

Village celebrates ownership of woodland

Tarvin residents turned out on Saturday, October 24th, to celebrate some key events in the life of Tarvin Community Woodland. Councillor Samantha Dixon, Leader of Cheshire West and Chester Council handed over the deeds to the woodland. The MP for Eddisbury, Antoinette Sandbach, presented the sixth consecutive Green Flag award and local resident Jonathan Sears, representing Barclays Bank, handed over a cheque for £6,600.

The woodland had been leased from the Council since 2009 but is now owned by Tarvin Community Woodland Trust on behalf of the Community in perpetuity.

The ceremony was held in Tarvin Primary School that adjoins the woodland. Headmaster Andrew Davies welcomed everyone to the main school hall, which was set out for its annual exhibition, and explained the close relationship that the school has with the woodland.

Cllr. Dixon presented the deeds to Stuart Exell, Chairman of the Trust and said that as a child she had visited the fields around Tarvin before the by-pass was built in 1984, which created the possibility that a piece of land could have been abandoned. She said how wonderful it was that the community had responded to the challenge and over the years transformed the area into a special place that is treasured by local people. The policy of Cheshire West and Chester is that local communities are best able to operate local open spaces and facilities. The full transfer of the land would allow the Trust to continue the wonderful things it had achieved and help the Council's continuing objective to improve the wellbeing of the people in Tarvin.

Stuart Exell replying said that it was a good example of Council and residents working together to mutual benefit; it could be said to be the Big Society in action. He said that there are many people in the village with professional and other skills who give freely of their time. When working together, this capability has achieved an enormous amount in a relatively short time. Finally, Stuart promised that the Trust would continue to look after and develop the woodland for the benefit of the village in perpetuity with a plea for some more and younger people to join the team.

Antoinette Sandbach then presented the 2015 Green Flag (Community) Award to Charles Bradley, Trust Secretary. It is a sign that the site is a well-managed and welcoming place, central to the local community and a high-quality green space in Cheshire West and Chester. She said how thrilled she was to be able to present the flag to a community that is clearly dedicated to its environment, not just in the woodland but with such activities as litter picks. She had spent an hour or so previously visiting the woodland to see it and gain a better understanding of its history and aspirations for the future. She congratulated everyone who had been involved.

Charles Bradley replying said that we had been so proud 5 years ago when the first Green Flag had been presented by Stephen O'Brien, the then MP. He paid tribute to the late Jim Grogan who had the single-minded vision and drive to create the woodland in the first place and had been so proud of that first award when he was in hospital. Charles said that it becomes harder to retain Green Flag status especially after 5 years so everyone is really delighted at the success. He is proud to be a member of the woodland and community.

Jonathan Sears, a local resident who works for Barclays Bank, presented the cheque for £6,600 from its Employee Community Programme to John Daines, Treasurer. He said that Barclays has around three thousand people working in the Technology Centre at Radbroke Hall near Knutsford. Every year there is a family and friends fun day that raises money for charity. Employees can nominate four charities and Jonathan had proposed the Trust. There had been a variety of events where employees had raised funds that were then matched pound for pound by Barclays to make the total.

In reply, John said that the Trust was very grateful to Barclays staff and what an unexpected surprise it was when the final amount was announced. The Trust survives financially on grants and donations such as this but primarily from the generosity of individuals in the community who support the annual plant sale in May and the coffee morning in October. The money raised by Barclays staff would be put towards the project to create some wetland in the woodland that would encourage a new set of flora and fauna. The donation would be recognised.

After the presentations tea and cakes were available and there was an opportunity for everyone to see the school's exhibition that represents each class's project work on a central theme; this year "A question of sport".