

Detail of annual supper, 7 May 7 pm at Over Stowey Village Hall when these Reports were given are included in Minutes of 14 May 2024

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SGSG CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT 2024 – Roy Osborne

Stowey Green Spaces Group noted at the end of our 2023 report that, having had busy years in 2021 and 2022, we looked forward to continuing and consolidating our work in 2023. Our activities focus on Nether Stowey Castle Mount; on and around the recreation ground; on the A39 Bypass Wood and in Stowey Millennium and Platinum jubilee Wood, as well as in Stowey Wood itself. We hold work sessions every first and third Tuesday afternoon of the month throughout the year, interspersed with relaxed meetings, once a month, when we reflect on what we have achieved and plan forthcoming activities. We continue to litter pick roads in and around Nether Stowey and Over Stowey every third Saturday of the month.

On 26 November 2022 we planted 120 saplings in Platinum Jubilee Wood and on 17 January 2023 almost 300 saplings in the old quarry, which first had to be cleared of twisted metal, plastic, building rubble and general rubbish. (We have only scratched the surface. What lies beneath is anyone's guess)! The QLPS kindly provided the trees and the AONB, now the Quantock Hills National Landscape, the tree guards and supports, while the Young Somerset apprentices helped with the planting.

We have Licensing agreements with Somerset Council to manage Stowey Millennium and Diamond Jubilee Wood and Stowey Wood, but not for the Platinum Jubilee Wood. We were told in April 2023 that this still needed to be formalized and that we would be contacted about this in due course.

Everything we do is done on a voluntary basis, so our community volunteers, in whatever capacity and for however long they can spare, are vital. Although we remain a relatively small group (and none of us are getting any younger) we are slowly growing, with five new volunteers having joined us in recent months. We are fortunate to be able to draw on support from several organizations. These include the QLPS, the Quantock Hills National Landscape, Taunton Mid-Week Conservation Volunteers, the Field Studies Council at Nettlecombe Court, Somerset Council's Clean Surroundings team and our Rights of Way warden, as well as the Parish Councils. We also liaise with Somerset Wildlife Trust and Somerset Council, where I am a member of SEEN, the Somerset Environmental and Ecological Network. We really appreciate all the help we get, whether it be support from other voluntary groups, grants from the QLPS or Parish Councils or the donation of trees from the Woodland Trust or from Friends of the Meads in Bridgwater. ***

In terms of events, Judith Greig and I attended a Wild Worship in a marquee at Spaxton on 30 July last year (after initially misreading Wild Worship for Wild Workshop)! I mentioned in my report last year that a new Tree Strategy for Somerset was being prepared for approval by the Unitary Authority. Stowey Green Spaces were invited to give a presentation on our work at the launch of the Strategy at Monks Yard, Ilminster on 8 September. Other presentations were made by the Woodland Trust, "Re-imagining the Levels" and "Green Ilminster:" – it felt a bit like non-League players sharing a pitch with teams from the Premier League! I gave a talk on our work at the Thomas Poole Library on 13 September. We gave a presentation also at Somerset Wildlife Trust's "Wilder Somerset" conference at the Canalside conference Center in Bridgwater on 14 October and attended SWT's AGM on 18 November. Our table display and banner featured prominently at all these events.

One aim of the Council Tree Strategy is to plant 240 hectares of new woodland in Somerset over each of the next ten years. The strategy team visited the Millennium and Stowey Woods, as did Bridgwater's Deputy Mayor, Councillor and guests.

In May 2023 the submission of a new management plan for New Stowey farm to the new Unitary Authority appeared imminent. It looked as though there would be scope for SGSG to help with implementation of the Plan on the ground. Negotiations took longer than expected, but last month (12 March 2024) a Partnership Agreement was signed whereby National Landscapes will manage the land at New Stowey farm. This is an exciting development, which fits well with the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency, and SGSG look forward to supporting the Quantock Hills National Landscape team in any way we can.

So far in 2024 our efforts have focused on managing the newly planted woodland at the entrance to New Stowey farm, clearing bramble from the A39 Bypass Wood and preparing some areas to seed with wildflowers and hedge-laying alongside the recreation ground. A new pedestrian footbridge has been installed in Stowey Wood and the footpath partially re-profiled (with help from the Taunton Mid-Week Conservation Volunteers) to enable walkers to avoid a particularly muddy section. Efforts are being made to control the spread of Himalayan balsam. A tawny owl nest box has been purchased and installed in Stowey Wood. A new pedestrian gate has been installed at the lower entrance to the Platinum Jubilee wood and signage in Millenium Wood has been made more secure following unwelcome acts of vandalism.

Roy Osborne

Chairperson, Stowey Green Spaces Group (SGSG).

May 2024

Litter Picking Report 2024 – Paul Brierley

In summary I explained that we had 13 routes in Over Stowey with 7 pickers, and 28 routes in Nether Stowey with 13 pickers [counting couples as one picker]. The routes are patrolled every 3rd weekend by the route's "owner" and the litter thus collected is bagged in special blue bags and picked up by Somerset Council.

Treasurer's Report 2024 – Terry Abbis

Summary Accounts Stowey Green Spaces Group 1.4 2023 to 31.3.24

Group Income	2022/3[@] (£)	2023/4 (£)
Donations	112.10	41.00
Sale of timber	500.00	150.00
Sale of scrap from Platinum Wood	60.00	nil
AGM Income	see *	145.00
Total Income	672.10	336.00
Total Group Expenses	0.56*	266.55**
Profit (Loss) on year	671.54	69.45
Carried over	283.48	955.02
Group Balance	955.02	1024.47

(@ = Accounts cover 11 months after 13 accounts for financial year 2021 to 2022)

(* = 2022 AGM income on door was £335.00 less food costs of £335.56. No other expenses incurred in this financial year)

** = see Expenses for 2023/4 listed below

Group Expenses 2023/4 only

Food for AGM	£82.75
Purchase of Leaflet Holder for MW and SW Info	£10.59
Purchase of 4 Litter Pickers	£13.95
Purchase of Advertising / Publicity Banner	£65.63
Purchase of a Gate Hook (MW) and Gate Hinge (PtW)	£8.64
Purchase of a Tawny Owl Nest Box	£60.00
Purchase of Grass seed / Flower seed mixture (MW)	£24.99

Total Group Expenses **£266.55****

Grants Income and Expenses	2022/3 (£)	2023/4 (£)
Nether Stowey Parish Council Grant (balance)	111.38	77.38
Hall hire for Committee and AGM Meetings	(100.00)	18.00
Zurich Insurance	(99.31)	****
Total PC Grant Expenses	(199.31)	18.00
Remainder at Year End	(87.93)	59.38
Grant from Parish Council	165.31	***
Grant remaining	£77.38	£59.38

**** = Insurance paid directly by the Parish Council with thanks

Somerset Fund Balance at account year end **£70.39** **£70.39**

TOTAL FUNDS at account year end	2022/3 (£)	2023/4 (£)
Stowey Green Spaces Group	955.02	1024.47
Parish Council Grant	77.38	59.38
Somerset Fund	70.39	70.39
TOTAL FUNDS	1102.79	1154.24

Bank Statement **£1102.79** **£1154.24**

T.P. Abbiss, Treasurer

April 30th 2024

Volunteer Hours: 2022/23 and 2023/24 – Terry Abbiss

Site	2022/3	2023/4
A39 Bypass Wood	67	108
Castle Mount	20	47
Millennium Wood	73	34
Platinum Wood	49	62
Plot 173	6	1
Recreation Ground	19	60
Stowey Brook (Fire Station)	14	12
Stowey Wood	80	203
Over Stowey Cricket Grnd	12	
Footpath work S. Lane		9
Totals	340 hours	536 hours

Notes:

- a) Work started on establishing Platinum Wood in November 2022
- b) In June 2023 made the path through Millennium Wood suitable for mobility scooters
- c) In Stowey Wood put bridge over stream back in place after being washed down stream
Uncovered and restored the Forestry Commission entrance sign
- d) In March 2024 had 3 work sessions on the Recreation Ground carrying and burning hedge cuttings after hedge laying
- e) The above totals include about 80 hours of work in both years by Taunton Midweek Volunteers
- f) It is hoped to have a contribution from Duke of Edinburgh volunteers from Nettlecombe Court Field Centre in the work year 2024 to 2025
- g) Finally, it is extremely pleasing to welcome several new and enthusiastic volunteers. On several occasions recently there has been a turn out of 12 or 13 people compared to the previous 6 to 8.