



REDGRAVE PARISH COUNCIL

Business Case: Proposed Purchase of Woodland off the Green, Redgrave (Supporting a funding application to the MSDC Community Nature Recovery – Large Grant Scheme)

1. Purpose of the Proposal

The purpose of this business case is to set out the rationale for the potential purchase by Redgrave Parish Council (RPC) of a parcel of woodland located off the Green (“the Woodland”), and to provide a clear framework for deciding whether it is appropriate to proceed to full due diligence and, ultimately, acquisition.

The proposal is to acquire the Woodland into parish ownership to secure its long-term protection and deliver structured, conservation-led management that supports nature recovery, biodiversity enhancement and community benefit, consistent with the Mid Suffolk District Council Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and the Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

The business case also supports the submission of an application to the Mid Suffolk District Council Community Nature Recovery Large Grant, to fund habitat restoration, priority species enhancement, biodiversity monitoring and community capacity building associated with the Woodland.

2. Strategic Context and Rationale

The Woodland forms part of the immediate setting of the Green and makes a significant contribution to the rural character, environmental quality, visual amenity and sense of place at the centre of the village. It comprises naturally damp woodland and mixed deciduous woodland, both identified as LNRS priority habitats.

The site already supports notable wildlife, including:

- Toads, using the woodland as key terrestrial habitat;
- Hedgehogs, forming part of a wider network of hedgehog-friendly gardens established in the village;
- Several bat species detected by a local professional ecologist;
- A wide range of birds, including greater spotted woodpeckers, treecreepers, buzzards, kestrels, nuthatches, tree sparrows, song thrushes and greenfinches.

The Woodland therefore functions as an important biodiversity refuge and stepping stone within the local Nature Recovery Network but is currently privately owned and subject to unmanaged decline, tree disease and the risk of future sale or inappropriate use.

Acquiring the Woodland would:

- Secure long-term protection of a locally valued and ecologically important site;
- Enable active nature recovery, supporting priority species and habitats in line with the Mid Suffolk District Council Biodiversity Action Plan and the Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy;
- Give the Parish Council control over future management, public access and risk, rather than responding reactively to external decisions;
- Allow planned, evidence-led management rather than reactive intervention;
- Prevent the loss of the land to development or inappropriate use;
- Enable active nature recovery for priority habitats and species in line with the MSDC BAP and LNRS;
- Support community wellbeing through access to nature, volunteering and environmental education;
- Align with wider objectives around biodiversity, landscape protection and community wellbeing;
- Enable eligibility for external funding, particularly the MSDC Community Nature Recovery Large Grant, by delivering biodiversity recovery, monitoring and community engagement outcomes aligned with district priorities.

Ownership by the Parish Council is a strategic, long-term decision intended to deliver enduring environmental and community benefits for present and future residents.

3. Options Considered

The Parish Council has considered the following options:

Option 1 – Do Nothing

The Woodland remains in private ownership. The Parish Council has no control over future management, access or use, and no ability to secure long-term biodiversity outcomes.

Option 2 – Informal Arrangement

Seek informal assurances from the owner. This offers no legal certainty and is not viable given the owner's intention to sell.

Option 3 – Purchase the Woodland (Preferred Option)

Acquire the Woodland into parish ownership, subject to valuation, legal checks and affordability, enabling permanent protection, nature recovery and community stewardship.

Option 3 is the preferred option, as it is the only option that provides certainty, permanence and strategic control.

4. Financial Considerations

4.1 Purchase Price

The indicative purchase price discussed to date is £20,000, subject to:

- An independent valuation by a suitably qualified MRICS surveyor;
- Confirmation that the price represents best consideration.
- Final agreement of the purchase price with the seller.

No commitment to purchase would be made without such valuation.

4.2 One-off Acquisition Costs

- MRICS valuation: c. £585 + VAT
- Boundary Survey Costs: £680+VAT
- Legal fees: c. £2,000 + VAT

These are standard due-diligence costs necessary to finalise the business case.

4.3 Ongoing Costs

Ongoing costs are expected to be modest and proportionate, and may include:

- Insurance (to be confirmed with the Council’s insurer);
- Periodic tree safety inspections;
- Occasional targeted management or safety works.

To support delivery and minimise long-term cost to the Parish Council, RPC has agreed to submit an application to the Mid Suffolk District Council Community Nature Recovery – Large Grant, with a submission deadline of 16 March 2026.

The grant application will support:

- Habitat restoration and enhancement;
- Protection and recovery of priority species;
- Capacity Building, including Volunteer Training and Biodiversity Monitoring;
- Purchase of monitoring equipment and data submission to the Suffolk Biological Information Service (SBIS).

5. Management, Capacity Building and Monitoring

The Woodland will be managed under a Woodland Management and Biodiversity Monitoring Plan, adopting a proportionate, evidence-led approach.

A key component of the project is **Capacity Building**, ensuring long-term sustainability through:

- Health, safety and biosecurity training appropriate to a damp woodland environment;
- Training in priority species identification and habitat management;
- Provision of monitoring tools (e.g. bat detectors, trail cameras and invertebrate identification resources);
- Collection and sharing of biodiversity data with SBIS to demonstrate measurable outcomes.

This approach ensures volunteers can contribute safely and effectively, while specialist or licensed activities remain with qualified professionals.

6. Risks and Mitigation

Risk	Mitigation
Tree safety / public liability	Professional surveys, proportionate management plan, insurance
Ongoing maintenance costs	Low-intervention management, grants, volunteer support
Governance or audit challenge	Independent valuation, transparent decision-making
Financial exposure	Proceed only after affordability and best value confirmed

Ownership allows risks to be actively managed, rather than left unmanaged or uncontrolled.

7. Consultation and Community Engagement

While there is no statutory requirement for a binding parish-wide vote, the Parish Council has undertaken consultation to gather residents' views, concerns and ideas to inform its consideration of whether the Woodland should be acquired into parish ownership.

Although the response rate was limited, the consultation responses received highlighted:

- Strong support for protecting the Woodland from future loss or inappropriate use;
- Recognition of its value for wildlife, wellbeing and quiet enjoyment;
- Support for community-led stewardship and long-term protection of the site; and
- Some concerns regarding the purchase price, which will be addressed through independent valuation and due diligence.

Despite the modest response rate, the balance of views expressed is consistent with the strong support for the protection of natural assets identified during consultation on the 2022 Redgrave Neighbourhood Plan, providing reassurance that the responses received are broadly representative of established community priorities.

8. Legal and Governance Considerations

- Any purchase will comply fully with the Parish Council's Financial Regulations.
- Authority will rest with the full Council.
- Purchase is conditional on valuation, affordability and best consideration;
- The acquisition will be by the Parish Council alone; any involvement of third-party or volunteer groups will be advisory or operational only, and at arm's length from decision-making;
- Any application for external grant funding, including the Mid Suffolk District Council Community Nature Recovery Grant, would be subject to Parish Council approval and reported transparently in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

9. Long-Term Protection and Legacy

The Parish Council intends to secure the Woodland's long-term future through:

- Removal from the Settlement Boundary via the Neighbourhood Plan review;
- Designation as a Local Green Space; and
- Seeking Local Nature Reserve status.

These measures will ensure biodiversity gains and public benefits are protected in perpetuity.

9. Conclusion

This business case demonstrates that the proposed purchase of the Woodland is:

- Strategically justified, supporting nature recovery, biodiversity enhancement and community wellbeing supporting LNRS and MSDC BAP priorities;
- Financially proportionate, subject to valuation and affordability;
- Capable of being managed responsibly and sustainably over the long term, with appropriate risk management.

The acquisition converts a potential future risk into a protected, community-led nature asset, delivering measurable biodiversity recovery, community engagement and long-term stewardship.

The proposal is strongly aligned with the objectives of the Mid Suffolk District Council Community Nature Recovery Large Grant, providing a robust basis for leveraging external funding to enhance biodiversity outcomes while minimising long-term cost to the Parish Council.

Figures:

1. Surveyed Site.

