

What a difference a year makes!

Winter was once again pretty miserable, wet and muddy. But early Spring this year has been uplifting, and so different to a year ago when the woodland sites were under water. Original Wood site had to be closed for repair and upgrading to improve drainage, and the tracks were becoming impassable.

For those involved with our annual Plant Fair, you will remember we were on tenterhooks as three weeks from the event the ground was still saturated and unusable.

Once the woodland was firm enough to take heavy equipment, diggers and trailers full of road stone were taken into the woods by Patrick and the team so they could work on improving the tracks and sites. It was time consuming and costly. Then, during the latter half of the winter, it became clear that last summer's work was disappearing quickly into the mud and new potholes were appearing because of the volume of traffic passing through the sites.



Changes to minibus drop off

This continuing deterioration means we need to restrict the amount of traffic driving into and through the woods.

We are asking all volunteers and participants to park in the designated car parks rather than on site. Ideally there should only be one staff car on site for transporting kit to site, and to be available in an emergency.

In recent years we have invested time and money to create car parks for each site and to upgrade the woodland tracks to enable emergency access should it be required. In the last year alone we have spent just over **£7,500** on stone to repair the tracks we made in 2021 and by February we'd already spent a further **£500**. The tracks are degrading quickly and may require substantial re-investment to repair. This amounts to tens of thousands in the not too distant future, all of which will impact on our ability to deliver services - the more we spend on tracks the fewer sessions we can afford to run.

As the tracks degrade, there is also increasing impact on the TCS minibuses - another huge cost in terms of garage bills (£6,066 in the last year). The most recent visit to the garage resulted in the mechanics asking us to clean the underside of the vehicles if we want to reduce wear and tear on the buses. I am not comfortable asking any of our volunteers to get on their knees and go under the buses to clean them as there is a simple solution - the buses do **not** go in to the woods.

We always used to drop off participants at car parks so they could walk in. Original Wood and Sapling Wood car parks can be used for all of the sites, so ideally we are asking drivers to choose one and drop off and pick up from the same car park. If you are using the Polytunnel site, the minibus will stop at the top of the track, so you can walk down to the site.

With ongoing horrendous winter weather, the situation is only going to get worse. We need to preserve what we've got for as long as we can. Your help with this would be much appreciated.

Staff Changes

Jazz: Some of you will remember that Jasmine Bearman took Maternity Leave last year to have her daughter, we have just heard from her that she will not be returning to her role and we wish her well.

Shelley: Shelley first came to The Cart Shed as a student and after qualifying in the summer of 2024, she returned to cover Jazz's maternity leave. Sadly the commute from Worcester is wearing, so Shelley will be leaving us in the summer, returning occasionally as a member of our Clinical Bank

Pip: In March 2024 Pip took a year's sabbatical to work on her PHD. She has returned to her role and is now working Wednesday's and Thursdays

Annabel: Annabel joined the team last spring to cover Pip and has stayed on to help cover other gaps. She leaves us at the end of May, but will hopefully return occasionally on Bank.

Oli: As some of you will know by now, Oli is now Dr Oli having successfully completed his PHD in Educational Research - congratulations Dr (He's quite good at First Aid too)!

Plant Fair - Garnons 2025.

You may have noticed the purple signs covering the County advertising our Plant Fair, or even seen some of the beautiful flyers and posters. The event is open from 10.30am - 4pm on 30th April. If you cannot go, but are a good home baker and would like to donate a cake, brownie or flapjack please let Richard in the office know - we can accept deliveries at the office on Tuesday 29th if you are unable to attend the fair.



Monty Don enjoying his visit to The Cart Shed seen here with one of our plant fair flyers!

