

# BOX COMMUNITY WOOD

**Report on activities of  
Box Community Wood**

**1st January 2023**

**to**

**31st December 2023**

**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 pedestrian 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, common land 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 its wildlife, 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 supervised by their land management team but carried out largely 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.

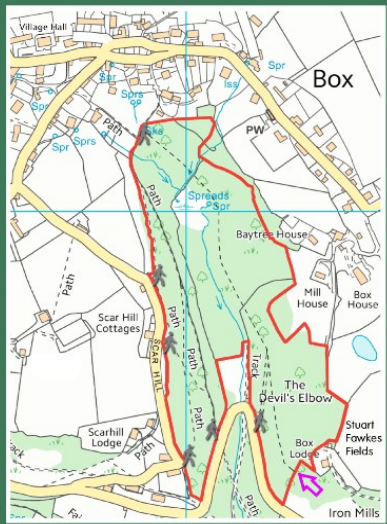
Box Community Wood, in cooperation with local educational organisations, will maintain and develop opportunities within Box Wood for educational purposes. One trustee of Box Community Wood is specifically nominated by an educational organisation to ensure that educational

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.gloucestershirowildlifetrust.co.uk](http://www.gloucestershirowildlifetrust.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 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 2023

*(report by Beris Hanks — chairman of Box Community Wood trustees)*

The first two months of 2023 saw furious activity in Box Wood and Stuart Fawkes Fields as tree maintenance contractors were brought in by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to fell dead and diseased ash trees. A second tree maintenance team with trucks and heavy lifting gear worked to thin The Spinney (a small, overcrowded area of Box Wood adjoining Stuart Fawkes Fields), felling several of the densely packed, non-native larch and pine trees that were preventing sunlight reaching the woodland floor. Much of the cost of the tree felling in The Spinney was paid for using “Felicity’s Fund”, a large sum of money given in memory of Felicity Smith, who loved Box Wood.

Large, overhanging trees were felled in the area below the Wilkinson Gate, and several other trees were cut or pollarded in the area just below the pond. Although primarily for safety reasons, the work has created a peaceful, open area next to the stream. Several logs have been cut and left as stools for children (or adults) to sit on, and here, too, we are hoping that wild flowers will soon begin to blossom where previously there was little sunlight.

March is considered to be the last month in which to safely remove or prune trees and shrubs, as birds start nesting. Therefore, Box Wood GWT volunteers then turned their attention to repairing gates, steps and other general maintenance. This included the rapid removal of Himalayan Balsam which was particularly prevalent in the highest part of the wood and around the pond area until two or three years ago, when the GWT volunteers set about clearing them. Bees love the attractive, pink flowers, but the pods disperse seeds over a huge area when they explode in late July to September, and new plants quickly monopolise the banks of the streams at the expense of our native vegetation.

Ever since Box Wood was purchased by the community in 2016, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT) has encouraged the volunteers to consider Box Wood, Stuart Fawkes Fields and, to some extent, Iron Mills Common as one large nature reserve. Although the fields are owned by GWT and Iron Mills Common by the National Trust, wildlife has no understanding of property boundaries. There is no doubt that properties surrounding the woods and the fields, many of which have large gardens, also offer a home or feeding grounds to those same creatures

With this in mind, the GWT volunteers then turned some attention to Stuart Fawkes Fields. The volunteers spent several Thursday morning sessions cutting back brambles and bindweed that were starting to smother the new double hedgerow running east to west across the fields, planted to increase the ‘connectivity’ of local wildlife areas. With global warming, and the danger of species declining in isolated ‘islands’, there is an increasing need for additional ‘wildlife corridors’ to enable species movement and migration.

Box Wood links directly not only with the Stuart Fawkes Fields (both managed by GWT) but also with Iron Mills Common, ‘the W’ and Minchinhampton and Rodborough Commons, all managed by the National Trust. Also, when particularly considering woodland species, Box Wood has near neighbours in the extensive area of Gatcombe Wood and Hazel Wood. Box Wood therefore plays an important part in this jigsaw of connectivity.

*Steve Hemmings retired from his trusteeship of Box Community Wood in April 2024. Steve was Chair of the Trustees for seven years and he also played a hugely important role in preserving the footpath rights, in the acquisition of the wood, and in reaching the agreement with the GWT regarding their overall management and conservation work. Although no longer a trustee Steve continues to volunteer, keep an active eye on the woods and to help out in any way that he can. We all owe him a huge debt of gratitude.*



## Box Wood Volunteers *(by Bob Common — our new BCW trustee)*

Over the past number of years, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT) have organised work parties to tackle the myriad tasks involved in managing the Wood. These sessions have been open to volunteers from across the county and have been regularly attended by a number of Box village residents.

Following the covid pandemic, however, GWT suffered a significant fall in funding whilst the number of reserves for which it was responsible stayed pretty much constant. GWT accordingly reorganised itself with a number of staff reductions and consequent reprioritisation of its remaining resources. The impact felt at Box Wood was that the frequency and timings of volunteer sessions was reduced.

As a way to help GWT maintain its levels of service to Box Wood and other reserves, regular Box Wood volunteers had a number of discussions with GWT with the aim of setting up more “care and maintenance” sessions, under the direction of GWT but with local volunteers providing work planning and coordination and the provision of First Aid cover during sessions.

In September 2023, GWT agreed that we could initiate sessions to run on a fortnightly basis, and they provided the various tools needed to execute tasks. The Box Community Wood trustees invested in a brush cutter for which two volunteers have “tickets” to operate this equipment. The first locally organised session took place on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023 and over the final quarter, seven sessions were held.

Tremendous progress has been made in tackling the various tasks to maintain the Wood and this is summarised in the table below:

| Task                                                 | Progress                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                      |                                                                                                      |
| Cut back laurel regrowth                             | Areas cleared include along the main path, in front of the lower (original) entrance on Pensile Road |
| Clear regrowth away from main paths through the Wood | Regular cutting back to widen paths to and around the waterfall/pond area                            |
| Repairs to steps at various points in the Wood       | Repairs at Wilkinson Gate and at various points completed                                            |
| Widen the Ride from the Glade to Iron Mills Common   | Completed to allow easy flight paths for bats, butterflies and moths                                 |
| Keep vehicle entrances free from regrowth            | All vehicle entrances are clear                                                                      |
|                                                      |                                                                                                      |

The local volunteer group has continued its work in the Box Wood with an average of six volunteers turning out every fortnight over the year to date. We maintain regular contact with GWT and are pleased that, in addition to the locally organised sessions, GWT continue to organise groups when more manpower or more specialised tools (for example to tackle ash die back) are needed.



## FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2023

| BOX COMMUNITY WOOD - FINANCIAL SUMMARY         |            |                 |                 |           |              |               |              |          |
|------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|--------------|---------------|--------------|----------|
| 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023         |            |                 |                 |           |              |               |              |          |
|                                                | DATE       | CASH AT BANK    |                 | INCOME    |              |               | EXPENDITURE  |          |
|                                                |            | £               | £               | £         | £            | £             | £            | £        |
|                                                |            | Current Account | Reserve Account | Donations | Misc. Income | Bank Interest | Improvements | Miscell. |
| Opening Balances                               | 01/01/2023 | 1655.2          | 10585.05        |           |              |               |              |          |
| Insurance                                      |            | -420.98         |                 |           |              |               |              | -420.98  |
| Wayleave Payment                               |            |                 | 61.17           |           | 61.17        |               |              |          |
| Annual Brochure Printing                       |            | -47.00          |                 |           |              |               |              | -47.00   |
| Donations (4)                                  |            | 450.00          |                 | 450.00    |              |               |              |          |
| Gift Aid                                       |            |                 |                 |           |              |               |              |          |
| Improvement work                               |            | -689.00         |                 |           |              |               | -689.00      |          |
| Transfers                                      |            |                 |                 |           |              |               |              |          |
| Bank Interest                                  |            |                 | 121.77          |           |              | 121.77        |              |          |
| Misc. expenses                                 |            | -43.14          |                 |           |              |               |              | -43.14   |
| Closing Balances                               | 31/12/2023 | 905.08          | 10767.99        |           |              |               |              |          |
|                                                |            |                 |                 | 450.00    | 61.17        | 121.77        | -689.00      | -511.12  |
| Total Income                                   |            |                 |                 |           | 632.94       |               |              |          |
| Total Expenditure                              |            |                 |                 |           | -1200.12     |               |              |          |
| Net Deficit for year (Income less expenditure) |            |                 |                 |           | -567.18      |               |              |          |

## 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.





## BOX COMMUNITY WOOD TRUSTEES

Beris Hanks — Chairman  
 Martin Smith — Secretary  
 Roger Ogle — Treasurer  
 Bob Common  
 Thomas Pentzek

## BCW REGISTERED DETAILS

Charity number 1169429

Registered address:  
 c/o Roger Ogle  
 Laburnams, Box, Stroud, Gloucestershire,  
 GL6 9HG.