

BOX COMMUNITY WOOD

Report on activities

1st January 2022

to

31st December 2022

Registered charity

number 1169429



Background

Box Wood has traditionally been used by Box residents and visitors for a variety of recreational purposes over many years. Originally thought to have been created by mill workers for access to local woollen mills in the Avening and Nailsworth valleys, the numerous footpaths are now used for walking, educational activities for local children, exercising (including dogs), spotting the indigenous wildlife as well as continuing to provide access to neighbouring villages and other locations; benefits that we can all enjoy.

Box Community Wood (BCW) is an independent charitable organisation, established specifically to own Box Wood on behalf of the local community and to protect and manage it as an amenity for the foreseeable future.

BCW raised funds locally and acquired Box Wood on behalf of the community, in order to make it available for the enjoyment of the public in general, to conserve and manage the woodland and to protect it from any possible future development.

It was recognised that the trustees of BCW would not have the necessary expertise or resources to manage the wood in the longer term, and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT) agreed to enter into a 99 year lease as our tenant, to manage and conserve the wood. This includes the development of an ongoing, medium term management plan, obligations to manage its sustainability, and insurance against probable risks.

Between February 2017 and the date of this report, extensive wildlife audits have taken place and a programme of scrub clearance, footpath clearing and general management, including tree safety inspections, have taken place and will continue, organised by GWT and manned by their land management team, which is supported by enthusiastic local volunteers.

Box Wood is fully open to the public, with footpaths, fencing, gates, signage and general access having been massively improved. The intense activity and remarkable enthusiasm around the purchase of Box Wood has raised local awareness, and its use by villagers, the local community in general and even those travelling from further afield has greatly increased in the period since its acquisition by BCW.



Charitable Purposes

The charitable organisation **Box Community Wood** was formed with the specific intention of acquiring Box Wood on behalf of the local community, in order to preserve the integrity of the woodland into the future, and to protect Box Wood from future development. Box Wood is itself an area of natural beauty, adjacent to Box Conservation Area, both of which are contained within the Cotswold Area of

Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Under the ownership of Box Community Wood, Box Wood has been made wholly accessible to all members of the public, attracting local people and those from further afield to the great outdoors so that they can enjoy and appreciate this unique piece of Gloucestershire's natural countryside. Box Wood is carefully managed for the benefit of wildlife, flora, fauna and the general environment.

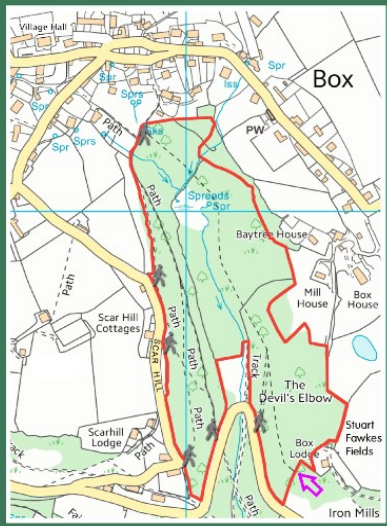
Box Community Wood, in cooperation with local educational organisations, will maintain and develop opportunities within Box Wood for educational purposes. One trustee of Box Community Wood is specifically nominated by an educational organisation to ensure that educational

opportunities are considered in all aspects of the wood's maintenance and development.

Box Community Wood has a strong interest in working with young people, as well as disadvantaged and hard to reach groups, with a particular interest in the health and wellbeing benefits of being outdoors. Box Wood is available to play a part in educational organisations' outdoor curricula.

Box Wood

Welcome



This woodland is owned on behalf of the local community by Box Community Wood (registered charity number 1169429) and managed by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.

The purchase of this woodland was initiated by Box Village Society with generous donations from local residents and with support and contributions from Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, The Langtree Trust, Minchinhampton Parish Council and Novalis Trust.



Protecting Gloucestershire's **Wildlife** for the Future
Find out more at www.gloucestershiREWildlifeTrust.co.uk
Telephone: 01452 383333
Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust registered charity number 232580

Practical Aims of Box Community Wood

- Ownership of Box Wood, on behalf of the community
- Year-round access to Box Wood for everyone
- Protection of Box Wood from future development
- Ongoing care and maintenance of the woodland
- Footpaths will be kept open and maintained, including public rights of way
- Protection and encouragement of indigenous wildlife
- Preservation and restoration of ancient woodland
- Insurance against probable risks



Public Benefits of BCW's actions

- Box Wood is now protected from development
- Box Wood is now fully open and accessible to the public
- Footpaths are open and maintained
- Wildlife is protected and encouraged

Box Community Wood has complied with its duty to have due regard to the guidance on public benefit, as published by The Charities Commission, in exercising its powers and duties.

Practical Conservation Projects Undertaken during 2022

2022 was the fifth anniversary of the purchase in February 2017. The purchase followed three long years of negotiations and fundraising. Since then, there have been many improvements made in the Wood, both for visitors and for wildlife.

Much of the work has been to enhance pedestrian access to the reserve, installing kissing gates and enabling paths to then form circular walks, including through to the adjoining GWT Stuart Fawkes nature reserve via the National Trust owned Iron Mills Common. The 'Clearing' has been significantly widened and, following two generous donations, locally sourced oak benches have been installed so that those walking through could stop and enjoy the tranquility.

Early this year another donation provided a number of new tree plantings in the area below the Wilkinson Gate where several trees have been lost to ash dieback and, before that, Dutch elm disease. Temporary netting has been placed around the new trees, mainly holly and yew, to discourage deer from grazing the young shoots. Some more box shrubs were included in the donation, and they have been planted near the clearing, where box is already growing successfully.

Meanwhile the trustees of Box Wood, who hold the deeds on behalf of the community, have invested in a major project to add a new set of steps alongside an old but awkward stile and which now form part of the main footpath into Box Wood from Pensile Road (Devil's Elbow). The new steps have been fitted with iron railings incorporating a new gate, making an attractive as well as a safer and more cow resistant entrance. Our sincere thanks go to the Novalis Trust, who very kindly provided the design and labour for the construction of the steps, and particularly to Thomas, Saman and Rhys who worked hard to ensure that Box Wood now has a safer and very worthy entrance from Devil's Elbow.

Projects Planned by BCW Trustees for 2023

Felicity Smith, a longtime Box resident who sadly passed away, loved Box Wood. Even when illness prevented her from walking down the paths, she insisted on seeing photographs of how Box Wood was progressing, and made further donations for tree plantings. It was Felicity's wish that a fund be set up after her death, requesting that any donations should go to Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust exclusively for the maintenance and development of Box Wood. A total of £3000 was raised.

Several ideas were put forward as to how best to use the fund, but the trustees have agreed with GWT to invest it in a scheme to create a new clearing in an area of the woodland known as "The Spinney", which is adjacent to Stuart Fawkes Fields. Currently The Spinney is populated largely by dead and dying non-native trees such as Japanese larch and Scots pine, creating a very dark and lifeless woodland floor. The intention is to remove many of the overcrowded and fallen non-native trees, thus bringing life to this tired area and encouraging native wild plants to grow, and to introduce a few more native deciduous trees to encourage wildlife. Work will commence early in 2023.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2022

BOX COMMUNITY WOOD - FINANCIAL SUMMARY								
1st January 2022 to 31st December 2022								
	DATE	CASH AT BANK		INCOME			EXPENDITURE	
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£
		Current Account	Reserve Account	Donations	Misc. Income	Bank Interest	Improvements	Miscell.
Opening Balances	01/01/2022	1210.05	12462.87					
Insurance		-412.56						-412.56
Wayleave Payment			61.17		61.17			
Annual Brochure Printing		-68.00						-68.00
Donations (3)		120.00	1000.00	1120.00				
Gift Aid		270.27		270.27				
Devils Elbow stile and gate		-2464.56					-2464.56	
Transfers		3000.00	-3000.00					
Bank Interest			61.01			61.01		
Closing Balances	31/12/2022	1655.20	10585.05					
				1390.27	61.17	61.01	-2464.56	-480.56
Total Income					1512.45			
Total Expenditure					-2945.12			
Net Deficit for year (income less expenditure)					-1432.67			

ACCOUNTING POLICIES AND RESERVES

Box Community Wood is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and its annual income is less than £500,000. It has therefore prepared its accounting records on the 'Receipts and Payments' basis. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in notes to the accounts and comply with the charity's governing document, the *Charities Act 2011* and *Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice* applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the *Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities* published on 16th July 2014.

BCW trustees have decided that it would be prudent to retain a modest cash reserve against any future management expenses that may be incurred. A proportion of this has been invested in an accessible interest-bearing account in the short term, and the Reserves policy will continue to be monitored at the discretion of the trustees.



Thomas Pentzek