

What we're planning:

An afternoon celebrating the community, music and nature – to be held in Melton woods

What would it include?

- Un-amplified performances from a handful of musicians, set in various parts of the wood (to be agreed)
- A nature-spotting walk
- Child friendly activities

When would it be?

- We'd like it to be on a weekend afternoon, this summer, but are open on dates
- We see it as running for about four hours, maybe between 2 and 6pm
- Provisional dates would be Saturday 10 July, or Saturday 11 September

Who are 'we'?

We are Richard Haugh and Kerry Stranix, a husband and wife who live in Bury Hill. We walked through the woods every day of lockdown and it holds a special place in our hearts. We'd like to celebrate its beauty.

I (Richard) have more than a decade's experience of organising events, both at work and independently.

I have arranged gigs for acts including Mumford and Sons, Ed Sheeran and Bessie Turner, and would use this experience to make sure this event was well organised.

Kerry worked for Suffolk Wildlife Trust for over 10 years and is now employed by Groundwork East. She also spearheaded the county's first Nature Summit, which was an incredible success in 2019.

How many people would come?

Part of the joy of the woods is that they are open to everyone – apart from cyclists 😊 – and we'd want to make the event free to attend.

We would target advertising of the event to people living in Melton and Woodbridge, and ask those coming from further afield to use public transport if possible.

It is difficult at this stage to predict how many people would attend, but we would estimate around 200.

What issues can you identify?

Damage to the wood - We respect the wood and wouldn't want an influx of people to cause any harm. Our messaging would be clear about this, and we would also make sure a thorough tidy up operation was in place afterwards.

Food and drink – Rather than attempt to sell food and drink on site, we would advertise people bring their own picnics, or buy from Springside/The Spar

Litter – We would make sure there were additional bins in place, and then have a sweep of the wood afterwards

Toilets – This is the biggest boundary in our eyes at the moment. I don't know when the toilets are due to be built on the playing field, but if it was this summer we would perhaps be wise to wait until this was done. Otherwise, perhaps we could hire some temporary toilets.

Pond – We see the pond as an asset to the wood, rather than a hazard, but realise that care has to be taken around it. We could erect extra signage around the pond to alert people with children to its existence.

Noise – The music would be unamplified and finish at a reasonable time, so hopefully the impact on local residents would be minimal.

What are the costs of the event?

We would like to pay the musicians, so would need between £500 and £1,000 for this, depending on who plays. The music will be of a high calibre, and we're talking with Aldeburgh Music as part of this.

The biggest unknown at the moment is the toilet situation.

I don't think we'd need security at the event, but would be happy to discuss this if it was something the council would want.

And how would you pay for it?

Making the event free to attend is key to us – it's a celebration open to all. In terms of funding, this is something we would seek your thoughts on.

Is it something the council would have funds to help with? Otherwise we would consider applying for grants, or looking at a donation scheme for people attending.

Any other thoughts?

I think at this stage you're being presented with a proposal to host a fun event in the woodland. It would look good, sound wonderful, and hopefully be attended by people who want to connect with their natural surroundings as well as the arts.

But we realise there will be concerns about the damage to the woodland.

We firmly believe that one of the best ways to prevent this is to give people a positive experience in the setting, but will also do all we can to monitor issues on the day.

We would love to make this happen and hope that you'll give us a chance to discuss any reservations you may have.

Apologies that I can't be there in person for the meeting – unfortunately it has coincided with a late shift and I will be at work until 10pm.

I am happy to be contacted on email or phone, though, should you have any queries.

All the best,

Richard and Kerry