



Small Woodland Owners' Group

Newsletter April 2017

Pleasure and peace in the woods
The Tree Charter branches out
SWOG summer meetings

SWOG meetings

We have several meetings arranged around the country. Unless otherwise stated they are free. Email judith@swog.org.uk for more details.

13 May horse-logging, High Stoop, County Durham 10.30am–3pm

Karen Moon is the owner of a unique piece of woodland on a windy hill on the edge of the North Pennines AONB, and about 14 miles west of Durham. Her nine acres were formerly owned by the local council and used partly as a picnic site. It is a mixed woodland, with oak, beech and rowan interspersed among a lot of conifer.

Karen has organized a horse-logging demonstration in her wood on 13 May. The day will start at 10.30 am and Charlie the horse logger will be present all day, either demonstrating or available with advice and to answer questions.

There is hard standing in the wood for parking and space available for a limited number of caravans. The Brown Horse Hotel/Pub is close by, either for refreshments or accommodation. If you would like to attend this free event, please email judith@swog.org.uk



20 May Perivale Wood, Greenford, West London

The Selbourne Society, managers of Perivale Wood in north-west London, have kindly agreed to host a meeting at their 11-acre ancient oak woodland, www.perivalewood.org.uk. It is thought to be one of the first nature reserves in the country, and the wood and has been managed largely by volunteers for over 40 years. There will be a woodland walk and a talk from the volunteers about management techniques.



Summer meetings: managing your woodlands for butterflies

A series of meetings will be held in conjunction with **Butterfly Conservation** to discuss managing woodland for butterflies. Butterflies are in decline throughout the UK and woodland owners can make a significant contribution to their survival.

2 July Plattershill Wood, Horsham

**23 July Longlands Wood (part of Tottington Wood)
near Small Dole**

30 July Coombewell Wood Lamberhurst

The meetings will be led by well known butterfly experts Neil Hulme and Steve Wheatley, who will explain in detail which species can be encouraged in each location and exactly what woodland owners can do to help. Please email judith@swog.org.uk if you would like to attend any of them.

Stargazing pack

As the weather gets warmer, a woodland owner's fancy turns to thoughts of spending nights under the stars in their woodland.

Few of us are a really significant distance from roads and conurbations, but most small woodlands benefit from a 'dark sky' effect, where light pollution is at least reduced. There is something magical about seeing stars twinkling through the woodland canopy, and many woodland species such as birds, bats, moths and insects also benefit greatly from reduced light pollution.

However, if you struggle separate your *Ursa Major* from your *Ursa Minor*, help is at hand. The Forestry Commission has published a *Beginner's Guide to Stargazing*, which is available free: www.forestry.gov.uk/stargazing



Written in association with BBC *Sky at Night* Magazine and intended for families, it is packed with useful facts and tips to engage children and help them to enjoy an evening's stargazing. It will help you to learn about constellations, navigate by the stars, play night-games and become a Forest-Star. It also lists the five Forestry Commission sites around the country which have been awarded 'Dark Sky Discovery Site' status, from Kielder Forest in Northumberland, to Queen Elizabeth Country Park in Hampshire.

Sussex Lund grants in the High Weald

Sussex Lund, the annual grant programme of Peter Baldwin and Lisbet Rausing, has been launched. The programme supports small-scale, practical projects that improve the ecology and landscape of the High Weald.

Charities, community groups, schools, churches, parish councils, farmers and

landowners are being invited to apply for grants of between £500 and £10,000.

Successful applications in 2016 resulted in improved hedgerow habitats, more flower-rich grassland, new ponds, reduced light pollution and more attractive and accessible community greenspace. A full list can be seen [here](#).

Sussex Lund will support projects that make tangible improvements to the High Weald, and that inspire wider change.



Who can apply?

If you are a private landowner or a for-profit organisation you will need to demonstrate that the landscape and public benefit is greater than any private gain.

For grant criteria and the application form, visit highweald.org/sussexlund or call the High Weald AONB Partnership on 01424 723011. The deadline for applications is Tuesday 2 May 2017.

Forestry in England – Seeing the Wood for the Trees was published by EFRA (Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee) on 21 March, the International Day of Forests. It is a wide-ranging document which throws down the gauntlet to Government to ensure that forestry is placed on a par with agriculture and other land uses in rural land management policy.

The Forestry Commission, Confor, the Royal Forestry Society and the Woodland Trust were among 70 witnesses to give oral evidence to the Inquiry. The EFRA sub-committee examined woodland planting and management, the grant schemes for forestry, the long-term strategy for forestry, and protections for woodlands and forests.

It discussed the total woodland coverage in Britain, which is one of the lowest in Europe at 13%, and reflected witnesses' concerns that Government planting targets are unlikely to be met. The Government has pledged to plant 11 million trees by 2020; this target is not likely to be attained until 2027 at current planting rates.

The grant system came under particular scrutiny, with several respondents condemning it as 'overly complex' and 'tortuous'. Stuart Goodall, Chief Executive of Confor, bluntly said that it 'is not fit for purpose' and anyone who has tried to navigate the system will know how complicated it is, with three different agencies involved. This system is partly blamed for the low planting rates in recent years.

The report advocates a review of the current grant system and recommends a simplification of a 'one-stop shop' for grant applications which will be in place by the time Britain exits the EU.

RFS Chief Executive Simon Lloyd said, 'We welcome this report which shines a light on forestry's often overlooked and under-valued contribution to the economy, environment and society. The report's call to simplify the

Countryside Stewardship Scheme is welcome, but is not sufficient to accelerate new woodland creation. The in-built barriers to forestry in current land management policies need to be removed and Brexit is a one-time opportunity to do so.'

The Woodland Trust gave evidence to the committee regarding the protection of ancient woodlands. The report follows up their recommendations to give ancient woodlands better protection under the planning system. It also advises the compilation of a public register of ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees, to be updated annually.

The committee noted that forestry research is already underfunded and that Brexit is unlikely to improve this scenario. It recommends that the government acts to fill the gap in research funding after Brexit. Royal Forestry Society President Sophie Churchill commented, 'Much of the research that is currently ongoing, is as a result of European and international collaborations. As Brexit moves closer there is an urgent need for commitments to continuity of such research which will benefit us all.'

Beccy Speight, Chief Executive of the Woodland Trust made a trenchant summary. 'This report clearly highlights the barriers to progress that forestry in England faces. It's incredibly valuable, particularly with Brexit just around the corner. Government policy is failing forestry catastrophically and urgent action is needed. Planting rates are shockingly low – we believe parts of the UK are at real risk of deforestation. Grant systems are complex and restrictive, and protection for ancient woodland is weak. Crucially, the report sets out what government must do now to bring about dramatic change for our forests' future, and it's really not rocket science.'

The full report is available to **download here**.

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Debby Overdevest has owned Blue Belle Wood in West Sussex for a couple of years. Like many owners she shares her enjoyment – and some of the hard work – with her family and friends. She has kept us up to date with her progress.

I have not done as much as I wanted in our woodland yet because of work and personal commitments, but that has not stopped me getting a great deal of pleasure and peace from just sitting in our favourite spot in the woodland.

I have harnessed the power of my nieces to help with some of our work. Six-year-old Saskia has helped me to build a stone fire place, and she and her older sister Aneska, along with some of our friends' kids, are creating a very simple but pretty path just by picking up broken branches from the ground and lining a raked footpath.

I visit our woodland at least once a week – usually two or three times – even if it is only for a few hours with the dogs. Most important is refilling our bird feeders which get emptied at a great speed! I have four squirrel-proof birdseed feeders, one nut feeder and one fat ball feeder. I am doing some research as I want to put up a



movement-activated camera to record all the different type of birds that feed of them. In time we would like to build a home-made hide so we can watch them ourselves.

We decided that two dogs weren't enough, so we now also have a six-month-old chocolate Lab called Poppy (we got her in Remembrance week). She loves the woodland as much if not more than our Tessa and Tia but is not yet brave enough to follow Tia into the river for a swim.

Another stalwart helper is my brother, and I hope that this year he will create an area for us to park our campervan and spend the night in our own woodland: that will be so special!

As spring creeps on, the wild garlic, bluebells and some primroses are coming up, as well as various other green shoots which I still have to identify. Although I have not done as much work as I hoped, we are certainly getting huge much enjoyment out of it, and it is a wonderful stress-buster!

Our woodland is ten minutes from work, but if I go home via Blue Belle wood, I can leave the stress behind. There is no better way to forget your troubles than to just build a quick fire and make yourself a cup of tea, although I do cheat! No rubbing sticks together: barbecue fluid and a blow torch does the trick!

I'm hoping that next year I will have a bit more of a game plan, but that is the other thing I love about owning our own bit of woodland – there is no rush. You can take it all at your own pace.



The Tree Charter branches out with ten principles

After months of discussion, the ten principles of the 2017 Tree Charter have been announced. SWOG is one of 70 organisations – with a combined membership of over 20 million people – to be supporting the Charter.

The principles will form the bedrock of the new **Charter for Trees, Woods and People** to be launched in November 2017, which aims to secure a brighter future for the nation's woods and trees, and to protect the rights of all people in the UK to access the many benefits they offer.

The creation of the Tree Charter is supported by a raft of famous names including Clive Anderson, Benjamin Zephaniah, John Humphrys, Chris Packham, Kevin McCloud, Gemma Cairney and Carenza Lewis, who have all helped to create animations to support the project principles.

At a time when England may have tipped into deforestation, with more trees being cut down than planted for the first time in 40 years, it is essential we act now as a nation to protect the future of trees and woods for people for generations to come.

From community woods across the UK, to street trees in our cities, timber in our houses, and to many ancient trees and woods with historical and cultural connections, trees and woods play an important part in our lives, but more woods are under threat than ever before.

Beccy Speight, Woodland Trust CEO said: 'Today, our nation's woods and trees are facing unprecedented pressures from development, pests and diseases and climate change. They risk being neglected, undervalued and forgotten. Now is the time to create a new Tree Charter, which recognises the importance of trees in our society, celebrates their enormous contribution to our lives, and acts now so that future generations can benefit from them too.'

'Our collective ambition is for



The Charter campaign has enlisted the help of several notable people, such as John Humphries, Benjamin Zephaniah and Chris Packham, who have all recorded animated videos for the campaign. Take a look [here](#).

a Tree Charter that puts trees back at the heart of our lives, communities and decision making – where they belong. The Tree Charter will provide guidance and inspiration to allow us all to appreciate, preserve and celebrate our trees and woods for what they do for us in so many different ways.'

Whereas the historic charter was signed by the King to grant rights to his subjects, the new Tree Charter will draw its strength from people power, with signatures from hundreds of thousands of people from across the UK.

Tree Charter principles

The 10 guiding principles for the future of trees, woods and people have been drawn from more than 50,000 stories submitted by members of the public (including many SWOG members). It is summarised below.

Nature: Thriving habitats for diverse species

Urban and rural landscapes should have a rich diversity of trees, hedges and woods to provide homes, food and safe routes for our native wildlife. We want to make sure future

generations can enjoy the flora and fauna that depend upon diverse habitats.

Planting: Planting for the future / 25% tree cover for the UK

As the population of the UK expands, we need more forests, woods, street trees, hedges and individual trees across the



landscape. We want all planting to be environmentally and economically sustainable. We need to use more timber in construction to build better quality homes faster and with a lower carbon footprint.

Arts & Heritage: Celebrating the cultural impact of trees and woods

Trees, woods and forests have shaped who we are. They are woven into our art, literature, folklore, place names and traditions.

Utility & Livelihoods: A thriving forestry sector that delivers for the UK

We want forestry in the UK to be more visible, understood and supported so that it can achieve its huge potential and provide jobs, forest products, environmental benefits and economic opportunities for all. Careers in woodland management, arboriculture and the timber supply chain should be promoted.

Protection: Better protection for important trees and woods

Ancient woodland covers just 2% of the UK and there are currently more than 700 individual woods under threat from planning applications. We want stronger legal protection for trees and woods that have special cultural, scientific or historic significance.

Planning: Enhancing new developments with trees

We want new residential areas and developments to be balanced with green infrastructure, making space for trees. Planning regulations should support the inclusion of trees as natural solutions to drainage, cooling, air quality and water purification, with long-term management considered from the beginning.

Health & Wellbeing: Understanding and using the natural health benefits of trees

To create understanding and to use the natural health benefits of trees. We believe that spending

How you can help

*SWOG supports the Charter and you can show your support by signing it online here: **treecharter.uk/sign**.*

For every signature, the Woodland Trust will plant a tree in the UK.



time among trees should be promoted as an essential part of a healthy physical and mental lifestyle and a key element of healthcare delivery.

Access to trees for everyone

Everyone should have access to trees irrespective of age, economic status, ethnicity or ability. Communities can be brought together in enjoying, celebrating and caring for local trees and woods. Children should be introduced to trees for learning, play and careers.

Addressing threats: Addressing threats to woods and trees through good management

Good management of our woods and trees is essential to ensure healthy habitats and economic sustainability. We believe that more woods should be better managed and woodland plans should aim for long term sustainability, given evidence of threats climate change.

Strengthening landscapes

Trees and woods capture carbon, lower flood risk, and supply us with timber, clean air, clean water, shade, shelter, recreation opportunities and homes for wildlife. We believe that the government must adopt policies to reflect the value of these ecosystem services.

*Click on the titles to be taken to the full blogs or videos on the **Woodlands.co.uk** website.*

TV

Sculpting with a chainsaw in the woods

Chainsaw Sculptor Ste Iredale demonstrates how to carve with a chainsaw. He also touches on the safety aspect, 'The basic rule of chainsaws is go on a chainsaw course'.



Blogs

The National Forest Revisited

When it was first planted 25 years ago, it seemed impossible that the skinny saplings of the new National Forest, visible from the M1 in Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire would amount to much. A quarter of a century on, it has transformed the old industrial workings of the area and has become a haven for wildlife.

Białowieża- “a national treasure for Poland and an international treasure for us all”

Białowieża is a forested area that lies on the border of Poland and Belarus and includes 1500 sq km of some of the tallest trees to be found in Europe, including towering hornbeams. It is a valuable habitat, which is now threatened by the relaxation of local laws governing logging.



450-year-old oak in Białowieża National Park, Poland
WikiCommons By Konrad Kurzacz Pimkee

Primroses – heralds of spring

Although medieval writers referred to primroses as the 'first rose of spring, primroses are not actually members of the rose family.

Trees and flood mitigation

With floods becoming more frequent, various methods of mitigation are being explored. The presence of trees and hedgerows dramatically limits peak water flow, so farmers are now to restoring hedgerows and increasing tree planting on the edges of agricultural land.

Woodlands and forests in the Netherlands

The Netherlands is a small country which is the most densely populated in Europe. Just 11% is wooded, but the Dutch government now has an ambitious plans to increase coverage by 25%.

Squirrelepox – how it spreads

Researchers at Queen's University Belfast have been investigating why red squirrel populations decline when in competition with grey squirrels. One major cause is squirrel pox, which is spread from grey squirrels' urine and is devastating for the reds.

A tale of two saws

Nick Reckert recounts his efforts to manage his wood fuel requirements without recourse to a chainsaw – for a while!

The Arb Show

12–14 May 2017

Westobirt Arboretum, Gloucestershire

www.trees.org.uk/The-ARB-Show

Weird and Wonderful Wood

13–14 May 2017

Stowmarket, Suffolk

www.weirdandwonderfulwood.co.uk/

The Bushcraft Show

27–29 May 2017

Beehive Farm, Rosliston, Derbyshire

www.thebushcraftshow.co.uk

Devon County Show

18–20 May 2017

Clyst St Mary, Exeter, Devon

www.devoncountyshow.co.uk

Royal Bath & West Show

31 May – 3 June 2017

Shepton Mallet, Somerset

www.bathandwest.com

Weald and Downland Living Museum Show

17–18 June 2017

Chichester, West Sussex

www.wealddown.co.uk

Royal Highland Show

2–25 June 2017

Edinburgh, Scotland

<http://royalhighlandshow.org>

Great Yorkshire Show

11–13 July 2017

Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate

www.greatyorkshireshow.co.uk

Royal Welsh Show

24–27 July 2017

Builth Wells, Wales

www.rwas.wales

New Forest and Hampshire County Show

25–27 July 2017

Brockenhurst, Hampshire

www.newforestshow.co.uk

Woodfest Wales

29–30 July 2017

St Asaph, Denbighshire

www.woodfestwales.co.uk

South Downs Show

19–20 August 2017

Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Petersfield, Hampshire

www.southdownsshow.co.uk

Wilderness Gathering

16–20 August

West Knoyle, Wiltshire

www.wildernessgathering.co.uk

Stock Gaylard Oak Fair

26–27 August 2017

Sturminster Newton, Dorset

www.stockgaylard.com

Wychwood Forest Fair

3 September 2017

Charlbury, Oxfordshire

www.wychwoodproject.org

Confor Woodland Show

7–8 September 2017

Longleat, Wiltshire

www.confor.org.uk/about-confor

Belmont Woodfest & Country Fair

9–10 September 2017

Faversham, Kent

www.belmont-house.org

Bentley Weald Wood Fair

15–17 September 2017

Lewes, East Sussex

www.bentley.org.uk/woodfair

Surrey Hills Wood Fair

30 Sept–1 Oct 2017

Birtley House, Guildford

www.surreyhills.org/events/

SWOG Course Listings

Anyone who buys a wood from Woodlands.co.uk is given £300 towards a woodland course to help towards owners' enjoyment and knowledge. These courses can encompass anything from basket-weaving, green woodworking or pole lathe turning, to chainsaw tuition and woodland management. Buyers are asked to write a short resumé of their course, noting how effective they found it, and whether they would recommend it to others. View it on the SWOG website here: www.swog.org.uk/courses



What to do with woody windfalls

In the wake of Storm Doris, many owners had lost trees, No-one seemed to bemoan the loss of a pine, but Sarah Bateman posted pictures of a fine cherry tree. She wondered if it was only good for firewood, or whether it would be useful to turners or craftsmen. The picture prompted a lively debate and the replies varied.

No one doubted the value of cherry timber to craftsman – it's been valued for centuries in making fine furniture and pipes – but the value of the wood is probably outweighed by the cost of logging and transport. As one member trenchantly replied, 'Log it up and get it split'.

Others advocated milling the wood for shelves, small tables or stool tops. Or it could simply be carved into a rustic bench. Several people pointed out that seasoning and drying is



time-consuming and requires a sheltered well-ventilated space. The **Instructables website** has a useful article about preparing and storing blanks for woodworkers

The general consensus seemed to be that location is everything. If you have contacts with woodworkers nearby, you might be able to sell similar hardwood timber, but the cost of processing the timber depends on the proximity of a portable mill. Sadly, this particular cherry is likely to end up on the fire.

The Small Woodland Owner's Group has been formed to aid the enjoyment, diversity and conservation of British woodlands. The company Woodlands.co.uk sponsors the group, so membership is completely free and events are free of charge unless otherwise stated. SWOG is open to anyone interested in the management or the enjoyment of woodland.

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