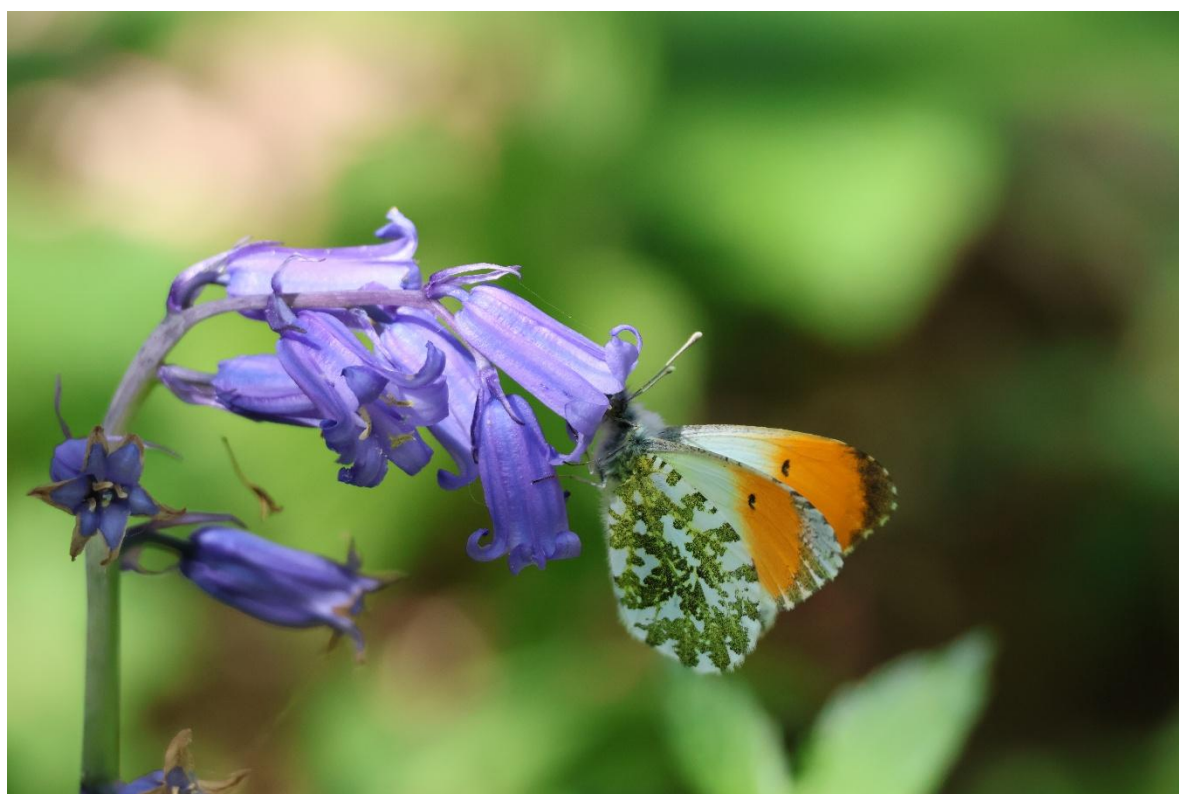


## New England Wood Trustees Report on 2025



### **1 Aims and Purposes**

The charity exists to maintain and preserve New England Wood, Cuckfield – which the charity owns - as a nature reserve and for the benefit of local people.

### **2 Objectives and Activities**

The charity seeks to ensure that as many local people as possible can benefit from using the wood for recreation, relaxation, volunteering and study of the natural world, whether of their own volition or in organised groups. To that end our volunteers maintain an extensive path network within the wood and multiple access points, and the trustees and volunteers support external groups in using the wood. We are also happy to supply wood materials to people, but access makes this challenging beyond small amounts.

Our contractors and volunteers work to keep the wood and path network safe as paths degrade and trees become unsafe.

To maintain a diverse thriving environment for nature, our volunteers:

- i) Engage in scrub clearance to maintain long term open spaces and a new ride
- ii) Coppice the understorey on rotation
- iii) Do some selective thinning

according to a long term plan agreed with the Forestry Commission for 2025-2034.

Where there has been significant felling – principally to manage safety around ash die back – we also do some supplementary tree planting.

### **3 Achievements and Performance**

#### **a) Expansion**

In early 2025 we were made aware that the 12 acres from the east of the wood up to Whiteman's Green were coming on the market later in the year. The trustees agreed we would like to buy it and that it serves the purposes of the charity to do so, but that we should aim to raise the money externally for the purchase, associated costs, and the likely costs of the first 5 years of management. We approached about 75 potential donors to assess enthusiasm. We secured over forty pledges and applied successfully for over £40,000 of grants before bidding and winning, estimating that we could raise the balance from the generosity of the village. Huge thanks to the over 250 local residents and businesses who contributed and to the grant givers: Cuckfield Parish Council, Ansty and Staplefield Parish Council, The Ernst Kleinwort Charitable Trust and the High Weald National Landscape Management Partnership, through whom we exceeded our target. At year end we had raised the funds for the project and were in the final throes of drafting documents to exchange and complete. The transaction completed in February 2026 with the fundraising target exceeded by a small amount.

While a few priorities have been established – improving the public footpaths, felling some dangerous ash with die back and clearing scrub in the southern meadow – we intend to make a long term plan for the area after a year or two of surveying it.

#### **b) Benefitting local people – maintaining safe access and supporting user groups**

##### **New Seating, steps and path surfaces.**

Thanks to Iain Pringle, 2025 mayor of the Independent State of Cuckfield for a generous donation from the mayoral funds which enabled us to replace the seating circle with new benches topped with planks of oak milled in the wood from an oak tree that fell in 2022, all milled and built by our expert volunteers. This has been of enormous benefit both to our volunteers for coffee time, for casual users of the wood who stop there far more often than previously, and particularly to external groups such as 1<sup>st</sup> Cuckfield Scouts and those organised by the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust who bring dozens of people in to the wood.

The run of steps up from the bridge nearest to the hut was replaced owing to decay, and a run of steps in the north west corner was replaced as a badger sett had begun to extend underneath it - and the badgers have since collapsed the old steps as their impressive earthworks continue. With four constantly evolving setts in the north west corner of the wood, its becoming increasingly difficult to maintain access safely and we may have to permanently close a section of path in the future.

With 2025 beginning and ending with wet winters, we split much of the straightest ash which had been felled in to planks to add to the paths to keep them navigable through the winters. In addition to making the wood more accessible to the public and easing volunteers' movement around the wood, this has also prevented the usual winter widening of wet paths as each user steps just a little further to the edge of the path in the hope of a secure footing. In turn this has led to a significant increase in the woodland flowers flourishing at the path margins.

Over the summer months volunteers were frequently out with scythes clearing encroaching bramble and sedge which constantly try to close the paths. As the wood has become more open from felling ash, this task is growing in intensity each year and we have tried out a brush-cutter.

## **Ash Dieback**

2025 was another busy year dealing with ash dieback, a fungal disease which is devastating the ash trees in the wood and causing safety challenges. As usual we began the year clearing up what was felled the year before and finished the year felling some more trees identified as dangerous.

After a very wet 2024 in which many ash trees showed encouraging signs of recovery, the dry 2025 saw significantly more deterioration, perhaps the most rapid deterioration we've seen. We have kept the whole path network open throughout the period but continue to warn users at the entrance not to use the wood in high winds.

Of the ash trees we had four years ago before we began felling at scale, over 80% are now firmly dead or felled and no more than a few dozen remain reasonably healthy, with none in great health.

Half the ash that was in the wood in 2022 is now down, at a cost of just under £20,000, mostly financed by the generosity of Adelphi Holdings over the first two winters and Sussex Lund in the more recent two. Given the rapid deterioration in 2025 there will likely be more felling required in the next few winters. The significant majority of the remaining standing ash is now well away from the paths.

## **Organised Activities**

1<sup>st</sup> Cuckfield Cubs had another positive evening in the wood, identifying trees, mapreading, and making smores.

We ran a second successful Dawn Chorus Walk in early May.

Holy Trinity Church used the wood for a very well attended summer family walk with dogs.

Ockenden Manor again used the wood for their Forest Bathing as part of their Full Moon Retreats.

Our volunteers assisted in setting up the Christmas trees for Holy Trinity's very successful Christmas Tree Festival in December.

The Leaky Dam volunteer groups' activity is described below.

If there's anything you'd like to do in the wood, we're keen to help.

## **c) Managing for Nature**

### **Volunteer Program**

Volunteers began 2025 coppicing overstood hazel, felling and stacking decaying ash trees and clearing bramble and sedge on the new ride, which is looking better each year. They finished the 2024/5 winter's work coppicing the understorey and making a deadwood hedge on the west facing slope east of the seating area.

We began spring by planting 280 saplings from the Woodland Trust in areas cleared of ash with dieback – principally along the edges of the new ride and Bramble clearing. In the dry months that followed these needed extensive watering but have survived well.

The 2025 volunteer work finished clearing the permanent open spaces and doing more work opening up the ride.

### **Leaky Dams**

This year we made our first venture for some time in to actively managing the water flows. After a couple of years of false starts, in 2025 we added six new leaky dams and over a dozen brash bundle barriers in intermittent surface water channels. These help with flooding downstream, provide an interesting microclimate for many insects, and improve the wood's resilience to a warming climate by preserving more water within the wood, particularly from any intense summer storms. We were ably assisted by the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust (OART). They helped us find the best places and did nearly all the painful bureaucracy that goes with any work in water channels (almost 100 pages of documentation across various applications, more than half of which were written specifically for the site). They then led our volunteers in doing some of the work and also organised external groups of volunteers from the Environment Agency, West Sussex County Council (including their leader and chief executive) and UK Power Networks. We are eternally in debt to the amazing Tara Dawson at OART for managing the whole project so expertly and with enormous enthusiasm come rain or shine.

## **Owls**

The Woodland Flora and Fauna group agreed to maintain and service the existing barn owl box and we bought an additional very smart box from them which they installed in 2025. Sadly there were no eggs this year in what was the worst year in decades for barn owls rearing young across the county. Hopefully we'll have more positive news on owls in the 2026 report.

## **Butterflies**

With a very sunny spring much of the wildlife had a very good year. We started a butterfly transect which showed up 19 species in the wood. The new ride is continuing to develop as we clear more of it and was a hotspot for insects.

Perhaps the best example of how well the wildlife is responding to the increased open space is the peak counts of silver washed fritillary butterflies found in a single walkthrough of the wood for the last few years. 2022: 1, 2023: 2, 2024: 5, 2025: 18.

## **Birds**

Huge thanks to Helen Crabtree for servicing and surveying the many small nest boxes within the wood and noting what else is nesting as per her attached report.

Throughout the 2024/5 winter we could regularly hear lesser spotted woodpeckers and a pair were seen together in March. While they were heard again in early May we couldn't find the nest and don't know if they successfully fledged. There is plenty of good habitat for them so fingers crossed, and for 2026.

## **4) Financial Report**

The numbers are all pretty clear in the Accounts which split out the new land purchase-related money raised and spent as Restricted so we won't repeat them here.

The new land purchase dominated the finances in 2025. Having raised all the money but not closed on buying the new land, our finances show a substantial gain. For the expansion we successfully raised over our target of £215,000 to cover all the costs of purchase including legal fees et.c., some initial safety felling, and to provide some funds for surveying and early years' management. We expect to have a significant balance of restricted funds for the new area once all the initial costs are paid. This is important as it is unclear so far that the existing volunteer model will be sufficient for all the work needed in the new area and we may need more contractor work, especially in the next 2-3 years while the new ride and ash die back work remain demanding in the old wood.



Looking at the activity not related to the purchase, we made a gain there too thanks to a generous donation early in the year from ISOC which more than covered the costs of the new seating, Sussex Lund paying us for the 2024 felling, and a greater number of one off donations than usual not tied to the purchase but likely inspired by the publicity around it.

The charity is in a robust financial position and expects to still be once all the costs related to the purchase have been paid.

## **5) Thank yous**

A huge thank you to:

All our wonderful donors and grant givers without whom we couldn't have expanded the wood as we now have.

All our volunteers whose amazing work keeps the site in fantastic shape for nature and safe for users to enjoy.

My fellow trustees who have been kept much busier than usual providing much wise counsel and work on the purchase.

Hayley Wicker-Bradbury who volunteered so much of her time and professional expertise helping us with the fundraising campaign.

2025 ISOC mayor Iain Pringle for the generous ISOC donation which funded the new seating that has been very much appreciated by all and a huge asset with all the external groups visiting this year.



Tara Dawson from OART leading a volunteer group using the new seating

# New England Wood Trust

Registered CIO No. 1188549

## Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet

as at 31st December 2025

### New England Wood Trust Income and Expenditure Statement For Year Ended 31/12/2025

DETAIL			NOTES	Year Ending 31/12/2025	Restricted 31/12/2025	Unrestricted 31/12/2025	Year Ending 31/12/2024
				£	£	£	£
A1 Receipts	Interest Received :-	Bank Interest - Current A/C	2	38.00	-	38.00	35.00
		Bank Interest - Gold A/C		850.00	-	850.00	253.00
		Interest on Virgin Money Bond		897.00	-	897.00	750.00
	Donations			228,322.00	213,100.00	15,222.00	5,469.00
	RPA Grant						1,500.00
TOTAL INCOME				230,107.00	213,100.00	17,007.00	8,007.00
A3 Payments							
	Public Liability Insurance		3	201.00	-	201.00	201.00
	Woodland Infrastructure			493.00	-	493.00	-
	Woodland Consumables		4	509.00	-	509.00	573.00
	Tools		5	233.00	30.00	203.00	304.00
	Room Hire, Subscription and Other Admin Costs.		6	184.00	-	184.00	685.00
	Contractor Felling			2,550.00	-	2,550.00	2,700.00
	Test transfer to Gold Account					-	10.00
	Legal and other fees re: proposed land purchase			8,114.00	8,114.00	-	-
	TOTAL PAYMENTS			12,284.00	8,144.00	4,140.00	4,473.00
Net of Receipts / Payments				217,823.00	204,956.00	12,867.00	3,534.00
A6 Cash Funds at last year end				48,624.00	-	48,624.00	-
Cash Funds at this year end				266,447.00	204,956.00	61,491.00	3,534.00

### Statement of Assets and Liabilities at the end of the period As At 31/12/2025

DETAIL			Notes	As @ 31/12/2025	Restricted 31/12/2025	Unrestricted 31/12/2025	As @ 31/12/2024
ASSETS							
B1 Cash Funds	Cash in Bank - (CAF Current Account)			58,057.00	-	58,057.00	17,432.00
B1 Cash Funds	Cash in Bank - (CAF Gold Account)			186,743.00	183,309.00	3,434.00	10,442.00
B1 Cash Funds	Net Cash Bank Balance			244,800.00	183,309.00	61,491.00	27,874.00
B2 Other Monetary Assets	Term Deposit Account (Virgin)			21,647.00	21,647.00	-	20,750.00
B3 Investment Assets				-	-	-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	New England Wood						
NET ASSETS				266,447.00	204,956.00	61,491.00	48,624.00
LIABILITIES							
B5 Liabilities				-	-	-	-

CHAIRMAN :- Mr P T Boyle	TREASURER:- Mr H D Church
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## Notes to the Accounts For the Year Ended 31/12/2025

### Note 1

#### Valuation of Working Assets

The Trustee's policy is to fully write off the value of working assets in the year of their purchase.

### Note 2

#### Donations/Grants/Contract Payments

Source	2025	2024
New Woodland Purchase Campaign	220,273.25	-
Cuckfield Society	-	2,000.00
Cuckfield Parochial Church Council	-	50.00
Independent State of Cuckfield	1,000.00	-
Lund Contract Claim	3,354.00	-
Donations	3,695.18	2,418.96
RPA Grant	-	1,500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>228,322.43</b>	<b>5,968.96</b>

### Note 3

#### Woodland Infrastructure

Source	2025
Owl Box	135.00
Leaky Dams Regulatory Consents	300.00
QR Code discs for woodland entrances	58.05
<b>Total</b>	<b>493.05</b>

### Note 4

#### Woodland Consumables

Source	2025	2024
Chainsaw Oil	53.39	39.99
Chainsaw chain	22.50	172.43
Chainsaw Service	120.09	140.80
Tree guards	294.00	140.33
Wheelbarrow tyre & inner tube	11.95	-
Chainsaw sharpening files	6.99	-
Misc	-	79.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>508.92</b>	<b>572.55</b>

### Note 5

#### Tools

Source	2025	2025
Sumup Terminal	30.00	-
Scythe Handle	68.36	-
Lifting Tongs	134.97	85.48
Rag Fork	-	33.75
Club Hammer	-	20.29
Silky Saw	-	29.10
First Aid Kit	-	135.18
<b>Total</b>	<b>233.33</b>	<b>303.80</b>

### Note 6

#### Room Hire, Subscription/Charges & Courses

Source	2025	2024
Small Woods Association	42.00	42.00
CAF Bank Charges	60.00	60.00
Just Giving enhanced account fee	18.00	-
Room Hire for AGM & Trustee Meetings	64.05	48.00
Admin costs - Leaflet/card design etc	-	174.27
First Aid Course	-	360.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>184.05</b>	<b>684.27</b>

### Note 7

#### Restricted Assets

The restricted assets are for the purchase of additional land west of Manor Drive, costs associated with its purchase and early years of management of that land as per the fundraising campaign in 2025

**New England Wood Trust**

**Year Ended 31st December 2025**

**Report of the Independent Examiner to The Kite Trust**

I report to the trustees of New England Wood Trust on my examination of the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2025 which are set out on the attached pages.

***Respective responsibilities of trustee and examiner***

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

***Independent examiner's statement***

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the charity which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a "true and fair" view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: *Amy Beecroft*

Date: 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026

Name: Amy Beecroft

Relevant professional qualification or body: FCA

Address: 19 Newton Road, Lindfield, West Sussex, RH16 2NB