were attempting to break records for the amount of rubbish they could generate, often thwarted by Andrew's persistence in clearing it. Thankfully, much of the rubbish was out of sight from the main pathways and the glade provided a changing glorious display of wild flowers throughout the summer.

We therefore decided to manage the site as a nature reserve and a green space, rather than a park-like space. The glade will get an annual cutting down of all growth, clearing potentially hazardous objects, and leaving wild plants to then grow. Paths will continue to be managed throughout the year. Both approaches have benefits for health and well-being, and to replace the emphasis on exercise (and vandalised equipment), we hope planting and caring for further trees here will benefit the community. Vandalism at the site needs to be tackled head on which will need to involve the local community, initially working with local councillors.

The autumn turned very wet, and the winter was wet and stormy, limiting our activities on the site considerably. And then Covid-19 arrived in March to further disrupt our planning!

Our licence for the site expired in December, and a new one with minor modifications was agreed with the Prospect Medical Centre. Hopefully we will be able to get matters under way at the end of the summer into autumn.

This report has been written in June 2020, and it was with sadness that we recently learned of the death of Owen Manning on the 5th May, who was inspirational and instrumental in designing the original layout of the site, turning it from a toxic waste site and drug den into something positive and healthy for the community. He also gave a generous donation to MCF several months ago. We will honour him by carrying on our development of this site, building on his vision. Once it is possible to do so without being vandalised, we will erect something fitting to remember him by and express our gratitude.