



REDGRAVE PARISH COUNCIL

Formal Report to Council

Title: Proposed Purchase of Woodland off the Green

Date of Parish Council Meeting: 5 Feb 26

Agenda Item: 13

1. Purpose of the Report

To present the business case for the proposed purchase by Redgrave Parish Council of a parcel of woodland located off the Green ("the Woodland"), to summarise consultation feedback to date, and to seek Council approval in principle to proceed with the purchase subject to confirmation by an independent MRICS valuation that the price represents best consideration and to final agreement of the purchase price with the seller.

2. Background

The Woodland is located adjacent to the Green and forms part of the setting and character of the centre of the village. Ecologically, the site comprises naturally damp woodland and mixed deciduous woodland, both identified as priority habitats within the Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

- The site already supports a range of wildlife, including:
- Toads, using the woodland as important terrestrial habitat;
- Hedgehogs, as part of a wider network of hedgehog-friendly gardens;
- Several bat species confirmed by a local professional ecologist all of which are protected species;
- A wide range of birds and invertebrates associated with woodland and damp habitats.

The land is currently in private ownership and has been offered for sale at an indicative price of £20,000.

The Parish Council has undertaken initial consultation with residents to gather views, concerns and ideas from residents to inform its consideration of whether the Woodland should be acquired into parish ownership.

The Parish Council has already commissioned:

- an independent MRICS valuation, with the valuation report expected by mid-February 2026; and
- an accurate boundary survey, which has now been completed and satisfactorily confirms and marks the site boundary.

These have been undertaken to inform any decision on acquisition. No unconditional commitment to purchase has been made at this stage.

3. Strategic Rationale

The acquisition of the Woodland would:

- Secure long-term protection of a locally valued and ecologically important site;
- Enable **active nature recovery** in line with the **Mid Suffolk District Council Biodiversity Action Plan** and the **Suffolk LNRS**;
- Protect and enhance priority habitats and species, including damp woodland, mixed deciduous woodland, bats, amphibians, pollinators and hedgehogs;
- Preserve the environmental and visual character of the Green;
- Provide the Parish Council with strategic control over management, access and risk;
- Prevent potential future loss to development or inappropriate use; and
- Support community wellbeing through access to nature, volunteering and environmental learning.

Ownership by the Parish Council represents a strategic, long-term decision intended to deliver enduring environmental, social and wellbeing benefits for current and future residents.

4. Management, Capacity Building and Monitoring.

The Woodland would be managed under a low-intervention, conservation-led approach, guided by a Woodland Management and Biodiversity Monitoring Plan.

A key component of the proposal is Capacity Building, including Volunteer Training and Biodiversity Monitoring, to ensure long-term sustainability. This will include:

- Health, safety and biosecurity training appropriate to a damp woodland environment;
- Training in priority species awareness and habitat management;
- Provision of monitoring equipment (e.g. bat detectors, trail cameras and species identification tools);
- Collection and submission of biodiversity records to the Suffolk Biological Information Service (SBIS).

This approach supports evidence-led management and measurable biodiversity outcomes while ensuring that specialist or licensed work remains with qualified professionals.

5. Options Appraisal

Option 1 – Do Nothing

The Woodland remains in private ownership. The Parish Council retains no control over its future use, management or sale.

Option 2 – Seek Informal Assurances

Non-binding assurances are sought from the owner. This provides no legal certainty, permanence or long-term protection. And the current owner is intent on selling so no assurances can be obtained from any other purchaser.

Option 3 – Purchase the Woodland (Preferred Option)

The Parish Council acquires the Woodland, subject to valuation, legal checks, affordability and Council approval, enabling long-term protection and nature recovery.

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

6. Financial Implications

6.1 Purchase Price

An indicative purchase price of £20,000 has been suggested, subject to:

- Receipt of the independent MRICS valuation, expected by mid-February 2026, confirming that the price represents best consideration; and
- Final agreement of the purchase price with the seller.

No purchase will proceed unless these conditions are met.

6.2 Due Diligence Costs

The following costs have already been committed in support of this proposal

- MRICS valuation: c. £585 + VAT (already commissioned)
- Boundary survey: £680+VAT (*completed and boundary confirmed*)

Further costs would only be incurred if the Council resolves to proceed following receipt of the valuation and survey information. The main outstanding cost would then be Legal fees estimated at £2,000 + VAT (initial estimate provided by recommended solicitor subject to final agreed price).

6.3 Ongoing Costs

Ongoing costs are expected to be modest and proportionate, and may include insurance, periodic tree inspections and occasional maintenance. Woodland management would follow a low-intervention, nature-led approach, supported where possible by external grant funding, volunteer involvement and partnership working.

The Parish Council intends to submit an application to the **Mid Suffolk District Council Community Nature Recovery – Large Grant** (deadline **16 March 2026**) to support:

- Habitat restoration and enhancement;
- Priority species protection;
- Capacity building and volunteer training;
- Biodiversity monitoring and reporting.

7. Risk Assessment

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 if best consideration confirmed

Ownership allows risks to be actively managed rather than remain uncontrolled.

8. Consultation and Engagement

While no statutory parish-wide vote is required, consultation has been undertaken. 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; and
- Some concerns regarding the price being paid, to 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.

Consultation feedback will inform future management considerations and will be taken into account as part of the Council's final decision.

9. Legal and Governance Considerations

Any acquisition would comply with Financial Regulation 16.4(v), including:

- Approval by full Council;
- Independent valuation and written report and;
- Transparent consideration of affordability, risk and consultation feedback..

Any involvement of third-party groups would be advisory or operational only and at arm's length from decision-making.

10. Conclusion

The proposed acquisition of the Woodland is strategically justified, financially proportionate (subject to valuation), and capable of being managed responsibly over the long term. It represents a rare opportunity to secure a high-value nature asset at the heart of the village, aligned with district and county nature recovery priorities and supported by external grant funding.

11. Draft Resolutions

The following draft resolutions are proposed for the Parish Council at its meeting of 5 Feb 26:

Resolution 1:

That the Parish Council **NOTES** the contents of this report, the consultation undertaken to date, and that the boundary survey has been completed and satisfactorily confirms the site boundary.

Resolution 2:

That the Parish Council **AGREES IN PRINCIPLE** to the purchase of the woodland off the Green, Redgrave, subject to:

- Receipt of the independent MRICS valuation, expected by mid-February 2026, confirming that the price represents best consideration; and
- Final agreement of the purchase price with the seller.

Resolution 3:

That the Parish Council **AUTHORISES** the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, to complete the legal purchase once the conditions in Resolution 2 have been satisfied.

Resolution 4:

That the Parish Council **AGREES** to the submission of an application to the Mid Suffolk District Council Community Nature Recovery – Large Grant to support habitat restoration, priority species enhancement, capacity building and biodiversity monitoring associated with the Woodland, subject to the purchase proceeding in accordance with Resolution 2.

Attachment:

1. Business Case: Proposed Purchase of Woodland off the Green, Redgrave.