

Perry Wood Community Questionnaire, Sept / Oct 2010



Prepared by the Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership

This Questionnaire has been put together to simplify some major areas of interest at Perry Wood and to enable you to offer your views and ideas. There are questions on all of the major proposals that from the new draft Management Strategy, and also questions regarding access, proposed wood-carved furniture and other visitor information. If you have a particular interest in Conservation, Access, Interpretation or Volunteering you might like to just fill in those Sections that particularly interest you.

Of course this could also be an opportunity for you to share your knowledge of the area and to get involved in conserving and celebrating this special place into the future! Please do leave your details at the end of the questionnaire if you'd like to be kept informed of any further developments.

Section 1 - Conservation Management

a) Perry Wood is a mixed woodland incorporating areas of mixed broadleaves and also chestnut coppice and conifer plantations. One main aim of the draft Management Strategy is to maintain and increase the area of 'semi-natural' broadleaved woodland, by gradually thinning areas of conifer plantation.

Please tick an answer to show how you feel about this

Do you:

Strongly Disagree Disagree Have no opinion Agree Strongly Agree

Please give reasons for your answer if you would like to.

b) The sweet chestnut coppice is traditionally cut in rotation to provide fencing stakes, hop poles and firewood. This brings light and shelter to other wildlife and encourages wildflowers. It is proposed that this rotation coppice continues throughout the areas of sweet chestnut (currently a 15 to 20 year rotation); the oak 'standards' that grow amongst this coppice, will be retained and replanted where necessary.

Do you:

Strongly Disagree Disagree Have no opinion Agree Strongly Agree

Please give reasons for your answer if you would like to.

c) Rides and glades can also provide light and shelter for wildlife and increase the diversity of plants and animals found in the wood. (Rides are long clearings at least 1.5 x the height of the trees, glades are often more rounded open areas). It is proposed to create one or two more rides through the areas of coppice and one or two more glades at path junctions in the wood.

Do you:

Strongly Disagree Disagree Have no opinion Agree Strongly Agree

Please give reasons for your answer if you would like to.

d) Rhododendron is a shrub which threatens the diversity of native wildlife - it actively prevents native plants and trees from growing and it spreads very quickly. However, many people enjoy seeing the rhododendron in Perry Woods, as they were planted in the 1800s and have become a feature of interest. The draft management strategy suggests a programme of removal - although it is worth bearing in mind that complete removal would be very difficult as there are so many small plants and seeds throughout the wood. How do you feel about removing most of the rhododendron?

Do you:

Strongly Disagree Disagree Have no opinion Agree Strongly Agree

Please give reasons for your answer if you would like to.

e) Bracken is also an 'invasive' species in Perry Wood, that is preventing the spread of heather across the hilltops. Again, a continued programme of removal is planned.

Do you:

Strongly Disagree Disagree Have no opinion Agree Strongly Agree

Please give reasons for your answer if you would like to.

f) Windmill Hill and The Mount are two high areas of ground, that have been open through much of their history, prior to the planting of conifers in the last century. Windmill Hill was, of course, the site of an old Windmill, and also the site of excavations into a suspected Roman fort; whilst the Pulpit has long been used (since 1800s) to survey the landscape around. The draft Management Strategy suggests that these areas could be restored to heathland, and possibly kept open by use of grazing animals. How would you feel about these proposals?

Do you:

Strongly Disagree Disagree Have no opinion Agree Strongly Agree

Please give reasons for your answer if you would like to.

g) A hardy type of animal such as Highland Cattle may be needed to graze here in the early years as the heathland vegetation develops. In fact these animals have been proven to be compatible with public access at sites such as Stelling Minnis Common and Charing Fen. How would you feel about seeing grazing animals such as Highland Cattle at Perry Wood?

Strongly Dislike Dislike Have no opinion Like Strongly Like

Please give reasons for your answer if you would like to.

h) The Old Quarry is perhaps better known by many as the area where there is a problem with mountain biking. Again, the Management Strategy suggests gradual thinning of the pines and natural regeneration, although the compaction from bikes is slowing the growth of a natural 'understorey'. Do you agree with the aim for natural regeneration?

Strongly Disagree Disagree Have no opinion Agree Strongly Agree

Please give reasons for your answer if you would like to.

i) Do you think that more drastic measures need to be taken in this area? Please elaborate.

There is now a possibility that further historical research, focussing on this Old Quarry could give cause for its greater protection in the future.

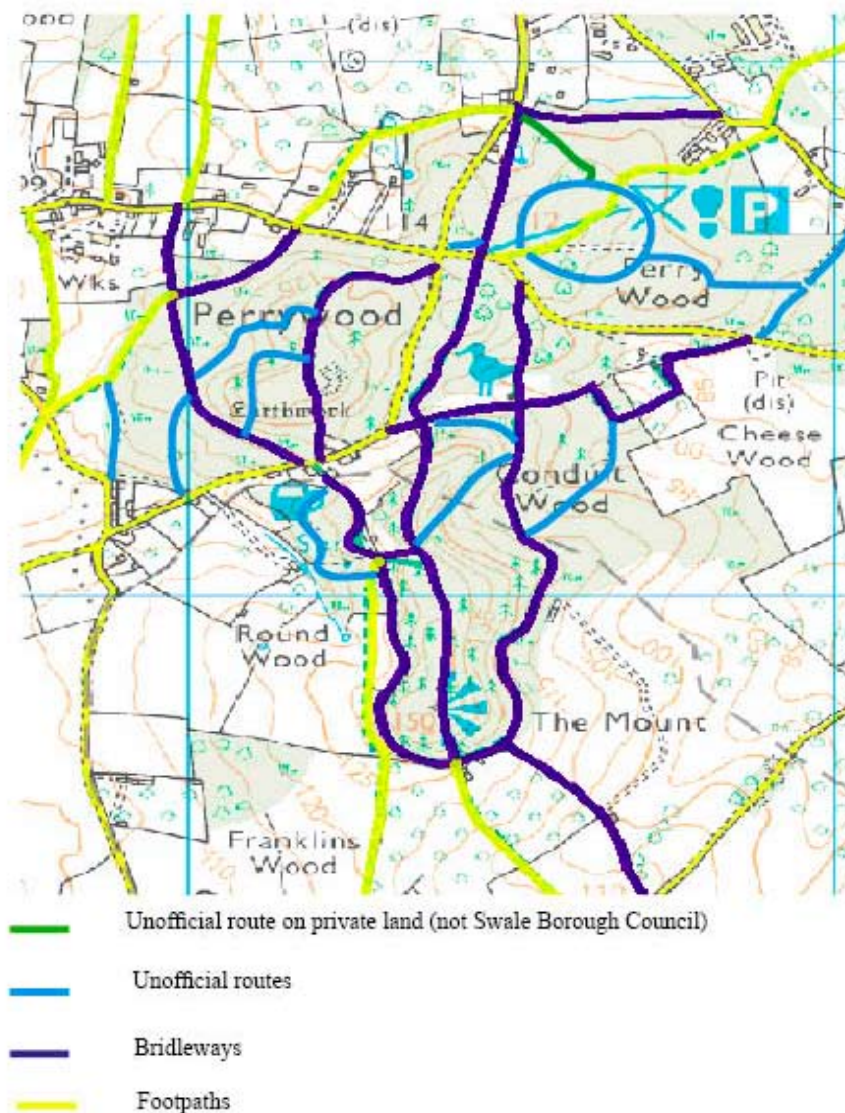
Section 2 - Access

a) An Access Review is available for you to read, prepared by the Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership. One main conclusion from the review is that there are areas of Perry Wood where popular paths need particular attention because the natural material is so erodible. Do you think that the public rights of way network requires more work?

Strongly Disagree Disagree Have no opinion Agree Strongly Agree

Please highlight areas of concern on the map.

Public rights of way, with unofficial routes



b) You'll note from the map that there are many 'unofficial' paths that are well used. Could you mark any that you use regularly?

c) There are currently no plans to make Perry Woods an 'Open Access' (roaming) site for walkers, but would this be something you would like to see in the future?

Yes

No

Please give reasons for your answer if you would like to.

d) In particular it might be possible to trial an 'Open Access' scheme on areas such as Windmill Hill and the Mount, as this would help to spread the visitor pressure and protect the main bridleways.

Do you:

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Have no opinion

Agree

Strongly Agree

Please give reasons for your answer if you would like to.

e) Another outcome of the Access Review is that there needs to be clearer signage showing where the public can go.

Do you:

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Have no opinion

Agree

Strongly Agree

Please give reasons for your answer if you would like to.

There is money for providing new 'Access maps' as part of the Discover Perry Wood work - please see section on Interpretation for further details.

Please use this page for any extra comments you might have concerning access in Perry Wood.

Section 3 - Interpretation

The Draft Management Strategy highlights the need for 'interpretation' of key features and wildlife in the woods. Interpretation is visitor information designed to enable understanding of the special nature of a heritage site or feature.

The Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership has compiled an Interpretation Plan for the woods, some key elements of which are summarised as part of the following questions.

The interpretation that is proposed will be in the style of the woodcarved panel currently in the main carpark (The Bandstand).

a) Have you seen this panel?



b) Do you like it?

c) Do you think it is effective?

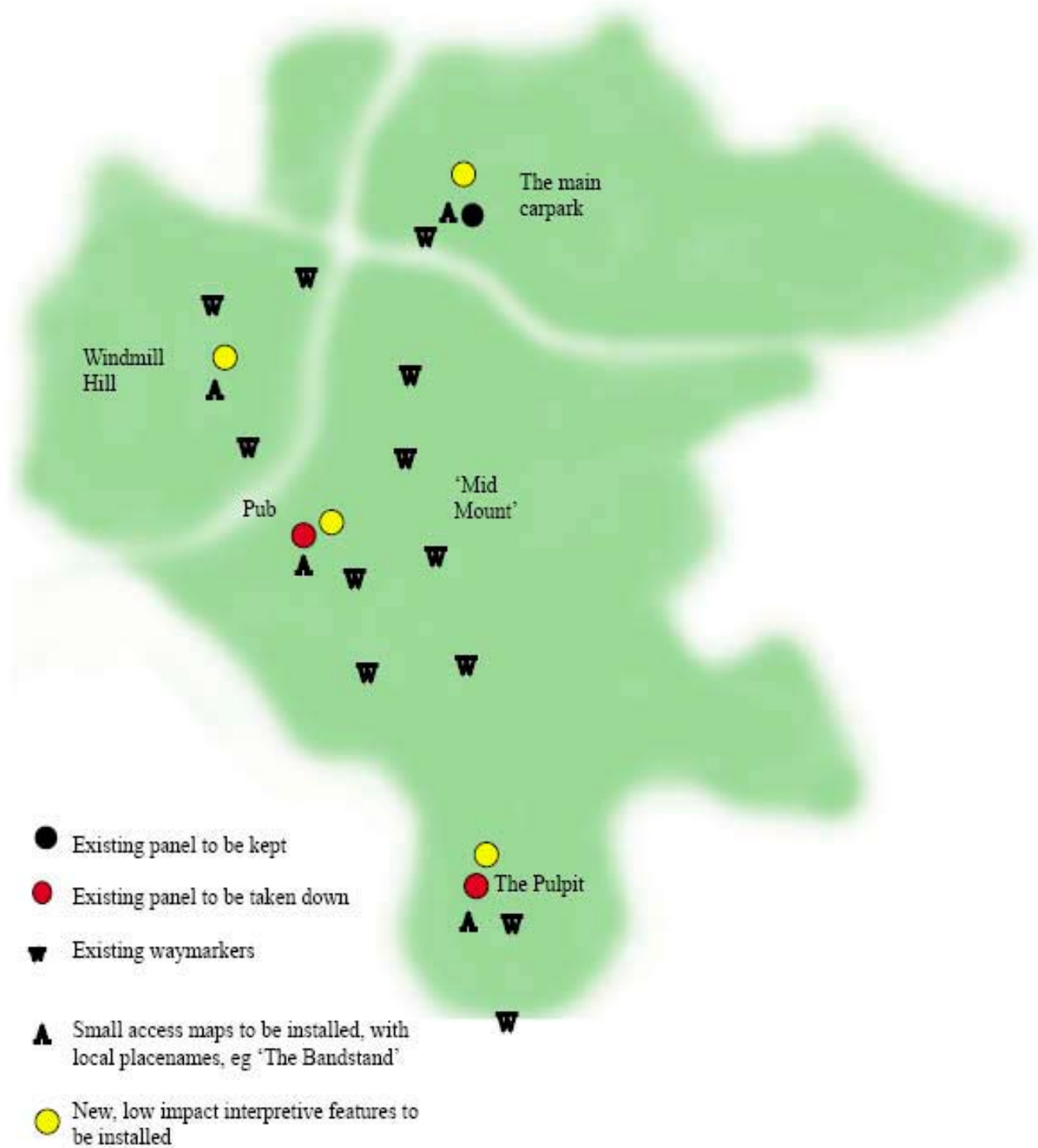
The map over the page shows the main sites where there is already interpretation, and where new features are planned.

d) The basic idea is that Perry Wood has a great deal of history and wildlife interest, and that encouraging awareness of its special nature will both inform the visitor, help them find their way and show that the area is understood and respected. New, low impact, wood-carved features are planned for the picnic area at the Bandstand, The Pulpit, the carpark behind the Rose & Crown and Windmill Hill. In general do you think that interpretation is needed?

Strongly Disagree Disagree Have no opinion Agree Strongly Agree

Please give reasons for your answer if you would like to.

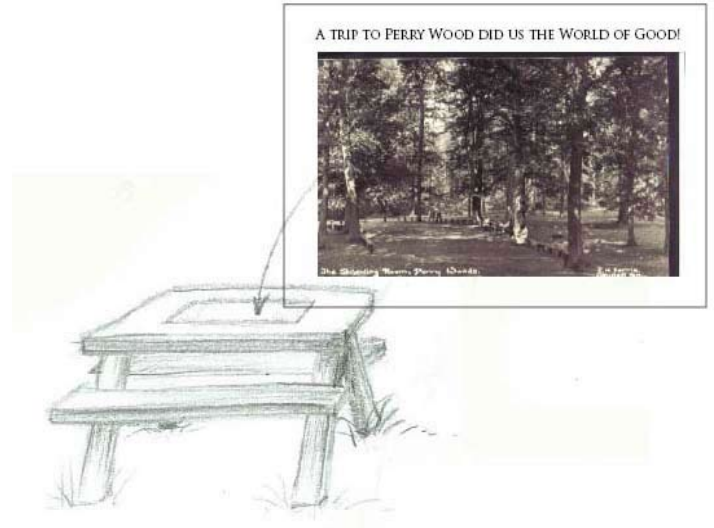
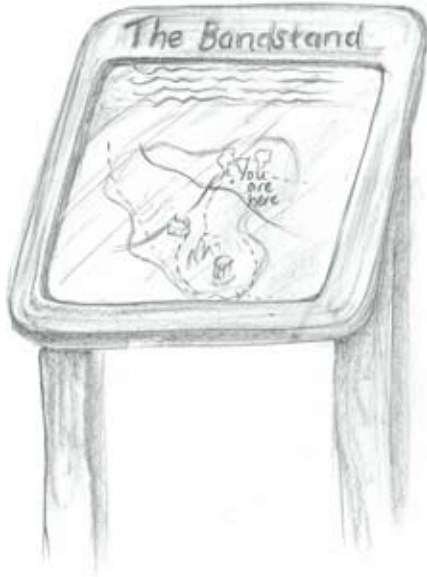
Summary of Perry Wood Interpretive Features



e) The proposed features for The Bandstand are:

A pictorial (drawn rather than OS) Access Map showing the main features, entitled with the local name 'The Bandstand'.

A table top representation of times past for picnickers in Perry Wood. These are shown below:



Do you:

Strongly Dislike Dislike Have no opinion Like Strongly like

Please give reasons for your answer if you would like to.

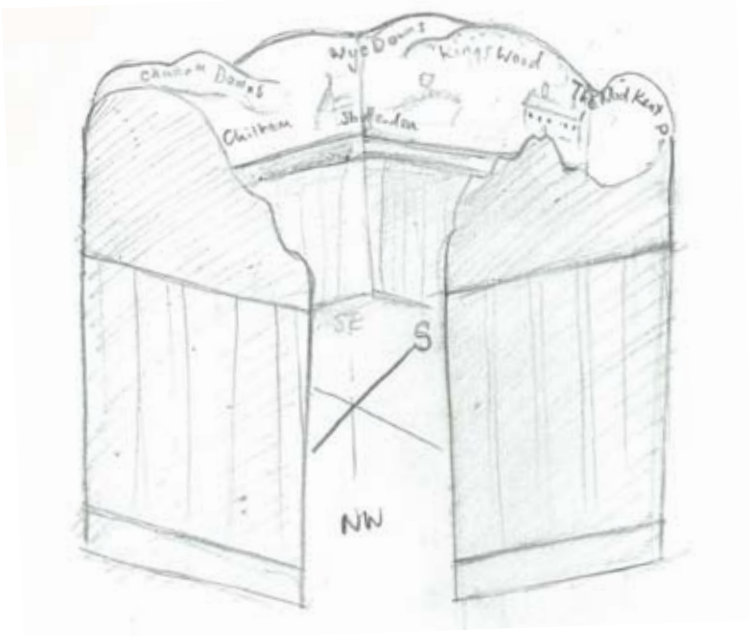
Do you have any other ideas or suggestions for the interpretation here?

f) The proposed features for The Pulpit are

An Access Map, with a brief introduction to the history of 'The Pulpit' (see pic for The Bandstand)

Landscape shaped panels showing the visitor the main areas and features in the surrounding landscape

A bench with a carved poem, encouraging reflection on changes in the landscape



Do you:

Strongly Dislike Dislike Have no opinion Like Strongly like

Please give reasons for your answer if you would like to.

Do you have any other ideas or suggestions for the interpretation here?

g) Alongside this new 'landscape interpretation' at the Pulpit, there is a possibility of building a new, larger structure, to the same specification as the one that existed before the current, smaller version. This would allow for more people to gather to enjoy the view, and new steps could be built which would be safer and less steep. What do you think of this proposal?

Do you:

Strongly Disagree Disagree Have no opinion Agree Strongly Agree

Please give reasons for your answer if you would like to.

g) The proposed features for the carpark behind the Rose & Crown.

An introductory panel similar to but smaller than the current one in the main carpark.
Either with an additional Access Map or with Access information incorporated.

Do you:

Strongly Dislike Dislike Have no opinion Like Strongly like

Please give reasons for your answer if you would like to.

Do you have any other ideas or suggestions for the interpretation here?

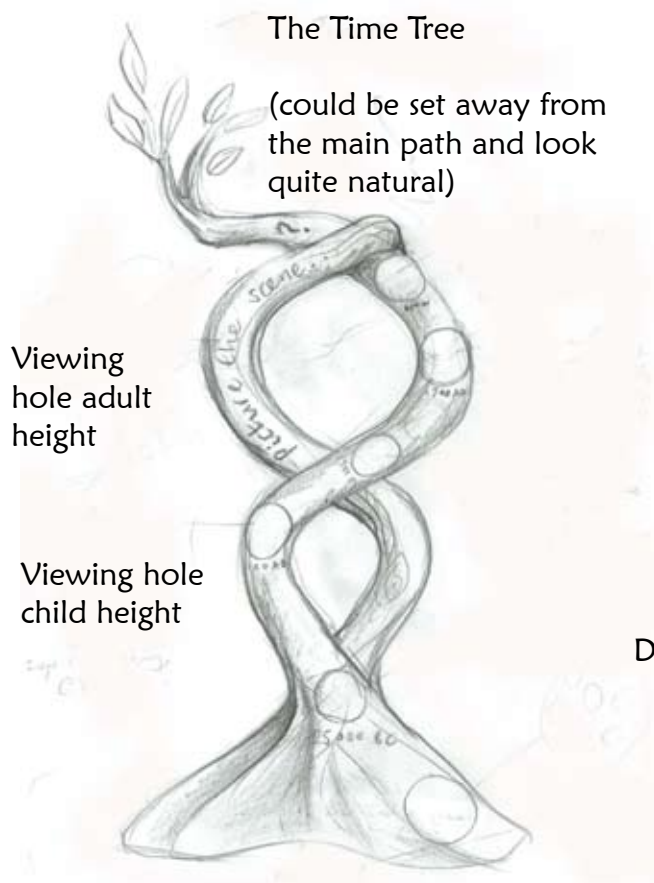
h) The proposed features for Windmill Hill (The Earthwork)

Either: A 'Time Tree' encouraging the visitor to look through and imagine the landscape when the Earthwork was constructed, and then at other points in history, such as when the Windmill was working and when the site was used for Semaphore.

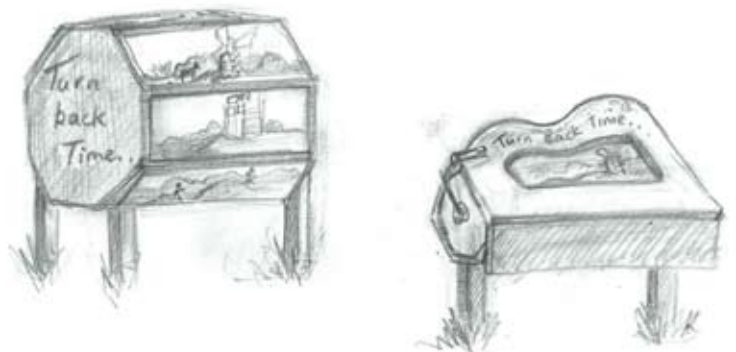
Or: A 'Turn Back Time' revolving drum, showing different artistic impressions of the site in the past.

An Access Map

Painted sandbags to mark the spot of the Old Windmill, Cottages, Quarry and entrance to the Earthwork.



Possible 'Turn Back Time' revolving drum feature designs.



Do you prefer one of these ideas? Please mark.



Painted sandbags placed at special areas, also including the entrance to the Earthwork and the base of the Old Windmill.

These features would be spread out over a fairly large area. If this part of Perry Wood were ever fenced and grazed, the local placename 'The Earthwork' or 'Windmill Hill' could mark the entrance the site and give it a protected feel as a special part of the woods; perhaps also helping to dissuade too much through-traffic and speed on the bridleway here.

Do you have any other ideas for interpretation here? Or any other comments?

i) You may notice that many of the management, access and interpretation proposals relate to Windmill Hill and the Mount. Ultimately you could have open access heathland here, coming out of the woodland into fenced and gated areas with scattered grazing animals, occasional trees and interpretation at key points. Views to the Swale and throughout the landscape would be panoramic. This artist's impression may help you to visualise the scene. Is this something that you would perhaps like to see in the future?



Strongly dislike Dislike Have no opinion Like Strongly like

Please give reasons for your answer if you would like to.

j) Wildlife carvings / rubbings?

There are already woodcarved waymarkers showing some of the wildlife interest in the woods. Would you like to see more carvings or rubbings?

Yes

No

k) Leaflet and website information

More details of the wildlife interest, forestry and history of the woods are planned to go in a 'limited edition' leaflet for the woods which will be available from local outlets. Additionally, more detailed information, including this leaflet, will be held on webpages for downloading.

Would you welcome a leaflet introducing where to go and what to see in Perry Wood?

Yes

No

l) Do you think a Perry Wood Website is a good idea, or should the pages be held elsewhere (for example the Kent Downs or Swale Borough Council websites)?

Please give more information if you would like to.

m) Live interpretation - Events

Events such as guided walks, story-telling and outdoor theatre can leave a lasting impression and be a very effective way of communicating the value of a place to visitors. The Old Quarry and The Bandstand present natural spaces for open-air interpretation, and guided walks around the woods can encourage an understanding of their diverse interest.

Do you have any interest in any of the following:

Guided walks

Storytelling

Outdoor theatre & traditional music

Historical re-enactment

Please give reasons for your answer if you would like to.

Do you have any other ideas or suggestions for this kind of interpretation?

Volunteering

There are plenty of ways that you could get involved in helping to manage Perry Woods. Please tick if you have an interest in any of the following:

Species monitoring

General conservation work

Volunteer wardening

Historical research

Contributing to events

Forming part of an on-going community group

Contacts for Perry Wood

Discover Perry Wood Heritage Lottery Fund project, and community involvement: Sally Evans, Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership, West Barn, Penstock Hall Farm, Brabourne, Ashford, Kent. TN25 5LL. 01303815170 midkentdowns@kentdowns.org.uk

Landowner: Sheila Smith, Swale Borough Council, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne. ME10 3HT. 01795 424341 SheilaSmith@swale.gov.uk

Woodland Managers: UPM Tilhill, Mike Chapman, The Oast, Blackham Court, Withyham, East Sussex, TN7 4DB, 01892 771900, mike.chapman@upm-kymmene.com

Public Rights of Way. Michael Ellis, Countryside Access Service, Kent County Council, The Granary, Penstock Hall Farm, Brabourne, Ashford, Kent. TN25 5LL. 01303814534 Michael.Ellis@kent.gov.uk

Your Contact details

Please leave your details if you would like to. Your details will not be passed to a third party.



Name	Address	Telephone E-mail	Yes please keep me informed about Perry Wood
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Thank you! Please return to Sally Evans, as above.

