

## **AGENDA 11, Enc viii)**

### **Ashington Community Woods Steering Group**

Teams meeting 06.11.25 2pm

Apologies: Sarah Eden, Cllr Scott Amery, Iain Singer, Neil Dawson

Attending: Becky Vickers, Kevin Clark, Matt Machouki, Cllr Caroline Ball, Jimmy Reith, Dennis Turner

#### **Background to the project:**

Conversations started with Stephen Humphrey at Ashington Town Council about support for the Friends of Ashington Community Woods and potential improvements to the entrance and miners memorial. Groundwork were commissioned to carry out consultation work and facilitate the steering group, create some options/designs for future improvements, and to write a funding application to fund the chosen works. With support from Groundwork's Landscape Architect and Business Development teams.

A couple of in-person meetings were held earlier this year at the woods. In the summer Groundwork carried out some community consultation (results summarised below) and Matt from our Landscape Architect team has drawn up some initial options and designs. We are now asking the steering group for their thoughts on these designs, what would you like to see on site, what would you not want etc.

#### **Consultation results summary:**

We had 48 responses to the survey as a result of a day spent in the woods talking to passers-by, and support from the Friends Group to distribute the survey to other regular site users. It was also available digitally and shared with the steering group.

- Over half of respondents visit the woods multiple times a week with the main reason being dog walking closely followed by personal exercise – walking or running
- The majority of respondents are local, postcodes NE62 and NE63, Ashington, Pegswood, Ellington
- When asked if there were any issues on site people highlighted Fires and Camps as their main concern
- Most people found the existing entrance welcoming but did mention issues of flooding/drainage and the car parking area looking scruffy
- 48% of respondents did not want to see more seating in the park, those that did cautioned about choosing the right places for it and making sure it was vandal-proof
- Only 19% of respondents said they would like to see shelter on site, the main concern was vandalism and attracting people to gather for anti-social behaviour
- 21% of respondents are happy with all existing signage and furniture on site, suggestions were for a map at the entrance and navigational signage/posts through the site. Most respondents are regular visitors so know their way

## **AGENDA 11, Enc viii)**

round but recognised for new visitors a map and/or waymarking would be useful.

- If there was any artwork or sculpture on site most people would like it to reflect a heritage/history theme and cautioned that it must be vandal-proof
- Other comments from the survey were around dog mess not being picked up, parking being an issue on the access road, and some of the paths getting overgrown.

### **Options/Designs:**

See additional PDF

### **Comments from the meeting:**

- Drainage work completed by Applebridge but needs finishing off – top dressing
- Entrance gate fell off/broke, is now fixed and being painted by the Friends Group volunteers
- Verge on stable side of the approach road is private land, possibly belongs to the stables. Would need to consult and get permission before any works could happen here.
- Parking is a wider issue locally with new developments, could talk to Highways at NCC about more parking in the area that could also benefit the woods.
- We want to attract new people – the next generation of visitors and volunteers, so maps and trails will be useful, and ways to engage people who do not currently visit the woods.
- Need to consider disability access with any entrance way changes
- Anything at the main entrance needs to also be suitable for horses as it's a bridleway
- Consider the other entrances too – scrap yard is now closed off, business park entrance gets muddy
- Augmented reality/QR codes/Digital trails could enhance the experience, link to the heritage of the area and/or the wildlife on site – have been successful elsewhere