

Volunteer Voice Monday 15th September 2025

Notes & Actions

1.	Rosie Wilson (Park Ranger for Queenswood, Bodenham & Oak Tree Farm) gave an update on a day of training she is developing for Volunteer Work Party Leaders and Voluntary Wardens. This will cover roles of responsibilities of each role and detail the support and training that HWT staff will provide. <i>Any volunteers interested in attending (no commitment to take up either role required!) should contact Rosie</i> at r.wilson@herefordshirewt.co.uk 07341736188. This was held on Wednesday 5th November at Queenswood. We plan to repeat this training every 6 months. Please contact Rosie for full details: r.wilson@herefordshirewt.co.uk
2.	Jamie updated on plans for disposal of some nature reserves. We had previously highlighted a number of reserves for divestment due, in short, to having more sites than we have the resource to manage as our estate continues to grow, and some of our sites no longer being strategically so important. (Read more detail about why we are disposing of some reserves here: https://www.herefordshirewt.org/blog/nature-reserves-update-our-strategy) Of these, it was decided that Wyevale Wood should remain owned and managed by the Trust, as should Foxholes (part of Tretawdy) Farm). Rookhill Coppice (near Whitbourne) was sold earlier this year. Upper Swingley, Romers and Motlins and Merrivale Wood are now being marketed for sale with Sunderlands, having confirmed our process with the Charity Commission and our solicitors. As and when sales complete on each reserve, we will let members and volunteers know. Once these sales are completed, the Reserves Acquisitions and Disposals Committee (a subcommittee of the Board of Trustees) will again review our estate holdings with a view to dispose of several more nature reserves in line with our strategy. Income from the sale of reserves will be partly reinvested into the management of our estate (staff time/ management/ kit/ training) and partly saved within our financial reserves (which are currently slightly below the optimum level). An update on our nature reserve divestment plans, September 2025 Herefordshire Wildlife Trust
3.	It was queried that there was a large amount of felled ash at Romers and Motlins felled by Say it With Wood – is this to be sold prior to sale of reserve?

	Luke has visited site but did not see any timber, can anyone advise where the timber is stacked?
4.	<i>Our next quarterly strategic update will be shared in the first half of October,</i> covering Quarter two of the year (July, August, September). Included in weekly email 24/10/25 and on website: Quarterly update, October 2025.pdf
5.	There were a number of comments relating to the reserves team staff members and their operational organisation. There was praise for new(ish) team members Rosie and Luke as well as for Pete and David. There were concerns about communications and collaboration within the team. These comments were noted and will be discussed with relevant staff members.
6.	First Aid - We discussed the options of one and two day training courses for volunteers leading a work party with no staff member present. Many volunteers felt the two day course HWT had organised previously gave them more confidence and would be more appropriate. Budget is available for training for local branch volunteers – please email Frances with your requirements: fweeks@herefordshirewt.co.uk
7.	It was queried whether it would be a good idea for all work parties to take out a defibrillator. <i>This will be raised at the next Health & Safety monthly meeting and we will investigate grant funding options.</i> It was noted that all risk assessments/ day sheets include details of nearest defib to the site. This was discussed at the monthly Health & Safety meeting in October. It was decided that we would not progress with this.
8.	Regarding the hay cut being replaced by mob grazing at Tretawdy this year: Staff confirmed this was not driven by cost but was a management decision. <i>TS and Pete Johnson to provide more detail on why mob grazing will be as effective as a cut for reducing nutrient content etc.</i> “The two processes are fundamentally different, this year it was the poor quality of the grass that gave rise to the idea. If a high grass yield is likely this method is not suitable.”
9.	There was a query as to the ongoing review of grazing licences – what the process and outcome was. Toby Spicer: “There is no review of grazing licences just the renewal of licences, updating paperwork and finding graziers for sites that don't have one. Previously

	out of date licences have been used or no paperwork completed at all with no animal records being kept.”
10.	Regarding request to know the financial value of last winter's firewood sales: Our accounts show one sale of bulk wood to Luggford logs of approximately £2,300 inc VAT within this financial year. The total log/firewood sales for HWT was £9,895 24/25; in 23/24 it was circa £21K. This includes wood sales from all reserves and not just firewood. In 23/24 there was approx. £10k of wood sales to ‘Say it with Wood’ from other reserves. We discussed that, while firewood looks to have been a profitable income source previously, we do not have a good enough set up to efficiently meet the new regulations around moisture content and the time spent by the visitor centre team administering this was not viable. <i>We will share updated finances at the next meeting. Max Smith action</i>
11.	We discussed use of the minibus. Eleanor (Operations manager) is looking at options for ‘Minibus Light’ training. We are looking at options for removing some seats from the minibus so more staff can drive it and plans for training more staff TS and EC action We are also fundraising for a new minivan to add capacity to our fleet. We have been awarded a grant to purchase a new electric people carrier-style vehicle which we hope to be with us by Christmas.
12.	We discussed our plans for entering The Goggin into a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) scheme. In short, as and when this goes ahead, this will secure additional funding for managing the reserve. Public access will not be affected. Jamie confirmed that we would not accept BNG income that would result from a development we specifically opposed.
13.	Update on tools and equipment: we are investing £57,000 in new equipment, to be spent this financial year (to 31st March 2026). The Reserves team are currently discussing exactly what they will purchase with this money and will discuss this with volunteers. - tractor break downs taking a long time to repair - Fix for chipper took some months; the knives have still not been sharpened /replaced. - The BCS - plans to replace?

	- The chainsaws are frequently blunt, the coppice crew working at Queenswood clean and sharpen the saws we use at the end of every day. This of course is not practical when the saws are used on work parties away from base. Some program of maintenance needs to be installed (Lewis used to see to this after his work parties) - edged hand tools are normally blunt often to the point where they are useless. Current purchase list: • a cut collector on order fitting date hopefully in March • replacement plant trailer • replacement tipping trailer • 5 brush cutters • two wheeled tractor
14.	It was raised that new processes implemented by the Reserves Team regarding the workshop, tools and equipment, had left the QW DIY volunteer group with limited access to kit and storage. This meant they usually had to bring in and use their own tools which is not appropriate. The relevant managers will discuss this and share their agreed approach to solve this issue. We will update DIY volunteers directly and also include in the next meeting The Shed in the Woodlands yard has now been made available for the sole use of the Queenswood DIT Team to store their equipment and tools.
15.	Frances confirmed that, while we are still committed to moving to using Eventbrite for all activities, we are happy to continue as currently, with volunteers who prefer not to use Eventbrite emailing Reserve Officers directly. Lesley has completed amended 'how to' notes which include using Eventbrite via a smartphone as well as for laptop/ tablet: How to Guide - Book a work party on Eventbrite.pdf Frances will chat with Lesley and Nigel about the process for volunteers at Tretawdy. Lesley H has been in touch with Lesley W
16.	It was mentioned that some volunteers do not receive HWT emails. This is usually due to them being marked as 'unsubscribed' sometime in the past. If this is the case they will need to resubscribe via the website. *Contact Frances for help with this: f.weeks@herefordshirewt.co.uk It was suggested that a reminder is included in the next issue of Wildside – we will do this, thanks!
17.	We discussed recruitment of new volunteers. This is something we are working on with ads in parish newsletters, with HVOSS, our website and communications to supporters. We will update on progress in more detail at the next meeting. FW Action

	It was discussed and noted that the divestment process was demoralising for some volunteers who had looked after sites for many years that were now being sold.
18.	It was requested that one or more Trustees attended Volunteer Voice. <i>We will pass this request to the Board of Trustees.</i> Jake Bharier, Trustee, will attend Volunteer Voice going forwards
19.	Jamie updated that, with the Species Recovery Project at Lugg Meadows ending, David Hutton would return to his role as Reserves Officer for 0.4 of his hours. (The remainder of his time remains as Project Manager for the Bartonsham Meadows project). This will result in a slight reshuffle of Reserves Officers – which Officer is responsible for which reserve will be confirmed and <i>shared with Volunteers in the coming weeks.</i> <i>This is now available on the Volunteering section of the website and shared in the Volunteer Weekly newsletter</i> Reserves Officers & Reserves November 2025.pdf
20.	An update on how we look after and plan for upgrades to our buildings was requested. We are currently developing a long-term vision and plan for Queenswood which will include building maintenance and staff and volunteer facilities as well as visitor experience and site management. <i>Once this is finalised, we will share with members and volunteers and we will start to plan a programme of funding applications to realise this vision.</i> MS Action
21.	It was asked as to what budget was available for training for volunteers including first aid and use of kit e.g. brush cutters We have a small budget for Volunteer Training within the Volunteering Budget. This is managed by Frances so any requests for training from this budget, please contact Frances. Priority is given to First Aid, Safeguarding requirements in the first instance.