

National Trust monthly brief: March 2025 (Andrew Danson – 12/03/2025)

Subject (add as appropriate)	Comment & update	Main NT contact
Big Nature, Better Access	We have received confirmation from Defra that we have been successful in our “Water Restoration Fund” bid. This will provide us with £100,000 in funding to carry out feasibility work and surveys on 83 hectares of Sherborne Farm including the Water meadows. We have received communication from Cotswold District Council that they are looking to hold a Policy EN18 Working group meeting on May 8th. They will distribute the invite. Lodge Park will be open for the 1st time this year for 3 days from Friday April 11th. We have submitted an expression of interest for a funding bid for the next phase of the Bridgeman restoration project at Lodge Park. We then hope to be able to submit a full bid in May this year. The Belted Galloways have now been moved on, having successfully grazed Budgehill Bank for six weeks – Ranger Ollie will be following up with Cotswolds calcareous soil seed mixes now and then we’ll leave it to do its thing through spring!	Andrew Danson
Conservation Management Plan	We expect the CMP to be published in the Spring.	Andrew Danson
Tree Planting	Tree Planting: Our January and February was almost entirely dominated by tree planting – with Sherborne Farm (the orchard and wood pasture) taking up most of that work. Simon also leant his hand to two new successional trees in North Park and our work at Lodge Park continued at pace with approx. 2200 trees planted in the woodland blocks – we have 300 more to go next week and then that should hopefully be that!	Andrew Danson

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SANG Funding	Rangers Ben and Ollie have continued to install new and replacement benches in the Pleasure Grounds, Quarry Wood and the Watermeadows.	Andrew Danson
Walling and Fencing	It has been a quiet month whilst tree work of every shape and style have taken precedence; in March we plan to remove a dangerous bridge in the watermeadows and repair gates in Windrush and North Park. In addition, we will be creating a stone platform along the bridleway gate along Sabrina Way – this has become a little bit dangerous in winter. Our estate infrastructure work will increase as the dry and warmer weather strengthens through spring and summer.	Simon Nicholas
Wildlife	The Sherborne Farm Monitoring Project will begin again in April at Stones Farm. A barn owl abundance in the Cotswolds with numerous birds spotted across the estate – one has been very reliably seen at dawn and dusk on the broadwaters around the Sandy Hill and Sherborne Farm grazing fields; one also seen regularly at Lodge Park and one spotted hunting Woeful Lake arable margins (4th Feb). One hawfinch was spotted at Budgehill Bak (late February). One weasel was spotted on the Sherborne to Windrush Road (late February) moving between Stones Farm walls. A chiffchaff was spotted in West Belt (late February). Winter thrush numbers remain strong across Home Farm (February) moving between the fallow ground and ivy-cladded ash. Two grey wagtails are fighting for territory at Ewe Pen Barn (28th February). Wigeon have begun grazing the banks of the brook in preparation for their return migration (mid-February); teal numbers are fluctuating. Two ravens displaying over South Park (28th February). The juvenile swan has been pushed down stream by the pairing that have settled in the broadwaters – I am optimistic we may see cygnets again this year. Canada Geese have been spotted on the broadwaters again (W/C 10th February). Brimstone and red admiral spotted on the wing, plus bumblebee sp. At Sandy Hill W/C 24th February.	Luke Hunter
Woodland work and Tree Safety	Forestry Works: We are continuing to deliver phase one of our woodland management plan in 2025, which (amongst other things) aims to increase opportunities for wildlife, improve soils,	Luke Hunter

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	reduce carbon, contribute to the local economy and protect the health and safety of visitors. The felling has finished within Snowbottom and Budgehill and forwarding will continue through the spring and summer. Home Farm and Woeful Lake Farm can expect forestry activity on their southern boundaries including increased activity, chainsaw work and forwarding/timber operations. Tree Safety: It was a busy February as we looked to box off most of our significant work ahead of nesting bird season: the ranger team have returned an enormous hazel by the A40 to coppice cycle and have continued to clean up leylandii by Sandy Hill Farm. We have also had a few other isolated trees to deal with. Contractors have assisted along the A40 by removing some squirrel damaged beech limbs at Folly Copse and over the A40 layby, we were also able to return a veteran ash pollard to cycle on the Sherborne to Windrush Road. Contractors have assisted with four dangerous trees in the school – removing two (cherry and hawthorn) and proactive deadwood removal and reduction in two others – sycamore and whitebeam.	
Volunteering	The Sherborne team were almost exclusively tied to tree planting; though Ranger Ollie was able to get some dead hedging complete in the watermeadows as well. This tree planting included the restoration of the Sherborne Farm orchard, a project I've been working on closely through the last year – working with David Lingren of Cotswolds Fruit, we have reinstated an almost entirely lost orchard that had appeared on Sherborne maps from the early 19th century – this is a conservation orchard and we have planted some very rare Gloucestershire varieties here (one of which there are only 50 specimens) – as is always the case with tree planting, the hard work starts now. The team also delivered tree planting with Sherborne school on Sherborne Farm – planting some 2000+ wood pasture whips. We were also planting at Lodge Park. Ranger Ben was joined by the Cotswolds Wardens at the start of the month to complete some (guess what!) tree planting... in addition, he has been leading the wardens on the restoration of the Sherborne School Forest School which I've felt since joining Sherborne needs some TLC to inspire the next generation of countryside stewards.	Luke Hunter

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	We have one more tree planting session to complete with 300ish trees due to be added to the Lodge Park woodland blocks. We also have a coppicing session planned in the watermeadows, dry stone walling at Lodge Park and fence removal at Budgehill Bank.	
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