

Bredhurst Woodland Action Group (BWAG)

24/25 Update

This year is BWAG's 20th anniversary, and its dedicated volunteers continue to manage and maintain Bredhurst Hurst, which is approximately 300 acres of ancient woodland.

Thanks to Kent Wildlife Trust for leading the monthly task days, held on the 3rd Sunday every month. Work in 24/25 focused on Primrose Bank, which looked stunning this year, and the continuation of coppicing, strimming, general repairs and litter picking. Unfortunately, Task Day volunteer numbers have dropped, which is very disappointing. Pre-covid regularly saw 20-30 volunteers attend per month but now they are just into double figures.

Club Nights continue to attract around 40 people per month with speakers covering a wide range of nature related and woodland topics. This year's talks included Wildflowers of Kent, Hares, Fungi, Costal Birds, The Bison Project, The Fox Project and A Woodland Year by Simon Ginnaw who is always a very popular speaker.

BWAG holds an annual Bluebell and Cream Tea weekend in April and held a quiz night for the first time in November. It was a sell out and another quiz night is planned for later this year.

The dormouse population continues to be monitored between March to October by a licenced handler who traveller to Bredhurst from Rye each month. There are also 160 bird boxes in and around Bredhurst Woods which are monitored several times a week by two very dedicated volunteers.

Working closely with the Kent Downs National Landscape Team (formally AONB Unit), BWAG secured grant funding of over **£41.5k** for specific projects within Bredhurst Hurst last year.

£30k Path restoration

2k Training (Chainsaw basic and advance courses for two operatives)

£4k Equipment and tools

£5.5k Felling diseased Ash affected by Chalara (Ash Die Back)

The grant funding could not be used for day to day running costs which must be met from membership fees and fundraising events. For the first time in BWAG's 20-year history, income was not enough to cover expenditure for day-to-day maintenance, insurance etc and **£2k** had to be drawn from its limited reserves.

The area is very heavily used by walkers, horse riders and cyclist who love the area and greatly value that it is well maintained but, sadly, very few are BWAG members, attend events or donate to BWAG. People assume that the woods are a free amenity that maintains itself, but it doesn't! Without BWAG, the woods would soon deteriorate.

Managing woodland is very expensive and BWAG needs to find a way to increase support and interest in the charity. Challenges include the serious decline in volunteers and to persuade the many 1000s of people who use the woods each year to support BWAG, either by becoming a BWAG Members (from as little as £5 a year), helping on task days or attending events.