

Sitlington Parish Council
and
Friends of Emroyd

The Emroyd Project

Project Plan

Version 2
Revised April 2016

**Sitlington Parish Council
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Sitlington Parish Council and Friends of Emroyd

The Emroyd Project

Sitlington Parish Council and the community group 'Friends of Emroyd' are working in partnership on this Project based at Emroyd Common, Middlestown.

Aim

The aim of the project is to improve the value of the Emroyd woodland for local residents by:

- a) opening up the woodland by creating new paths for walking, cycling and horse riding;
- b) increasing local awareness of the area - its history and ecology;
- c) increase the educational value of the area
- d) improving the ongoing management of the woodland through establishing local involvement.
- e) providing memorials for the contribution of parish residents to the First World War and the contribution made by horses to that war effort.

Objectives

1 Extending the footpath and bridleway network

A fundamental objective of the project is to extend the current limited footpaths and bridleways within the Emroyd woodland to include the whole of the area in order to maximise the enjoyment of the woodland for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

2 Create a memorial for those parishioners who fell in World War 1

At present the names of parishioners who fell in the First World War are recorded in a number of memorials scattered throughout the parish, the aim would be to create a consolidated memorial stone.

It is also proposed to create a memorial for horses who served in the war in recognition of their significant contribution.

3 Improve the open field area (See Project Plan)

The current aim is to improve the contribution of the meadow area makes to the diversity of the otherwise woodland environment and usage of the common.

4 Establish an Ongoing Management Plan for the Triangle (See Project Plan)

The Plan will set out proposals for this area.

5 Establish an Ongoing Management Plan for the Woodland

The Plan will provide a guide for the ongoing management of the woodland to maintain and improve an increasingly healthy ecological environment.

6. Establish the 'Friends of Emroyd' group as a sustainable organisation

The aims of the group are:

- to create an ongoing group of local volunteers to support the current project:
- to develop and help manage the environment of Emroyd in future years and
- to provide a vehicle for community involvement and awareness.



The Existing Woodland (Emroyd Common)

The area in the ownership of the Parish Council is registered Common Land. It is well wooded and slopes northward from the built up area of Middlestown to the Smithy Brook beck.

The area was extensively mined in the 1800's for both ironstone and coal and may well have been subjected to ironstone mining in mediaeval times. Some of the shallow workings were subsequently used for domestic refuse tipping.

The woodland, which covers the bulk of the area is of a semi-natural type consisting of predominantly oak with a small percentage cover of Birch, Willow, Ash, Alder and Hawthorn. The trees are of young to medium age. It is hoped to obtain a Woodland Management Grant to enable ongoing management to be undertaken in accordance with a Management plan produced with the help Wakefield MDC forestry officers.

At the northern end of the site a large flat area suitable for a football field was created in conjunction with opencast coal working of the area to the west of the existing woodland. Owing to access difficulties the field was used for football for only a brief period and has been cropped for hay at times.

An ecological survey has found the woodland provides a valuable, although unexceptional natural habitat. It does contain a pond and surveys are ongoing to establish whether Great Crest Newts are established there. The proposed additional routes will not impact on the pond.



The Project Plan

The Footpath/Bridleway Network (Objective 1)

The attached plan illustrates the proposed location of the new routes. These routes, provide a significant extension to the existing cycling and horse riding route currently provided by the permissive bridleway which runs east west across the higher more southerly part of the site. Existing unofficial footpaths running down, away from Middlestown are of variable quality and reduce the accessibility of the northern part of the site for older and less mobile members of the local community and those not used to, or equipped for, rougher walking.

In addition a short flight of steps will be provided at the north-east corner to facilitate pedestrian access to the existing footpath along the northern boundary and also at the south-west corner of the open field, again to provide a pedestrian connection up the bank to main route along the western boundary.

Improvements will also be undertaken to the existing statutory footpaths and permissive bridleway located in the southern half of the site, nearest the village. In some cases improvements are required outside the area owned by the Parish Council and the co-operation of Wakefield MDC will be sought.

In addition to providing an improved circular route within the woodland, there will be a direct link to the wider footpath network to the west of Emroyd via the existing statutory footpath along the northern boundary of the Common. There is potential to also extend the bridleway network in that direction in the future, subject to the co-operation of the Wakefield and Kirklees Councils and landowners, thus providing a link with the newly created bridleway along Briggs Lane.

The War Memorials (Objective 2)

Taking up the underlying First World War centenary theme, the Project Plan proposes sites at the south-west and south-east corners of the meadow field as locations for the two memorials. In addition it has been suggested that some planting of special trees to mark the centenary would be an appropriate symbol. The Plan therefore includes the planting of an avenue of horse-chestnut trees along the straight north-western length of the new route, close to the horse memorial.

The Meadow (Objective 3)

At the present time, options for the longer term use of the field area are still under consideration and will be the subject of specific report outlining possible options for wider consultation purposes. Limited access has prevented its original use as a football field and at the time of writing the following options are under consideration:

- a wildflower meadow
- a grassland area kept trimmed for picnics and ball games
- a grassland area combined with some group planting of trees to provide some shade and greater interest.

Other options and refinements may emerge as a result of further work and consultation. During the first year cutting the grass relatively short has been well received and will continue for this coming year. However a small area in the north-east corner is currently being used as a trial for a wildflower meadow to be sown this Spring.

As a result of an approach from Fountains who undertake ongoing maintenance beneath the power lines which skirt the northern edge of Emroyd, the opportunity has been taken clear the bank alongside the track on the north side of the meadow to provide a further variation in the ecological habitat.

The Triangle

In 2005 the Parish Council bought a small area of the adjacent agricultural field, between the Common and Thornhill Road, abutting the north-east corner of the original Common area. The purpose of this was to potentially provide vehicle access into the woodland which would be entirely within the Parish Council's ownership, as an alternative to the track along the northern edge of the wood which is in private ownership.

This former agricultural land has begun to be colonised by small saplings and required positive management. The Conservation Volunteers have undertaken some clearing work to provide some structure and shape to the areas of saplings and Highfield School, Ossett have taken a positive interest in using the area as an educational resource. A basic plan has been prepared as a guide to future management.

Woodland Management (Objective 4)

Establishing a long term plan for continual management of the woodland is an important objective of the Project Plan. Consultation has already taken place with Wakefield MDC's Forestry Officer, the Forestry Commission and a representative of woodland management and timber company. The WMDC Forestry Officer has produced a draft Woodland Management Plan which provides a valuable starting point. It is intended to produce a separate Woodland Management Plan with a view to obtaining grant aid for ongoing works.

The Woodland Management Plan will particularly need take account of any ecological issues (e.g any specific requirements related to the ecology of the pond) and perhaps industrial archaeological if necessary.

Ecology

The woodland is designated in the Wakefield District Development Plan as a Local Wildlife Site. Extensive consultation has already taken place with the Environment Agency, English Nature, the West Yorkshire Advisory Service and representatives of Wakefield Biodiversity Group. As a consequence an updated survey of the flora of the woodland has been undertaken by English Nature. The survey confirms the area as of considerable interest, thus justifying its current designation, without being exceptional in terms of requiring any greater special status. It is intended to work closely with local experts and groups to manage the woodland in a manner which enhances its biodiversity.

Industrial Archaeology

The existence of shallow deposits of coal, ironstone and fireclay within or adjacent to the current Common area has resulted in a long history of mining and industrial activity in the area. This peaked in the latter half of the 19th century with Emroyd Colliery immediately to the north, together with Brothers Pit in the south-west corner being the main coal producers. Coke ovens, lime kilns and a foundry were also working around this time in the

area. There were a number of rope-hauled wagon-ways crossing the site linking the two pits together with outside connections from Flockton Collieries and down to the Calder and Hebble Navigation. The woodland is also pock marked as a result of shallow bell-pits from older ironstone and coal working. The intention is to research this history further with local experts and make it more widely available to the local community.

The existence of the stone tops to two shafts has been brought to the attention of the Parish Council and the Friends through an initial archaeological themed walk with. The Coal Authority have fenced off one of these. It is likely that the Parish Council will wish to do the same for the other which is specifically in its ownership.

Friends of Emroyd and Community Involvement (Objective 5)

The Parish Council initiated the formation of a Friends of Emroyd Group, and following a public meeting in November 2014, an inaugural meeting was held in January 2015. A Management Group was formed which works in close partnership with the Parish Council, with representatives attending the Parish Council's Development Group. The Friends are composed of interested local residents and the Management Group has co-opted a retired Natural Environment Manager with Wakefield MDC and includes a representative of the Sitlington Bridleways Group and a local parish councillor.

The FoE have been extremely active in increasing awareness of the group and the project. Two newsletters have been produced during the first six months, articles have been included in the local magazine, Coxley News, and contributions have been included in Parish Council items in the Wakefield Express.

A stand was manned at Middlestown Gala which publicised the project and attracted a number of residents interested in receiving information and being involved and it is intended to repeat attendance this year.

Two work session for Friends - litter picking, and another to uproot balsam – have been held. Similar sessions will be undertaken annually.

Schools

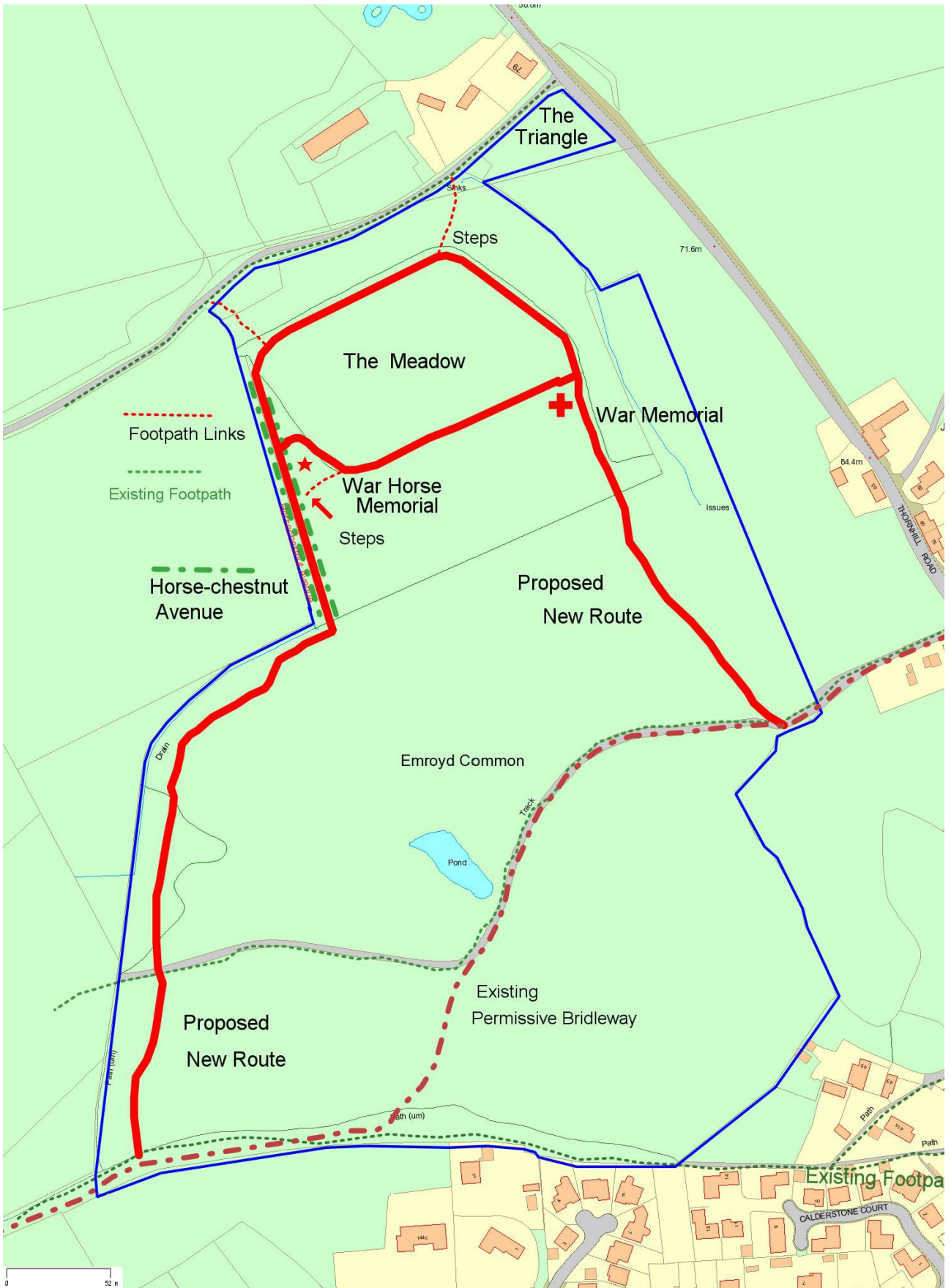
The Friends have aspirations to involve local schools at an appropriate time but have already made contact with Highfield School at Ossett who have expressed great interest in being involved and using the woodland within their curriculum. Highfield School is a school for SEN pupils from 11 to 18 and are looking to use the area as a location where small groups of students can undertake activities which would contribute to a special award – the John Muir Award.

Other Bodies

As indicated above the Friends have been very active in liaising with local experts and bodies with regard to ecology and industrial heritage and intend to continue to further all relevant contacts with a view to making educative material available more widely available to the community.

Close links have also been established with the Conservation Volunteers who have already undertaken work for the partnership. The Friends are keen to continue this relationship which is seen as being mutually very beneficial.

Overall, maximum community involvement in the project is being sought



Priorities, Implementation and Funding

Priorities

The fundamental priority for the Project is the creation of improved access within the woodland through the construction of the proposed new circular route.

The route will improve accessibility around the wood and in so doing encourage more people to visit the woodland and facilitate the provision of the war memorials and the wider educational aspects of the Project.

The second priority is to establish the two war memorials before the end of 1918 in order to be relevant to the current centenary remembrance.

Underlying these two focussed priorities is the ongoing need to have regard to the overall management of the woodland and related areas. In particular:

- Work should continue on establishing and where possible implementing management plans for the Meadow and the Triangle area.
- Urgent maintenance work e.g. tackling the invasion of Himalayan Balsam will be addressed. Other unforeseen urgent tasks will be addressed as they arise.
- Consultation and research on longer term aspects of the project will be ongoing. This work will inform the detail of the later period of project such work associated with managing areas of particular interest e.g the pond, former bell pits and other aspects of the ecology and industrial archaeology. Signage and interpretive materials will be a further aspect as the project develops..

Implementation

The principal task associated with these priorities are set out below and summarised in the accompanying outline timetable.

The New Route

Before construction of the new route can commence the following tasks will have to be completed:

- Establish the precise route and the specification of the various sections it.
- Obtain the necessary planning permission
- Obtain quotations for the work
- Apply and obtain grant funding

Work is complete on the first two bullet points with planning permission for the routes granted in March 2016.

Other preparatory tasks may be required prior to the commencement of construction e.g the laying of the tall hedge along the western boundary.

A target date for completion of the construction of the New Route is the autumn 2017, subject to obtaining grant funding.

The Memorials

Tasks associated with establishing the memorials are:

- Design of two memorials
- Quotations for the memorials
- Obtain funding

A target date for the above stages is the early 2016 with implementation after the routes have been implemented in the latter half of 2017 or early 2018.

Management

- Urgent actions will be addressed as when necessary e.g there is a short season for effective action on the Balsam before it seeds again in August/September.
- Research and consultation on all longer term aspects of management to produce recommendations on particular aspects e.g the pond, will be ongoing.
- Management of the Triangle will be developed in consultation with Highfield School and the Conservation Volunteers, while proposals for the Open Field may evolve more slowly as trials of wildflower seeds are evaluated and wider reaction is obtained to the shorter grass which is to be maintained during the remainder of 2016.
- Work will continue to maintain the profile of the Friends Group through using Facebook for example.
- A Woodland Management Plan will be produced.
- Signage and interpretive material to be developed.

Responsibilities

The project is proceeding through close co-operation between the Parish Council and the Friends of Emroyd.

The necessary co-ordination is being formally achieved through the Parish Council's Development Group, with the councillor Chair of that Group also being represented on the Friends Management Group and, conversely, other Friends being co-opted into the Development Group.

The division of responsibilities between the two bodies as envisaged at the present time is as follows:

- This overall Project Plan has been developed on a joint basis between the Parish Council and Friends.

- The two bodies will work together to make the most effective bid proposals for grant aid from outside sources for the proposed new routes.
- The Parish Council, as landowner, will retain formal responsibility for all matters and formal procedures associated with that ownership and will have the final decision on all developments within the area of its ownership.
- The Parish Council will take the lead in securing the implementation of the main war memorial.
- The Friends of Emroyd will take responsibility for implementation of the war horse memorial.
- General management operations within the area will be agreed jointly with responsibility for implementation being agreed by Development Group as appropriate.

Funding

The Routes

Initial indications are that there are three possible sources of grant funding for the new routes from funds which encourage community projects of this type.

There are two funds which derive from the environmental levy associated with waste disposal. Emroyd is within the prescribed distance from a waste disposal site at Thornhill which may qualify the scheme for a SITA trust grant. Emroyd is also within qualifying distance of the waste disposal site at Normanton which opens the possibility of a grant from the WREN fund. A third possible source of grant is the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Over last year a number of other sources of funding have been identified for smaller discrete sub-projects. Sponsorship will also be investigated.

The Memorials

The memorial to the horses in World War I is currently envisaged to be of a relatively simple low cost design which might rely in part on donations from local horse owners.

The memorial to the parishioners who fell during the War is currently envisaged to be of stone with all the names inscribed on it. As such it will be a more substantial construction. Grant funding for this may be more problematically as the Parish has already been the recipient of a Lottery Fund grant which is specifically aimed at refurbishing existing memorials. The grant was for refurbishing and reconstructing the stained glass windows from the former St Luke's Church and locating them at St Andrew's Church, Netherton. In any event this fund was aimed at existing rather than new memorials. The Heritage Lottery Fund may however, be a possibility, otherwise alternative sources such as sponsorship may be required.

Woodland

A DEFRA Woodland Management Grant for ongoing management of the woodland will be

sought. The Emroyd Woodland has been registered with DEFRA and a draft woodland management plan to assist the bid has already been kindly provided by the Wakefield MDC Forestry Officer. Further work is required to amend the plan in the light of the latest information which is emerging from developing the project.

Summary of More Detailed Proposals/Plans/Documents to be Prepared

1. Design of Memorials and submission of planning application
2. Woodland Management Plan

Project Plan Updating

This is the first annual revision of the Project Plan. It is anticipated that further refinements and additions may be required as the project progresses and the Plan will therefore be reviewed annually.

Key Tasks and Summary Timetable (X completed)

Key Tasks	2015				2016				2017				2018			
The New Routes																
1. Establish the precise routes and specification			x													
2. Obtain Planning Permisssion					x											
3. Apply for/Obtain Funding						√	√	√								
4 Lay the Boundary hedge					√		√	√								
5. Construct Routes									√	√	√					
War Memorials																
1. Design and cost memorials					√											
2. Establish Funding Sources					√	√	√									
3. Apply for funding							√	√				√	√	√		
4 . Install memorials																
Additional Documents																
1. Plan for Triangle				x												
2. Proposals for field					x											
3. Woodland Management Plan								√								
3a Apply for Woodland Management Grant					√			√	√							

Key Tasks	2015				2016				2017				2018			
Management Tasks																
1. Uproot Balsam		x	x			√	√									
2. Clear Paths						√	√									
3. Action on Pond Area							√	√	√							