

## Green Flag Community Award 2016

Name of Site: Bearsted Woodland Trust

Name of Community Group: Bearsted Woodland Trust

### Field Assessment Comments

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations
<b>Welcoming Place</b>		
Good and safe access	Paths into and around the site are very good hard surfaces.	
Welcoming	An extremely welcoming site with its open aspect and far reaching views.	
Signage	Very good signage at all entrances. Good site map which has recently been updated to include new features and additional site bequeathed to the Trust. Attractive wildlife interpretation boards around the site.	Continue to keep signage as up to date as practicably possible.
Equal access for all	A very large site with most areas accessible for all. This natural site does have some inclines and parts of the meadow area would be challenging for wheelchair users and the less mobile.	Endeavour to keep the site as accessible as possible to all members of the community.
<b>Healthy, Safe &amp; Secure</b>		
Personal security	Very well used by local community so feels comfortable and safe despite its varied habitats of open and more wooded areas. Regular usage by dog users walking through the site.	
Safe equipment and facilities	All equipment kept in a locked store with a security system in operation. High standard of maintenance on all their equipment. Volunteers trained to use the wide range of equipment available and attend regular refresher courses. One volunteer is now a qualified chain saw operator after attending a	Excellent policy of volunteer and public safety at all times.

	two week course. Health & Safety warning signs for the public are in place for all maintenance and working party activities.	
	Very large natural site which includes childrens play areas and football pitch.	
Appropriate level of facilities		
Dog fouling	None seen despite the number of dog walkers using the site.	
<b>Clean &amp; Well maintained</b>		
Litter and waste management	Litter picking is carried out on a regular basis by volunteers and users of the site who are dedicated to keeping their site as litter free as possible. None seen during visit.	Keep up this good work.
Overall standard of maintenance	Exceptional standard of maintenance particularly as it is now a 26 acre site. Teams of volunteers carry out work on the site three days a week in accordance with their comprehensive management plan which is under regular review.	A huge thank you to the committed volunteers who continue to maintain this site for the enjoyment and pleasure of the local community.
Graffiti and vandalism	No evidence of any on site. No incidences have been reported since BWT took over the site. .	
<b>Sustainability</b>		
Peat use	None used on site.	
Pesticide use	None used on site.	
Sustainable materials use	Wherever possible. Recycled woodchips used for maintaining woodland paths. Wooden bench seating around the site.	
Waste recycling and minimisation	Recycling bins in store shed.	

## Biodiversity & Heritage

Conservation of landscape & historic features	BWT are very keen on preserving their site and its natural landscape. Fruit trees have been planted to depict the previous old orchards. Research into the history and ownership of much of their land shows it goes back to Henry VIII's reign and has been highlighted in an article in their Spring 2016 newsletter.	
Conservation of biodiversity	<p>Diverse range of habitats attract a range of wildlife. With the number of trees birdsong is very evident whilst walking around. BWT are fortunate to have access to advisers and members with a variety of knowledge and expertise in conservation.</p> <p>The Trust's nursery is where young trees are planted for onward replanting around the site. Their new website includes a Nature Notes forum so members can share their sightings with all. An experimental guided wildlife walk was carried out in May which was very successful and more are planned.</p>	Keep up these good ideas.

## Community Involvement

Promotion of green space / project	Very well promoted throughout the local community with their newsletters, activity days and website. BWT have a stand at their local annual Fayre where they sell souvenirs made from material from the site. New blank cards with some charming photos taken at various time of the year should prove very popular.	Keep up these splendid ideas for promoting the site
Links to the wider community	<p>BWT aim to engage with numerous groups and organisations. This includes team building activity days by local businesses which are useful in contributing to the many projects and maintenance of the site. Local school children visit as part of their curriculum.</p> <p>BWT operate a policy to cooperate and keep on good terms with adjacent landowners, residents and the parish council.</p>	
Involvement in decision	BWT involve volunteers and the local community as much as possible. A survey in 2014 revealed a problem with unwanted	Appreciate that this is a major concern for the committee and

making	approaches from dogs. Despite much consultation with dog owners no proposals have been received to resolve the issue other than a dogs on lead zone. To date a request that dogs be kept on a lead on 40% of Trust land has been widely ignored. BWT are determined to provide safe access for everyone and remain open to proposals. If efforts to achieve voluntary compliance fail they may have to resort to requesting Maidstone BC to put in place a Public Space Consultation Order.	hope it can be resolved before too long.
Involvement in operations	Volunteers are involved in a wide range of projects and activities.	Pleased to meet some of the volunteers on day of visit.
Appropriate provision for the community	Very good local amenity and popular with the local community.	
<b>Management / achievements</b>		
Innovation and creativity	BWT seem to have a wealth of creative ideas. Their most recent is to engage a local woodcarver to create sculptures of wildlife from a fallen turkey oak felled in hurricane winds three years ago. The results are stunning.	Keep up these wonderful ideas!
Resources secured / used	The additional land bequeathed to BWT is an exciting challenge which they have discussed at great length. Some old farming implements and stone feature in memory of their benefactor have been put onto the new site. For the time being they are managing the site much as it was before.	
Additional Comments		
<p>This is such a delightful site to visit. Bearsted Woodland Trust is exemplary in managing and maintaining the woodland and meadowland for all to enjoy. It is even more amazing as there is a lot of land to maintain.</p> <p>A new opportunity has emerged for the future in that a local resident landowner is donating some adjacent land and lake to BWT at some stage. I am sure they will rise to the challenge admirably.</p>		