



Friends of Tunbridge Wells & Rusthall Commons

Winter 2023

Ash dieback shows no sign of slowing.

In the spring we reported on the situation with Ash dieback, when a significant number of trees on Rusthall Common were found to be affected and needed to be cut down.

To monitor the situation, during the summer months, the Ranger carried out a survey of all the Ash trees on the commons. Unfortunately the spread of the disease has shown no sign of slowing, and yet again, for safety reasons the Conservators needed to fell a large number of infected trees.

A felling project was carried out in the area behind Colbran Way and Pidgeon Wood, and a second area close to the Beacon and Langton Road. The trees have been removed and transported to a biomass facility.

Update on the Friends 2023 projects

The majority of the Friends major projects have been completed, though the clearance of areas close to Major Yorks Road and Hungershall Park have been postponed for a while. You may have already seen we have also contributed towards the cost of replacement litterbins, which we hope will be installed soon. More recently, we have contributed to the painting of the toilet block, power tools for use by the Ranger and a variety of equipment for use by our volunteers.



In addition, at a recent committee meeting, the Trustees agreed to pay £2,000 towards the cost of a vehicle for the Ranger's use.

Our 2024 projects are due to be agreed early next year. One item being considered is a new noticeboard, located somewhere close to Fir Tree carpark.

www.friendstothecommons.org
(note the spelling)

Communications

We would be interested to hear from members, with suggestions on how our newsletter, or our website might be improved. What would you like to see included or changed, do you have articles or photos which you think might be of interest? One option the committee is exploring, is an online payment system, for members who wish to pay for their membership and events in this way. Contact Chris Gurr with your comments.

Volunteers

Our volunteers continue to make a huge difference – an enormous thank you to you all. During the birdnesting season, certain tasks needed to go on hold, however there was plenty to keep us busy. Benches and noticeboards have been refurbished, paths cleared, holes filled, wildflower seeds scattered, brambles cutback, piles of litter collected and so much more.



That's not all, three editions of Common Ground have been produced by the committee and distributed with the help of members. The website is regularly updated, and several social events have been organised. As a small festive thank you, *weather permitting* - we are offering our volunteers FREE Tea, Coffee and Scandi bakes at our December volunteer session.

<https://www.friendstothecommons.org/news.html>

Update on recent surveys

The new management plan is due to be published shortly. Two recent surveys carried out on the Commons, have identified seven – yes seven, different species of bat on Rusthall Common. Sadly though, butterfly populations have declined nationally, this is due in part to pollution and changing weather patterns. The Woodland Trust website includes information to help attract butterflies to our gardens, and detailed instructions on how to make a butterfly feeder <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2020/03/how-to-attract-butterflies/>