The Friends of Stara Wood s

Chairman's Report and Working Party Report 2025

We all know that Stara is a unique and special place, but few visitors realize how unusual it is for such a community resource to be an independent Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Community Woodlands are increasingly common across the country, but most are owned by local authorities, Parish Councils, larger charities, or private landowners. Very few are owned by the Friends themselves, and those which are independent seem to be quite small, 3 – 5 acres in size, so thanks to Anne's generosity, we have such a wonderful resource under our own stewardship.

We calculate that on average, it costs around £3500 each year to maintain the woods, paths, bridge, and car park. This is cash we must raise from Friends and supporters year in year out to cover costs such as insurance, emergency tree work, stone aggregate for paths and other materials. Next year, the bridge will need painting as it is beginning to rust in places. This is too difficult a job for volunteers so we will need to fundraise additional sums to meet this cost.

The number of visitors to the woods has remained high, particularly since the Covid lockdowns, which has put an increased strain on committee members, volunteers and fund raisers to cope with additional wear and tear, and the mitigation required to compensate for the impact of visitors on such a sensitive site as Stara. In the future, we hope to have sufficient funds to employ more contract staff to undertake more of the 'heavy duty ' tasks which need addressing.

On the 23rd of November Kaleido and Willow singers will be in concert at Rilla Mill yet again raising funds for Stara Woods.

Thanks to Piers for setting up the 'Just Giving' page, linked to the QR code next to the car park. This is working well.

Working Parties have again tended to react to pressures from visitors, keeping routes open and as safe as possible. We are still struggling with dangerous ash trees infected with Ash Dieback disease and have had to temporarily close the top path to Treovis which is lined by a number of badly infected trees. Moving the boardwalk bridge next to the car park has been completed. Thanks to all who helped with this epic job. We are also making good progress in developing more wildlife monitoring as well as removal of invasive plant species. Volunteers' numbers have held up well throughout the year, so we are indebted to all those who come out in all weathers to get tired and dirty for no reward.

Having replanted quite a few areas of felled woodland over the past 20 years, we have many fast-growing young trees re-establishing diverse broadleaf woodland. Unfortunately, these are just at a stage where they are vulnerable to attack by grey squirrels, which strip the bark from the upper branches. We have a large number of trees which are potentially at risk of damage so next spring we intend to reduce the grey squirrel population through shooting. Trapping is not an option at Stara where we have dormice and other protected species, as small numbers of accidental catches are possible. Shooting will require careful safety measures to be adopted as well as effective publicity.

Next year will be a busy time as we address the next conifer felling project. This is part of our 50-year plan to restore all of Stara to its original ancient woodland condition. We hope to fell the area of large Douglas Fir trees at the top of Colquite Wood, coming down the slope as far as the old Leat (The large conifer trees along the riverside path will all be retained). Removing timber from Stara is difficult and requires double handling as well as transporting across neighbouring farmland. This is expensive but we have received generous support from the Woodland Trust, towards the cost of ancient woodland restoration. The work will be noisy, messy, and disruptive. We are planning operations carefully to minimise their effect on wildlife, but it will take time to achieve an overall improvement in habitat quality.

Simon Humphreys

FRIENDS OF STARA WOODS C.I.O.

TREASURER'S REPORT 2025

Prepared for the Trustees of the Friends of Stara Woods C.I.O. by Laurence Smith, Treasurer, and presented at the Annual General Meeting on 16th November 2025

TOTAL FUNDS AS AT 31/10/2024 BROUGHT FORWARD **£7,825.80**

EXPENDITURE

		This year 01/11/2024 to 31/10/25	*Previous year 01/11/2023 to 31/10/24*	Breakdown in 2024/25
(a)	Project work	£1,879.13	*£3,110.18*	(a) £162.00 reimbursement to Laurence for purchase of aggregate (b) £696.00 Woodlands & Wetlands for clearing fallen oak tree (c) £552.00 Woodlands & Wetlands for felling work (d) £202.25 reimbursement to Laurence for purchase of concrete posts and Postcrete (e) £18.19 reimbursement to Laurence for purchase of bridge timber (f) £168.00 reimbursement to Laurence for purchase of aggregate (g) £39.71 reimbursement to Laurence for purchase of Postcrete and cement (h) £40.98 reimbursement to Pete for purchase of decking screws
(b)	Purchase of tools and equipment	£39.54	*£287.09*	£39.54 reimbursement to Simon and Leela for purchase of bowsaw blades and First Aid kit supplies
(c)	Running costs	£321.80	*£262.05*	(a) £27.00 for AGM coffees (b) £55.00 for First Aid training via LAPWG (c) £239.80 renewal of annual public and employer liability insurance
	TOTAL	**£2,240.47**	***£3,659.32***	

INCOME

		This year 01/11/2024 to 31/10/25	*Previous year 01/11/2023 to 31/10/24*	Breakdown in 2024/25
(a)	Grants	£9,141.00	*£200.00*	(a) Woodland Trust grant of £9,041.00 (b) Linkinhorne Parish Council grant of £100 for boardwalk
(b)	Donations	£443.27	*£487.90*	(a) £70.00 following Anne's appeal for raised subscriptions (b) £74.53 at Bioluminescence walks (c) £211.00 at Kaleido concert (d) £30.00 following Anne's talk at Pensilva WRVS (e) £10.00 for timber

				(f) £27.74 at Sterts' Environmental Fair (g) £20 for bridge
(c)	JustGiving	£46.77	*£0.00*	
(d)	Subscriptions	£1,286.00	*£1,343.50*	(a) Monthly order = £553.00 *(last year £455.50)* (b) Annual order = £733.00 *(last year £863.00)* (c) Annual cash/cheque = £0.00 *(last year £25.00)*
(e)	Gift Aid	£180.18	*£441.25*	
	TOTAL	**£11,097.22**	***£2,472.65***	

TOTAL FUNDS AS AT 31/10/2025 **£16,682.55**