

National Trust monthly brief: April 2025 (Andrew Danson – 16/04/2025)

Subject (add as appropriate)	Comment & update	Main NT contact
Big Nature, Better Access	We have signed the Grant agreement with Defra for “Water Restoration Fund” project. This will provide us with £102,000 in funding to carry out feasibility work and surveys on 83 hectares of Sherborne Farm including the Water meadows. Surveys to be carried out include Geophysical, Hydrological, Topographical and Species surveys. The project will commence in July and run for 9 months. We are submitted a full funding bid for the next phase of the Bridgeman restoration project this May. The fund is the Landscape Enhancement Initiative. The fund is administered by the Cotswold National Landscape on behalf of National Grid. The team have increased our dog signage across the estate asking for dogs to be on leads and reiterated appropriate dog handling behaviour after an increase in anecdotal reports of bad behaviour as well as issues with sheep. Ben and Andrew are continuing with tree guard removal/brash rings with a public session on Sunday 27th In early April we have re-chipped the path around Home Farm arable at Ewe Pen which we hope will keep walkers, runners, and dogs off the wildflower margin.	Andrew Danson
Conservation Management Plan	We expect the CMP to be published in the Spring.	Andrew Danson
Sherborne Brook	We expect to submit a planning application for Wetland creation on the Sherborne Brook in May. We will hold two public information sessions before any application is submitted.	Simon Nicholas
Tree Planting	Ollie and the volunteers planted the final 300 replacement trees at Lodge Park, and we have now completed our planting for winter 24/25.	Andrew Danson

National Trust monthly brief: April 2025 (Andrew Danson – 16/04/2025)

	As we move away from tree planting, we now have the daunting task of trying to keep them alive through summer – we have already started watering our pot grown trees at the Sherborne Farm orchard and Lodge Park avenues – if you see the team towing a bowser and engines whirring in either of these locations, that is what we’re up to; planting trees is the easy bit, keeping them alive is much harder. In addition, we have again started our mowing in the Lodge Park woodland blocks to manage vole damage – We envisage this will be the last year we need to do this as most of the trees establish.	
SANG Funding	Ben and Luke repaired a public right of way gate at Windrush Mill mid-March, swapping a defunct vehicle gate for a more accessible pedestrian gate; we have also ensured an improvement in terms of stock keeping by railing between sides. The ranger team along with various volunteer groups have been working around Sabrina Way – ensuring the bridleway substrate is appropriate for horses and the gates can be secured open to ease with stock movements – we intend to tidy up down here through April. Ollie and his volunteer team have dead hedged along the Sabrina Way track between Century Wood and Picardy – we hope to keep walkers (and dogs) out of this woodland which is sensitive for conservation reasons. This will also hopefully help with stock movements east along the track. Ollie and Tim removed a dangerous and collapsing bridge in Cowham.	Andrew Danson
Walling and Fencing	Contractor booked to repairs breaches in Old Park walls. Working on drawing up planning application for pre-emptive wall repair on Langotts Hill where it has started to bulge out towards the road. Next phase of fencing repair has been booked in with contractor – Laughclose field. New walling contractor being brought onboard.	Tim Green

National Trust monthly brief: April 2025 (Andrew Danson – 16/04/2025)

Wildlife	The Sherborne Farm Monitoring Project has begun at Stones Farm with April butterfly sessions already proving fruitful; a large influx of (especially) peacocks, red admirals, orange tips and brimstones have been recorded. Bird surveys will be starting towards the end of the month. It has been a bonanza of wildlife sightings across the estate these last few weeks. Barn owls have continued to boom through early spring with multiple sightings on all seven of the farms that make up Sherborne – the Sandy Hill/Sherborne Farm bird has been particularly reliable in the centre of the village. A marsh tit was working its way through managed ditches in the watermeadows (March 11th). A water rail was recorded in the watermeadows 18th March; an osprey was seen on Sherborne Brook between 20th March and 26th March – a different individual to the one who visited last year, so please keep an eye out for a second bird. Otter spraint on the Windrush – red/pink indicative of the issues with signal crayfish down there (25th March). First swallow over the village Monday 7th April. At least four otters on the brook (Wednesday 9th April). Brook other highlights – the swan pair are now nesting; a second pair were present Thursday 10th April including the juvenile that was there through winter, a kingfisher pair was spotted on Wednesday 9th which is very promising – also reed bunting, grey wagtail and Cettis warbler, Little Grebe were gathering nesting material (12th April), plus a gadwall pair and one mandarin. Mandarin have been in large numbers along the brook and Windrush for a few weeks now. 2 common snipe in Windrush (Thursday 10th April). Three little owl territories were confirmed Friday 4th in less-than-ideal conditions; down from 5 last year but the two dropped sites are not written off. Last wigeon recorded W/C 24th March – see you next year; teal present in reduced numbers. We are struggling to confirm any lapwing sites this year.	Luke Hunter
Woodland work and Tree Safety	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, 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.	Luke Hunter

National Trust monthly brief: April 2025 (Andrew Danson – 16/04/2025)

	For the first time in what feels like an eternity, I have little to say about tree safety! We worked with contractors to remove/monolith some dangerous ash in the Pleasure Grounds at the start of March and thankfully it has been quiet since. Our tree safety surveys begin again in June when we will be surveying the ash dieback across the estate – more to follow.	
Volunteering	Ben and the ANTS volunteer group have been removing old tree guards along Sabrina Way and ‘brash ringing’ a practice to keep stock away from the sensitive root areas of developing (and veteran) trees. The principle being that without grazing, bramble grows through and gives the root area a crown of thorns guard, whilst still providing enough shade for the stock as the tree matures. March: The Sherborne team delivered some ditch management in the watermeadows in one of the ditches that were identified as not supporting water vole, a flagship species on the Sherborne estate – in appropriate ditches we aim to establish mosaic habitats of sunlit and shady areas in riparian environments. We were quickly rewarded with longtail tits taking up residence in one of the retained thorn thickets and a water rail marshalling the ditch shortly after; hopefully, water vole have moved in when we next survey! The team also conducted some laurel cutting which continues to be an issue in the A40 belts, repurposed the double hedgerow hedge laying brash to dead hedge and dry-stone walling at Lodge Park. April: A busy April on the cards, Ben, and the Cotswolds Wardens plan to replace fencing around the fly fisher's car park on Sabrina Way, whilst Ollie will be removing another dangerous bridge, leading drystone walling sessions, and removing old defunct fences.	Luke Hunter