

## MANLEY ROAD COPSE – BACKGROUND PAPER

1. Manley Road Copse was one of four pieces of land forming an Inclosure Award of 4 July 1797 '*for the getting of stone and other materials for the local residents*'. The Recreation Grounds Charity was formalised by an order of the Charity Commission made on 1 May 1914. (Frodsham Recreation Grounds Charity – 504519). The Charity is administered and managed by Frodsham Town Council. Only Crowmere remains in the Charity. Top Road was sold in 1978 with the full consent and approval of the Charity Commissioner. In 1988 Manley Road Copse and the Marl Pits were transferred by free gift absolutely to FTC.
2. The Land Registry issued Title Deeds on 9 July 2001. Manley Road Copse is registered as Title absolute owned by Frodsham Town Council.
3. The copse has always been maintained by FTC with the support of Mr Tom Blundell and Mr Joe Beswick who were non-voting members of the FTC Environment Committee. In February 2017 Storm Doris caused significant tree damage in the copse. Councillor Alan Oulton issued a press release and report (copy attached).
4. The copse has been monitored by the Environment Committee, these are the extracts from the meeting minutes since 2017 when Storm Doris did significant damage to the copse.

### **Jan 2017 Environment Committee: Agenda Item 147**

There is no update on when the trees will be felled. TC will contact the contractor again. Once a timetable has been agreed there will a press release explaining what is happening and why.

### **Feb 2017 Environment Committee: Agenda item 164**

The license to allow the trees to be felled has still not arrived but the contractor has been on site and removed the side branches. Once the trees are removed there will be a site visit to think about replanting. The potential to layer the hedge will also be considered.

### **Mar 2017 Environment Committee: Agenda item 182**

It was agreed to bring this item forward. A large tree from the centre of Manley Road Copse fell across the road and has damaged properties in the neighbourhood. TC will be making an insurance claim once all the quotations for repairs have been received. It is expected that the rest of the trees will be cut down by the end of the week as the contractor has received the license to fell. It was agreed to call a site visit once the area is cleared before deciding on any replanting. The neighbours will be consulted too. It might be useful to leave any replanting for 12 months to see what comes up naturally once the tree shade has gone. The long-term maintenance of the area needs to be considered.

### **Apr 2017 Environment Committee: Agenda item 199**

The trees have all been removed. Mr Beswick and FM will look to repair the bench. It was agreed to hold a site visit at 6.30pm on Tuesday 2 May before the next meeting. The insurance company may not cover the damage to the neighbours as it was due to the high winds. TC has sent them a copy of the tree survey to show that the trees were diseased and rotten and this contributed to the tree falling.

### **May 2017 Environment Committee: Agenda item 215**

All the trees have been removed. Although the site look a mess it will be difficult to do much further clearance work as we have entered the nesting & breeding season. There had been a good site visit, involving local residents, just before the meeting. Cllr Oulton stated that we wanted to keep the site as a quiet space for local people which required the minimum of maintenance. FM pointed out that it hadn't cost FTC over the years as Mr Beswick had been maintaining it. The area needed a basic management plan. The residents could form a 'Friends of MRC' group to help with long-term maintenance. It was agreed that FM would put up a post and rail fence to fill the gaps in the hedge but leave the entrance open until we finalise what to do with the space.

### **June 2017 Environment Committee: Agenda item 12**

12.1 A substantial and smart fence has been built to fill the gap in the hedge. TC reported that the insurance company have agreed to pay out for the damage caused to the neighbours by the fallen tree but only as the council had the report which stated that the trees were diseased. There will be an excess to pay

12.2 Plans for the Copse It had already been agreed to leave the Copse to see what comes up now that there is more light. Some residents had started to offer trees and plants but this should be discouraged until next year. TC will contact them to let them know the plan.

12.3 The bench Mr Beswick is working with one of the neighbours, who works for a fabrication company, to restore the bench by making metal legs that extend into the ground for stability.

### **July 2017 Environment Committee: Agenda item 33**

Mr Beswick reported that the bench had been repaired and returned to the site. It was agreed that the TC should write a letter of thanks on behalf of the Committee to the resident who carried out the repair free of charge. Mr Beswick will now repaint it and it was agreed to reimburse him the cost of the paint. Someone has planted a number of unsuitable trees on the site without permission. It was agreed that the FM would remove them. Mr Beswick will trim the area and he and the FM will arrange a suitable date to cut back the hedge adjoining the road.

### **Sept 2017 Environment Committee: Agenda items 46 and 49**

46 Woodland Trust Tree Packs It was agreed to consider applying for a free copse tree pack when the management of Manley Copse is decided.

49 Copse It was agreed that the Cllrs Oulton and Ashton would inspect Manley Road Copse with the Facilities Manager on 13 September and report back to the next meeting.

### **Oct 2017 Environment Committee: Agenda item 63.2**

Cllr Oulton reported back on a site visit he had made with Cllr Ashton and the FM to Manley Copse, approximately six months after the felling of the large unsafe Beech trees formerly on the site. The repairs to the boundary fence and the excellent repairs to the bench go towards giving the site a "recovering, rather than abandoned" status. There had been no repetition of ad-hoc tree planting by neighbouring residents.

The Committee discussed future actions on the site and it was agreed to:

- (i) Obtain a quote for the provision of Hawthorn and Blackthorn whips for future planting to fill gaps in the hedge;
- (ii) Remove self-seeded Holly from the copse;
- (iii) Apply to the Woodland Trust for a free copse tree pack (10 Silver Birch, 10 Rowan and 10 Wild Cherry) to plant in the wood;
- (iv) Hire a tracked chipper to get rid of the accumulated brash from hedge trimming and conifer removal within the copse;
- (v) Organise a community event in January 2018 to involve residents in chipping, Holly removal and tree planting, and to invite the person who renovated the bench, and his employer, who provided the workshop facilities;
- (vi) Inform local residents of the work that is planned;

proposed and seconded by Cllrs Oulton and Martin.

63.3 The Committee considered a request from the WW1 Commemorative Group to plant or dedicate a tree to commemorate the centenary of the Zeebrugge Campaign on 23 April 2018. The Council has a Commemorative Tree Policy, last reviewed in 2009. Given that the trees to be planted in Manley Copse would be whips, it was decided to offer the WW1 Group the opportunity to dedicate one of the existing flowering cherry trees on the Park Lane play area, subject to the views of the Friends of Park Lane.

It was agreed to:

- (i) Seek the views of the Friends of Park Lane and the WW1 Working Group on the dedication of a tree on the Park Lane play area;
- (ii) Revise the 2009 Commemorative Tree Policy, changing the name “Trees and their Environs” to “Environment Committee”, deleting the £20 charge and noting that request to plant trees in Castle Park should be addressed to CWAC rather than FTC;
- (iii) R2 – that the Council adopts the revised Commemorative Tree Policy;

proposed and seconded by Cllrs Oulton and Sutton.

#### **Nov 2017 Environment Committee: Agenda item 79**

79.1 It was noted that applications have been made to the Woodland Trust for Copse & Hedging Packs. Although quotes have been received it was agreed to wait to see if the Woodland Trust applications are successful before deciding

79.2 Development of the Copse – there will be a meeting with residents to discuss the planting. Covenant on the land says we need to preserve the natural aspect, features and animal & plant life. All planting will be to minimize future maintenance costs.

79.3 Centenary Field – this was mentioned at the Playing Fields Association AGM. It was felt that this might put people off visiting but more information was needed

#### **Jan 2018 Environment Committee: Agenda item 94**

94.1 It was noted that the Woodland Trust has approved the Council’s application for free copse and hedge packs to plant at Manley Copse.

94.2 It was agreed to arrange a community planting event on 18 February, subject to the Woodland Trust being able to deliver the tree packs in time – proposed and seconded by Cllrs C Ashton and P Martin. The Administrative Officer (AO) was asked to liaise with the Trust and arrange the hire of a chipper and to invite local residents. Cllr A Oulton will supervise residents using the chipper.

94.3 After reviewing information on the Fields in Trust (formerly National Playing Fields Association)’s Centenary Field scheme and considering its applicability to Manley Copse, it was agreed to take no action – proposed and seconded by Cllrs C Ashton and P Martin.

#### **Feb 2018 Environment Committee: Agenda item 108.1**

It was noted the application for free tree and hedge packs from the Woodland Trust had been successful and they would be delivered in March. It was agreed to arrange a community planting event on Saturday 17 March at 10am and to hire a tracked wood chipper for use on brash and holly cleared from the wood. Cllr A Oulton will supervise residents using the chipper and supply tools, helmets and gloves – people will be advised to wear sturdy footwear and outdoor clothing. Invitations will be restricted to local residents in the first instance, due to the restricted nature of the site. While the Manley Road site is too small for additional tree planting, Mersey Forest had access to DEFRA funding for tree planting by schoolchildren under the “Trees for Learning” programme if the Town Council has other land on which it would like to plant trees.

#### **Mar 2018 Environment Committee: Agenda item 121**

The community planting event planned for Saturday 17 March was noted. The Committee had previously agreed to hire a tracked chipper. Cllr Oulton reported that the cost would be £80 for hire, plus £20 delivery plus approximately 10 litres of diesel. The expenditure was approved – proposed and seconded by Cllrs F Sutton and C Ashton.

#### **May 2018 Environment Committee: Agenda item 138**

The tree and hedge whips have been planted in the hedge with post markers and are growing well. In the autumn there will be a review to see any standard trees are needed. Mrs Beswick was thanked for strimming the area.

### **July 2018 Environment Committee: Agenda item 12**

The whips in the hedge are suffering from the dry weather, and late planting, and will probably not survive. A resident had called to complain about the weeds crowding out the whips and the hedge needing trimming back off the pavement – EM has been down to clear the weeds and the hedge off the pavement.

### **Sept 2018 Environment Committee: Agenda item 25**

Mr Beswick had sent a written report that he had cut the hedges alongside the pavement, but the tops still need to be done. Mr Blundell suggested that if the hedge was left high it would be possible to layer it in a few years' time. Mr Beswick also reported that there was a large patch of very invasive weeds developing which would need dealing with. EM will visit and investigate the weed. It was agreed to hold a site visit to start and plan where to replant trees and shrubs and which species to use. A Saturday morning at 10am was agreed as a good time – TC will email round to with suggested dates and to see who was available to attend. It was also agreed that local neighbours should be invited to attend.

### **Nov 2018 Environment Committee: Agenda item 45**

The proposed site visit had been cancelled. It was agreed to meet at the Copse on Sunday 2 December at 10am – TC will email round all Councillors and the local residents.

### **Mar 2019 Environment Committee: Agenda item 61**

To discuss the redevelopment of the Copse following the site visit on 2 December and agree actions. It was noted that this visit did not take place.

### **July 2019 Environment Committee: Agenda item 10**

Noted: It was noted that Frodsham WI has secured 2 x tree packs from the Woodland Trust to plant at Manley Road Copse (120 trees). Cllr Oulton asked to be involved in a site meeting prior to planting to establish suitability. Tom Blundell, supporter of the Environment Committee, provided a written report which was noted.

### **Sept 2019 Full Council: Agenda item 85**

To receive a report in relation to planting in Manley Copse Noted: Vivien Shaw from Frodsham WI attended the meeting and reported that: in celebration of 100 years of WI in Cheshire the group wished to plant 60 cherry, birch and hazel trees in the copse; some works will be required prior to the planting. Cllrs Oulton and Dawson noted that 60 trees would be too many in this area and suggested that trees could also be planted in other areas such as Hob Hey Woods and Castle Park.

To agree action to be taken Resolved: It was proposed by Cllr Dawson, seconded by Cllr Jones and unanimously agreed to approve planting subject to confirmation of location.

### **Sept 2019 Environment Committee: Agenda item 23**

Cllr Oulton provided a report and it was noted that clearance of diseased trees took place last year and the chippings were left in the copse. The cherry trees are being actively managed and Cllr Oulton will be meeting with representatives of Frodsham WI to discuss further planting.

Further action will be considered following the meeting with Frodsham WI.

## **ACTION SINCE THE LAST FORMAL MEETING REPORT**

5. The WI and FTC planting took place on 24 November 2019. FTC were represented by Cllrs Liam Jones and Caroline Ashton. Councillor Alan Oulton had left the Council by this time.
6. Following the planting of the copse it was FTC's intention to leave the copse to grow back with minimum interference until the trees were established.
7. When the Estates Manager left FTC a Service Level Agreement was agreed with Northwich Town Council (NTC). This included litter picking and inspection (12 visits per year). Unknown to NTC local residents and members of the WI have been carrying out unauthorised work on the copse. While this

has not in any way caused any harm to the copse it has impeded NTC's responsibilities in regard to inspecting and monitoring the copse. FTC are currently reviewing the Service Level Agreements for maintenance of all land assets ready for the re-tendering process.

8. FTC is concerned that private individuals working in the copse without liaising with the Town Clerk are not covered by public liability insurance if they, or other people, are hurt as a result of an accident.
9. Residents should report any maintenance issue to the Town Clerk so that the work may be carried out safely by the FTC contractors.

### Frodsham Town Council Press release 30 Mar 2017

Several mature trees have recently been removed from Manley Road Copse, a small area of land off Manley Road owned by Frodsham Town Council.

The Town Council commissioned a tree survey to check out the condition of the trees and unfortunately this showed that they were suffering from fungi and rot and recommended that the trees should be removed. Neighbouring houses had also reported damage from falling branches and the Council became more concerned about the long-term stability of the trees.

Storm 'Doris' realised our 'fears' by bringing down trees at the copse, blocking Manley road.

Work is now completed and the trees have been removed.

We now plan to leave the area alone during the nesting and breeding season to allow birds to nest in the hedgerow, etc. This will also give wildflower seeds in the soil seed bank a chance to germinate in the disturbed soil.

Whilst it is very sad to lose any tree, especially a mature one, removal was unfortunately the only solution. With the new planting and monitoring in the future, hopefully the copse will continue to provide a quiet area for people to enjoy.

Cllr Alan Oulton, Chair of Frodsham Town Council's Environment Committee, explains the background to the decision



### Background

The trees have mainly been Beech trees, but others, including a Larch have also been removed. Our attention was drawn to this area last autumn, when a bough from a Beech tree broke free and damaged the roof and internal ceiling of a house on land adjoining the copse. We engaged the local CWaC Tree Officer to carry out an inspection (from the ground) of the tree. He suggested crown thinning and crown reduction of the tree. We then engaged a CWaC registered Arborist (tree surgeon) who is also registered with the Arboriculture Association. Unfortunately on closer inspection of the tree (by climbing) it was discovered that the tree was in a very poor state. It was also found that the tree was in fact made up of 3 trees which had combined. The Arborist found that the tree was infected with a fungi - *Ganoderma applanatum*, this is a bracket fungi that both feeds on heartwood and also living sapwood. It is a common disease found in mature Beech trees. It is also known as artists bracket and bear bread. The trees were also 'suffering' from water pockets, caused by the trees branching habit, causing rot within the tree. The advice given to FTC was that the only solution was, sadly, removal of the trees. FTC invited tenders and an approved contractor was engaged. Although there were no Tree Preservation Orders on the trees (TPOs), whenever a tree of this age is felled a licence has to be obtained from the Forestry Commission. This licence took time to be issued, and FTC needed to complete the works by the end of March to avoid encroaching into the nesting season. Also mammal habitat could also have been compromised. It was also decided to remove several other trees on site which were fast becoming a problem, stability-wise. One of these - a Japanese Larch, was very shallow rooted due to the area being

sandstone, with very little topsoil, resulting in a serious stability problem. There was also a danger that the said tree would become infected by other fungi- *Phytophthora ramorum*. This is spreading throughout the UK, attacking numerous species. The generic *Ramorum disease* is also known as Larch disease and sudden Oak death. It has also attacked Beech trees. Storm 'Doris' realised our 'fears' by bringing down trees at the copse, blocking Manley Road. Work is now completed and the trees have been removed. FTC has financed the removal, but costs were kept somewhat lower by the contractor removing the timber for sale as logs. We now plan to 'leave the area alone' during the nesting and breeding season to allow nesting in the hedgerow, etc. This will also allow the seed bank to maybe 'wake up' due to ground disturbance, allowing species of wildflowers to germinate. Replanting will then take place, the species being selected for visual and habitat value. Such species as wild cherry (gean), red hawthorn and rowan/mountain ash. The hedgerow will also be replanted where there are gaps. Whilst it is very sad to lose any tree, especially a mature one, this was unfortunately the only solution. With the new planting and monitoring in the future, hopefully the copse will continue to provide a quiet area for people to enjoy.