

## **Further Information**

Please see below further details regarding the proposed project at Tretawdy Farm Nature Reserve.

We were first offered the reserve as a legacy in 2016 and initially turned it down as we were concerned about how we could restore the dilapidated farmhouse. In 2019 the executors of the Will agreed that we could sell the farmhouse if we accepted the legacy under the remaining terms of the Will and so we took on management of the reserve in March 2019, selling the farmhouse later that year.

The terms of the Will state:

- 1) The farm shall be managed and operated at all times as a nature reserve and in such a way as to encourage and preserve wildlife and where necessary wildlife is given priority
- 2) The land shall be farmed using the minimum of chemical or artificial fertilisers, weed killers or pesticides on the farm although it is accepted that some localised weed killers will have to be used initially to remove weeds and get the land back into good heart
- 3) The Trust shall use its best endeavours to provide education and enlightenment for the public and especially young people at the farm
- 4) The farm shall not be sold, leased or otherwise disposed of but shall remain Trust property and be managed and operated at all times in accordance with the terms of this Schedule but this shall not exclude short term farm leases and annual grazing licences tenancies for the property etc in the future if this allows the farm to be best managed for nature conservation.

Since taking on the reserve we have worked hard with fantastic support from the local volunteer group to begin restoring the species-rich grassland on site. This includes fencing the site to allow for conservation grazing, organising graziers for the site, beginning seed strewing, an in-depth botanical survey, bracken control and designing new signage for the reserve. We are currently working on plans for fruit tree planting, pond creation, wetland and ditch enhancement, hedgerow planting, further seed strewing to enhance the flora and new interpretation boards.

With much work happening on site and the reserve not yet looking its best we had not yet begun to schedule many engagement events – one guided walk has taken place for local residents and another was planned for late May 2020, which had to be cancelled due to restrictions imposed by Lockdown. We plan to run both guided walks and family engagement events at the reserve in the future.

There are two run-down stone barns on the site and since accepting the reserve we have deliberated as to what the best use for them might be. At the time of the meeting we held with village residents at Llangrove Village Hall in August 2019 we were still at an early stage of considering options and had made no decision about their future use.

While one thought was for the barns to become a Visitor or Education Centre, it was quickly clear to us that this would not be viable for a number of reasons:

- 1) The barns are not large enough for this use (generally, schools bring groups of 30 to 60 children at a time);
- 2) The reserve is only 27 acres – a very small site for this level of infrastructure and required number of visitors to make the development of a centre worthwhile;
- 3) The site does not have suitable access or parking for many cars, coaches or minibuses;
- 4) Grants that are available for this type of development usually require evidence that that the centre will receive a large number of visitors each year and caters for groups and school visits. Again, we felt that this type of development and related footfall would be too high impact for the site.

After research and discussion by the Senior Management Team and Trustees, it was decided that restoring and renovating the barns into accommodation would offer a low impact, but high engagement offer, which also would raise ongoing income for our work on the reserve. Our proposals are for creating rustic holiday accommodation: one unit which sleeps six with two double beds and two single beds (there will be 2 additional small beds in an annexed room, which would sleep small children), which will be marketed to families looking for a peaceful retreat where they be immersed in nature. We have worked on the plans with national industry leaders Canopy and Stars and hope to continue to work with them on the restoration and management of the barns.

We see no reason why guests staying in the barns should have more impact on the site than other families visiting the reserve. While we do not expect this type of offer to attract 'party' groups or stag or hen parties we will state that the accommodation is not available to these types of guest and will screen bookings to exclude such parties.

Offering overnight accommodation on nature reserves and wildlife-rich areas as part of eco-tourism is not new and has been successful most publicly at the Knepp Estate in Sussex while charities such as the National Trust have long-welcomed over-night visitors to cottage and converted buildings on their estates.

This option for restoring the barns also allows us to generate income from the site, for the site. Generating income has never been more important for charities as securing grants becomes increasingly competitive and the financial support for land management from government goes through a once in a generational change. Ensuring a stream of regular and reliable income allows us to become more resilient as a charity and better allows us to achieve our aims. Though the sale of the farmhouse in 2019 has meant that we can securely begin our restoration of the grassland this money is finite and will only support the site for a limited period of time.

We are confident that we are creating a positive engagement experience on the site by developing the barns in this way while not in any way damaging or detracting from the nature reserve. We think that this development will see us interacting with a wider

demographic, the average age of bookings being from people in their 30s and 40s while our membership is largely over 60. Ensuring we continue to raise the funds required to achieve our charitable aims is an essential part of what we do and is indeed something we are obliged to do under Charity Commission regulations.

For more information about this project please see our website:

<https://www.herefordshirewt.org/news/immersed-nature>

Or contact our CEO Helen Stace: [h.stace@herefordshirewt.co.uk](mailto:h.stace@herefordshirewt.co.uk)