

Thu 06/08/26

Dear Colleagues,

Reorganisation of operational responsibilities

We have had our own mini reshuffle although no podiums were involved. From the start of this week the +Adventure project is now under the direct responsibility of Commercial Director Ian, with the Centre Managers from Castle Head, Preston Montford and Rhyd-y-creuau joining the core project team. Lease negotiations relating to Flatford, Nettlecombe and Margam, and the Infrastructure department are moving to Andy as Education and Operations Director.

Slapton's Weevil Release Scheme

In 2024, Slapton's National Nature Reserve Ranger Kieran identified the highly invasive species floating pennywort in a large pond on private land, next to the Ley. It will cause a huge problem if spreads. Estates Manager Matt Hawes therefore pulled together a large scale multi agency approach which also unlocked funding from The Environment Agency, Southwest Water, South Devon National Landscape and Defra via CABI (CAB International, a not for profit group). Our contribution has been "in kind" with staff time and monitoring.

CABI have been granted Ministerial approval to undertake field trials using the weevil *Listronotus elongatus*, a specialist herbivore of floating pennywort, with the aim to curb the plant's spread. After the mechanical removal and composting of the pennywort, CABI have been responsible for rearing and releasing the weevils through the course of 2 visits in this year and will continue to monitor progress during 2027.

This is a significant project for us and it's the only place in the South West to try out this new biological control. Alongside the funding partners, Matt has been working hard to bring together all of the interested parties including the landowner, our own staff, volunteers and apprentices with vital support from Centre Manager Kate. It's not been the easiest year for storm battered Slapton as our staff continue to deal with the fall out of the road closure, so well done to all of them in being at the forefront of such a project.



Opportunities to join the AI Working Group

The AI Working Group want to expand and diversify the group membership and is seeking staff from all centre teams to join the group.

- **What does the group do?** The AI Working Group exists to understand and develop the charity's use of AI as a tool to support staff in their area of work, adding real value and benefit.

- **What are the group working on?** Examples and short case studies relevant for each area of work across the charity, explaining and exploring how AI could help support with day to day tasks.
- **How often do they meet?** There's an online meeting for 1 hour every 1-2 months.
- **Who can apply?** The group are looking for staff who are curious, experimental and open to finding out what works and what doesn't.

So if you'd like to work collaboratively on this important area of work, please contact Gary Foster via email for more information. The next meeting takes place on 16th September.

Epping Open Day and MP visit

Congratulations to all the staff from Epping who put on another really enjoyable Open Day. It's an important part of connecting to the local community. Around 150 people came to enjoy the range of activities on offer and a lot of hard work went into a really successful event. Well done everyone.



Jo Vere and her team also hosted a visit by Epping's local MP and Shadow Environment Minister Neil Hudson (who used to be Blencathra's MP until the boundaries were changed). He has always been supportive of our work so spoke enthusiastically about [his visit](#). We've been increasing our engagement with MPs, MSs and MSPs this year and it's still paying off with more visits booked in this autumn and the number of MPs who have not (yet) responded to anything we have sent is now down to just 2.

Welcome to Field Studies Council

Thelma James has joined the team at Rhyd-y-Creiau as Casual Hospitality & Catering Assistant

Previous Catch Ups can be [found here](#)

Best regards

Mark