

National Trust monthly brief: May 2025 (Andrew Danson – 12/05/2025)

Subject (add as appropriate)	Comment & update	Milestone dates (e.g. start work / completion)	Main NT contact
Big Nature, Better Access	We have 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 bid is for £350,000 and includes work to recreate the “Theatre of Trees” and the planting of further serpentine avenues. In total we will look to plant over 330 avenue trees and 2700 whips in woodland blocks. We have also submitted an internal funding bid for £450,000 to create 50 hectares of grassland on Sherborne Farm – This funding is to replace the money originally secured from National Highways. As well grassland the project will fund tree planting, hedgerow management and pond creation. Decision on the funding should made on May 22nd. Cotswold District Council postponed the scheduled meeting local Parish Councils on May 8th at relatively short notice. We are awaiting to hear from them regarding an alternative date. Lodge Park is open again on the weekend of 30th, 31st and 1st of June. Community newsletter will be published this May – Residents will be able to sign up for electronic distribution of this communication by emailing Sherbornenews@nationaltrust.org.uk	Ongoing	Andrew Danson
Conservation Management Plan	We expect the CMP to be published in the Spring.	Spring 25	Andrew Danson

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Sherborne Brook	Two public information sessions on the Sherborne Brook Wetland creation project will be held at Sherborne Social club on Saturday 7th June and Wednesday 11th of June. We will share details of the proposed works and have a walk on the site. We then expect to submit the planning application for the works on the Sherborne Brook on Friday June 13th. We have carried out a tender exercise for potential contractors to deliver the proposed works.	Planning Application June 2025	Simon Nicholas
Tree Planting	Tree Planting: Summer – no more tree planting scheduled until the autumn.	Autumn/Winter 2025	Andrew Danson
Estate Infrastructure	Tracks have been repaired in West Belt following damage sustained during timber operations during a particularly wet period the winter before last. Ranger Ollie and his volunteer team have removed an additional two dangerous and defunct bridges from the watermeadows – taking away unnatural structures to improve both visual aesthetics, safety and the natural course of the river. Much of April's infrastructure time was spent tidying up from our April activities – we have benches, gates, bridges and fences booked for a busy May. Ranger Ben has worked with the Cotswolds Wardens to replace post and rail fencing on Sabrina Way to improve facilities for the Cotswolds Flyfishers. We have dug out the grips in Ragged Copse.	Ongoing	Andrew Danson
Walling and Fencing	Ranger Ben and Delivery Manager Tim have repaired a fence line in Elbram parallel to the breach on the Sherborne Brook – with Environmental Agency permission we had	Ongoing	Tim Green

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	previously repaired this breach using natural material and hope sediment will build up in the absence of stock pressure and reinforce the bank. Walling repairs taking place along track from Ewe Pens Car Park. A new monthly walling volunteering session begins on Wednesday 14th May.		
Wildlife	The Sherborne Farm Monitoring Project continues at Stones Farm with sessions continuing to deliver; highlights from the volunteers so far include... buff tailed bumblebees in huge abundance, peacocks, brimstones, tortoiseshell, orange tip, large/small white, red admiral, green veined white and dragon/damselflies. Bird sightings have included common whitethroat, yellow wagtail, corn bunting, reed bunting, sedge warbler, reed warbler, Cettis warbler, kestrels, kites, and barn owls. It would have been hard to live up to the April influx but some additional highlights - Sandy Hill reported 11 yellow wagtails amongst cattle (12/04). I clocked a speckled wood in the Pleasure Grounds (25/04). Common Sandpiper on the brook plus female swan on the nest (07/05). A stoat was spotted on Stones Farm (18/04). Otter spraint everywhere – I have had substantial numbers of reports this spring. Reed, Sedge and Cettis warblers all on the brook (05/05). Grey wagtails nesting on the brook and Little Egret in breeding plumage on the brook (05/05). Barn owl sightings have ebbed away as the month has gone on, but they have remained active around (at least) the Sandy Hill, Stones Farm and Lodge Park footprints. Swifts returned to the village (28/04). An anecdotal report of a cuckoo – on transit on the Sherborne Brook.	Ongoing	Luke Hunter
Woodland work and Tree Safety	Forestry Works: Have been completed till Autumn/Winter – there are a few more timber truck collections scheduled but otherwise this will sit dormant now. Tree Maintenance: 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	Ongoing	Luke Hunter

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	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 – I envisage this will be the last year we need to do this as most of the trees establish. Tree Safety: Our ash dieback surveys are scheduled for June and July which will be busy months for the ranger team; with stressed ash trees looking more noticeable than ever this time of year I am again envisaging another winter with a lot of tree work ahead... there is some solace to take that our approach to gradually working our way through the worst of the trees annually allows ash dependent species time to adapt, is less impactful on our woodlands and helps best direct our resources.		
Volunteering	April: Ranger Ollie led sessions building dead hedges on Sabrina Way as well as removing defunct (and dangerous to cattle) fencing in Budgehill Bank. In addition, he led a session tidying up our woodland planting blocks at Lodge Park – which are looking healthy and budding. Ollie has also started preparing the next hedge for laying at Sherborne Farm's double hedgerow - the team removed old chicken wire to easily lay the next hedge in winter. May: Ranger Ben joined the Cotswolds Wardens in early May putting the finishing touches to the Sherborne Forest School site – the Forest School was desperate for some TLC and Ben and the team have done a fantastic job in fitting bird boxes, bug hotels, a small pond, stools and a dead hedge edge – Ben also employed Men in Sheds - a local community group in Northleach to help build the bird boxes. We have also put considerable time into preparing the course for the Sherborne 5-mile run. Later in the	Ongoing	Luke Hunter

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	month, Ollie and Tim are delivering a walling session, I am leading on some orchard work and a slightly more boring session of tidying the car park! Ben has been working hard in John Smith's Ground removing old tree guards and 'brash ringing' – a technique that uses deadwood to protect the vulnerable root areas of trees from pressures related to stock. Alongside Andrew Danson, Project Manager, they delivered a session together working with the local community to complete some of this work. This brash was all repurposed from the double hedgerow hedge laying – a win-win!		
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