

# NEW ENGLAND WOOD TRUST

## Chairman's Report for 2022

### Challenges

If you have been in New England Wood recently you will be in no doubt of the challenge facing us. Ash dieback is firmly established throughout the wood and in 2022 we were faced with a hard decision; undertake a long-term felling programme to reduce risk to walkers or possibly having to close the whole wood. We chose to try to keep the wood open and visitors are now confronted with felled ash trees alongside the main paths. These were identified as most heavily infected and posing most risk of shedding branches or falling. This reinforces the need for walkers to stay on the main paths for their own safety. The expensive felling will have to continue outside of the Spring nesting season and funds will have to be raised for this and for replanting with alternative tree species. On a more positive note, the fallen timber will rot down (as it did after the 1988 hurricane) become overgrown and provide a wildlife food source.

Meanwhile grey squirrels are increasingly stripping the bark from young trees, especially beech, and we are considering what measures we can take to limit this damage. Again, on the 'challenges' front, can we remind walkers that New England Wood is a nature reserve and renew our plea to keep dogs on leads or under control and only on the main paths. Dogs rooting about in the undergrowth threaten wildlife habitat, especially in the nesting season. Thank you!

The proposed Cuck-stye housing development by Fairfax, which would see New England Wood flanked by a 'country park', is awaiting formulation of a new District Plan and then a decision by a government-appointed planning inspector, probably in 2024. New England Wood Trust is monitoring the situation and will not engage in any discussions or consultation until it becomes clearer whether the overall development is to be approved.



### Still 'Cuckfield's special place'

As ever, New England Wood is where Cuckfield residents find nature on their doorstep. A quiet place for reflection, enjoyment and activity. Scouts, Beavers and school groups have a ready-made natural classroom. If you are thinking of planning an activity in the wood, do contact the Trust- we are always ready to support you! Cuckfield residents have been generous and understanding of the challenges we face and the Trust is grateful for your support.

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## **The Trust finances**

The Trust's financial position remains sound. With low market rates our reserve was not earning acceptable interest during 2022 but funds have subsequently been invested in a Virgin Money Charity Term Deposit at 3.75%. The surplus/increase in balance sheet position at end 2022 is largely accounted for by a donation from Adelphi Holdings towards Ash Dieback felling costs that was expended early in 2023. Some of the Trust's reserves will necessarily be used in the felling and replanting programme but it is hoped that support will be forthcoming from national and local organisations and Cuckfield residents.

## **As always, a big thank you to all our volunteers and supporters in 2022**

*Our thanks to:*

- Our generous donors without whom we could not continue our work, in particular Adelphi Holdings, The Independent State of Cuckfield, Andrew Pearson, Cuckfield Parish Council and Cuckfield Local
- Our Woods Manager Patrick Letschka and his team of volunteers keeping the wood in good order and especially for their hard work dealing with ash dieback.
- Trustee Helen Crabtree for her wildlife monitoring and advice and Parish Councillor Adrian Podmore for his support
- Dave and Emmett Edwards for the wood chippings for the paths
- and the many Cuckfield residents generously contributing through Cuckfield Woodlanders!

## **Ken Burgess**

**Chair, New England Wood Trust**



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