

Volunteer Voice Monday 9th June, 2pm

Present: Frances Weeks (chairing), Jamie Audsley, Lesley Hack, Toby Spicer, Will Bartlett, Rosie Wilson, Lesley Winters, Rod Lees, Richard Hammond, Brian Hurrell, Nic Howes (note-taking)

1. Recap of our agreed approach to Volunteer Voice from last meeting:

We discussed and agreed the Terms of Reference [Terms of Reference.docx](#)

Brian made a recommendation about an additional point to add to the Terms of Reference.

2. Request for a planned schedule of work parties, with the session always on the same day, communicated 3 months in advance.

Toby: Wed and Thu work parties are resuming as of next week, returning to regular weekly schedule.

3-month schedule updated on website and next 3 months from end of June will appear asap

3. Request for a dedicated member of staff to support project activities and Hereford as a "nature reserve"

Frances and Jamie: Bid for funding for such a post is included in HWT "River City" grant application in progress, due for submission to National Lottery Heritage Fund by end of June. This will have a 1 year development phase and 3-year delivery phase.

4. Query on quality and condition of tools and equipment used on reserves

Toby: broken and of little use tools have been discarded. New quad bike, flail mower and road trailer purchased from closely defined successful funding bid. Work completed on New Holland tractor, which is better, including functioning handbrake. Polaris needs work. There was a discussion about funding for hand tools for Branch work parties – Parish Councils may have funding to support

5. Request for more social activities

Lesley: Summer picnic coming up next week, Christmas staff & volunteer event will be planned and we have a full programme of member & volunteer Discovery Days and guided walks being planned with the next two now being advertised.

Wassailing discussed as another potentially popular event. Agreed that Lesley would circulate a questionnaire on the kinds of events that volunteers would like to see.

6. Query around the state of our infrastructure at Queenswood

Toby's infrastructure update: fencing grant to replace boundary of yard. Monitoring infrastructure across whole of HWT estate using Landapp: <https://thelandapp.com/> Rosie has started with Bodenham.

7. We would like to see more people being aware of the shop at Queenswood

New sign at back of Visitor Centre to be put up. We are also installing new doors on café and visitor centre to make them accessible to wheelchair users.

Points raised in advance of this meeting:

(NB these have been replied to at the time they were raised but including here to ensure discussion is visible to all)

8. Can we ensure the tone of voice used in weekly newsletters is more positive and welcoming .

It was agreed that this has been done well.

9. Clarity on the running and requirements of volunteer led work: ‘all volunteer activities/ work-parties’ (i.e. details of the First Aid certification required of volunteers who are a) leading work parties and b) operating power tools as a member of a work party) *Clarified - First Aid requirements for an HWT all-volunteer work party, managing land:*

- Such a work party includes a First Aider with the two day Outdoor First Aid qualification with +F (traumatic injuries) if the task involves any participant using brushcutter/trimmer or chainsaw.*
- The above qualified First Aider need not be the designated leader of the work party. The designated leader is responsible for ascertaining that the work party includes at least one such qualified First Aider.*
- If the above qualified First Aider is using brushcutter/trimmer or chainsaw, a second First Aider qualified at the same level should be present (in case the first First Aider cannot self-administer the necessary First Aid in the event of being injured).*
- It is not necessary for volunteer brushcutter/trimmer operators to have a First Aid qualification, provided the work party includes a First Aider with Outdoor First Aid +F (and the operator has the certificate necessary to operate the tool).*

Agreed that 2-day Outdoor First Aid +F training need is pressing. Nic to send Mark Jessup's details to Toby (Wye Emergency Care). Anubis mentioned as another possible trainer.

Risk Assessment, which includes the above detail, is available to all here:

[Volunteering - Health & Safety | Herefordshire Wildlife Trust](#)

10. Clarification requested re the Reserve Officers team FTE hours now, compared with this time last year; request for an update on staff recruitment and those who have left would be appreciated.

There has been a reduction from 4.2 to 3.1 (3.7 if new VARO Will's time is included). There was a discussion about the use of the word “informal” to describe the VARO training programme. Will felt clear about how the role was described at his application stage.

11. Clarification requested re the Trust management's expectations of the role of all-volunteer work party leaders.

There was widespread agreement that this is a demanding and important role, that needs full support if HWT volunteers are to step forward to take it on. Rosie is looking into obtaining an existing training Powerpoint for all-volunteer work parties leading.

12. Update requested on the Trust's VARO programme

Will is in place already and another VARO is to be appointed soon. The Trust is also recruiting another trainee to support the Restoring Bartonsham Meadows project.

13. Clarification on Volunteer Support re what is provided and by which staff and query as to whether there are any plans to bid for funding for a co-ordinator post for volunteers at HWT.

**And question in response – what additional support is currently missing that volunteers would like to see, whether as part of a Volunteer Coordinator role or roles of existing staff?*

Nic thanked Frances and Lesley for the volunteer support they offer. In response to Frances' question, Rod's raised the issue of volunteer recruitment and building teams. Weekly emails, Discovery Days, social events are what Lesley is working on (see point 5). It was agreed that Frances' question could be included in the questionnaire suggested in item 5.

14. Request to know what plans - if any - the Trust has for developing the role of Volunteer Reserve Warden.

Frances: We will put job description out there and agree we should put training on offer – work party leading and identification education.

15. Concerns around use of Eventbrite

Frances has made improvements. Rod and most other volunteers prefer the old system of email exchanges with work party leader. There was a lengthy discussion with Frances and Lesley explaining the administrative advantages of using Eventbrite. Frances to digest points made, including Brian's recommendation of "Let us know you're coming" rather than "Book Now".

16. Ensuring volunteers receive correct emails

No fault in system but anomalies have occurred, and Frances is ironing them out. It is essential that anomalies are reported to her promptly.

17. Difficulties navigating the Trust website ongoing

The website is from a template shared by all WTs; please keep feeding back problems, e.g., with navigation.

18. Clarification of HWT's risk assessment, insurance cover, access to Eventbrite and HWT staff "on call" if needed for volunteers leading events

This has been covered for Nic, who raised this issue re. interpretative walk leading

19. Clarification on the issues and responsibilities surrounding volunteers driving the Trust minibus after their 70th birthday.

Covered by Eleanor, who has confirmed GP's fee for form D4 will be covered by HWT for drivers affected.

20. "As a wildlife charity who wants to encourage looking after the environment, I would like to see more reusing of items, things that look perfectly good but are just surplus to requirements just seems to be chucked in the skip... a reminder to staff to set a good example and try to reuse, repurpose, recycle."

Toby: There is no skip anymore; the big one is for another specific purpose. There was nothing in the previous skips that could safely have been re-used.

21. The meeting times for tasks or events is not always exactly the same on the weekly emails (e.g. picnic start time) and the website/Eventbrite or 3 month calendar.

Frances: Mistakes will happen, but (hopefully!) rarely. She will remain vigilant.

22. We appear to be struggling to get the numbers of volunteers out that we were 12 months ago. I think it would be helpful now we have 2 new and fabulous reserves officers in place to have an open discussion on how we can get more people engaged in volunteering on the reserves. *See point 12*

23. Could we have an update on what is happening with the sale of/ moth balling of reserves?

*Jamie: Reason one: to make HWT reserves as ecologically strategic as possible.
Reason two: carrying capacity of our estate has become beyond management capacity. The Board were advised to divest.*

We are making progress on our planned nature reserve divestment (see: [Nature Reserves - an update on our strategy](#) | [Herefordshire Wildlife Trust](#) for details).

We have completed the sale of Rookhill Coppice and are now working with our solicitors to progress the sale of Romers Wood and Motlins Hole, Upper Swingley Coppice and Merivale Wood and continue to explore options for a long-term lease of Pool Ellocks.

24. Updates to staff about Board decisions. Rumours circulating – uncertainty about what's going on, e.g., *identification of reserves to be sold, and progress on that.*

This general point was discussed, and it was agreed that there is a need to pass Board and management decisions on to staff promptly, so that those staff can accurately answer volunteers' questions.

Also agreed that a 3-monthly strategic update, which had been requested by Local Branch Committees, to also be shared with all volunteers.