

Volunteer Voice

Tuesday 10th March 2026

The Pavillion, Castle Green Hereford

Staff Attendees: Frances Weeks, Lesley Hack, Saul Herbert, Ian Grafton, Cath Marshall, Ana Stepanova

Notes & Actions

1. Update on new staff and staff departures:

Nature Reserves:

- **Luke Osman** is leaving at the end of the month to take up a new role with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
- **Pete Johnson** will be retiring in May
- We have extended the recruitment period for the Nature Reserves Manager vacancy until 18th March
- The Reserves team will continue to be managed by Ian Grafton until the Nature Reserves Manager post is filled.
- Rosie will continue to run a full schedule of work parties and the draft April – June schedule is now available. Huge thanks also to Nic Howes and Rod Lees for offering to lead some work parties in the interim.
- We will be going out to recruit for Reserves Officer roles in the near future.

Commercial:

- **Ana Stepanova** joined us last month as the Shop Manager for the Hereford Charity Shop
- **Lily Kaye** left her role as Assistant Cafe Manager last week

Finance & Operations

- **Diane Theron** joined us last month as Finance Officer

Nature Recovery

- **Laura Beasley** leaves her role as Nature Recovery Manager at the end of the month
- We will be going out to recruit for project staff for Hereford ~ River City in the near future.

All staff roles are available on the website for reference: [Meet the Team | Herefordshire Wildlife Trust](#)

2. Update on the next Training for Volunteer Work Party Leaders and Voluntary Wardens

To be held on 18th May at Queenswood. Full details: [Volunteer Task Leader and Reserve Warden Training Day | Herefordshire Wildlife Trust](#)

3. Nature Reserves divestments update

Saul updated on the divestment plans begun last year: two sites have now been sold and three are in progress. (for background, please see: [An update on our nature reserve divestment plans, September 2025 | Herefordshire Wildlife Trust](#))

Saul also mentioned two potential site acquisitions for 2026 – watch this space!

4. Update on felled Ash at Romers and Motlins

Ian to now take this forward.

5. Update on exploration of the Rare Breed Supplement model as an option to pay graziers

Update from Luke Osman:

When re-applying for new stewardship schemes, the option (SP8) offers up to £167 p/ha if the grazier has the livestock breed featured on the rare breeds list. The plan was to initially trail this at a site like the sturts when the new agreement would come into place in start of 2028. This would give an additional £6680, which a large portion could go to the grazier to offset costs to them and also for the change to a different breed of livestock.

Ian to take forward

6. Update on income from timber sales:

Rosie is looking at options for timber sales.
Rosie and Nic Howes to discuss and take forward

7. Update on work party tools and equipment

A) Secure store for tools used at Bartonsham Meadows

We have budgeted for a container for storage within the delivery phase of Hereford ~ River City.

B) Maintenance plan for chainsaws and brush cutters / Sign out process for tools and equipment

A new system is being followed by the Reserves team and this has improved the maintenance of tools.

8. Update on access for DIY volunteers tool shed in the woodland yard

There is now a key box on the shed so volunteers can access easily

9. Update on volunteer recruitment

New enquiries remain high and we have had a significant increase in number of volunteers attending work parties.

Lesley has conducted a review of the volunteer recruitment, onboarding and induction process with all teams and is being implemented over the coming weeks and months to ensure a smooth and timely experience for new starters.

10. Update on volunteer activities:

- Volunteer Voice

The next Volunteer Voice will be at Ledbury on 16th June: [Volunteer Voice | Herefordshire Wildlife Trust](#)

- Annual Local Branch Committee meeting

Is taking place next week: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/local-branch-groups-committees-annual-meeting-tickets-1981009984190?aff=oddtcreator>

- Summer picnic & Christmas quiz

Planning in progress – details to follow soon!

- Discovery Days and Discovery Walks

Planning in progress – details to follow soon!

Discovery Day – Tretawdy Farm 15th April

We will also be running two workshops in May open to all volunteers: Wildflower ID and Grasses ID. Details to follow.

11. Update on recording on our reserves

Saul, with the Nature Recovery team, are reestablishing relationships with our county recorders as well as the Herefordshire Biological Records Office (HBRC).

We will be looking at how, and who, is recording in the county, where that data goes and how it is analyzed at the first workshop to develop HWT's 2026-30 Strategy. Key external stakeholders will be attending this meeting including HBRC.

Peter raised the issue of medium to long-term maintenance at Queenswood and the risks of under-investment in our infrastructure there.

Saul outlined our approach:

In the short-term, we have allocated several thousand pounds to remedy immediate problems including reinstating a fire escape staircase on the Tannery, replacing the tannery windows and investigating improved heating options. This is to be spent immediately.

Later in the year, we will start to develop a long-term and ambitious plan for the site which will likely include new office buildings, new visitor toilets and more. The plan will encompass the whole of the arboretum, offices and key visitor areas.

Several volunteers from the Hereford Shop raised a number of issues they have experienced in recent months:

- Reduction in quality donations
- Queries over where stock was moved to and from
- Concerns that the shop might be closed
- Poor communication over Christmas closing

Staff responded:

We have just taken on a new manager, Ana, as we recognised the shop lacked support and someone to take more responsibility for communications, supporting volunteers and managing stock. Ana is still very new in the role so we hope she will be supported in making positive changes to improve the running of the shop for volunteers, donors and customers.

We are considering either a new location for the shop within Hereford, or possibly opening a second shop, but are committed to maintaining at least one shop in the city. We will not begin to explore these options until we have opened our shop in Ross-on-Wye.

We are exploring the option of recruiting a volunteer driver to help us move stock between shops more effectively.