

Hay Bridge Nature Reserve Society – the next 50 years

The Hay Bridge 'estate' was designated an area of sanctuary for the Furness Fell Red Deer, a variety of red deer that had been in steep decline when Tissie and Herbert Fooks purchased the property in the late 1950s. They decided that these Red deer were worth protecting.

When Herbert died in 1969, Tissie and friends set up the Hay Bridge Nature Reserve Society charity in his memory. It was for the protection and conservation of flora and fauna on Hay Bridge as well as the advancement of knowledge and appreciation of natural history and the environment. It was registered as such in February 1971.

Society members virtually managed the Reserve as well as the membership; they organised all events and school visits. Historically it was the Society and its Trustees and Committee that determined the way forward for the Reserve. 50 years on and the world is a very different place.

The John Strutt Conservation Foundation (JSCF) bought the entire Reserve, over time, by 2010. Although HBNRS still manages the membership, produces newsletters, contributes financially to school visits and other projects, and arranges some events; the JSCF own and manage the land.

2020/2021 has been a bit of a wakeup call for the HBNRS Trustees and the Committee. A dwindling number of people remember Tissie and Herbert, the founders. Historically it was Tissie and then her daughter, Anne Frahm, who were the glue which held the Society together, the Society also being the face of the Reserve. For many years now, it has been the full-time warden Keith Loxam and his wife Helen, a trustee of the JSCF, who have been the face. During the Covid period, very little contact was made by members directly to the Society, most people speaking directly to Keith or Helen, on site.

On reviewing the situation, the HBNRS Trustees feel that it is not only the right time but also in the best interests of both Reserve and members, to merge the HBNRS with the JSCF. This would mean that the Society is dissolved but the JSCF takes on the membership, with members agreement, along very similar lines to those currently in place.

Several long-standing Committee members had already given their notice to retire at the April 2020 AGM and, as financial legislation becomes more demanding, our administration is taking up a disproportionate amount of Committee members' time, all of whom are volunteers.

A number of the Society's historic roles are carried out by JSCF, and though we still raise significant funds, it seems unnecessarily wasteful of members money, and energy, to be administering twice for every decision and expenditure made.

Public interest in the environment grows, and for Hay Bridge our membership has too. This is very much due to the quality of the Reserve, managed by JSCF.

Both charities are closely aligned, with similar aims and objectives and as the JSCF Trustees say in their response to our proposal, "the principal of this seems a logical step to promote what are effectively joint aspirations and interests".

The JSCF are committed to continuing a membership style operation with little change to current membership benefits. Members would have the same access rights as now (sunrise to sunset, or as arranged with the Warden) along with access to the car park, toilets and Study Centre.

Membership fees (or donations - to be decided) would remain at the existing rate (with a three-year review) but moved from an existing standing order to a direct debit system.

Members (or 'friends' - to be decided) would continue to benefit from the following:

- a variety of events with a view to including more hands-on practical activities and ecological monitoring projects. The Natural History Group's Raised Peat Bog survey would continue to be valued and its continuation encouraged.
- JSCF also hope to increase the use of media platforms and develop their website. News would be posted regularly on the website and there are plans for a members only Facebook page for up to the minute news. There would be consideration for those with no internet access and the notice boards would be used more widely with information and news for those visiting.
- JSCF will continue* their education programme, hosting visits from various local schools; welcoming continued regular visits from two local Forest Schools; using the Forest School facilities to help train University of Cumbria students who are learning to deliver FS activities; continuing to host visits by a local special school for students with disadvantaged and troubled backgrounds from inner city areas all over the North of England.
*Subject to Covid guidelines
- All residual funds from HBNRS and monies raised by membership in the future will be re-invested in the Hay Bridge Reserve.
- JSCF have offered to designate a project/projects to HBNRS in the future recognising the Society's historical input to the Reserve.
- The Reserve will always be called the Hay Bridge Nature Reserve.

Based on these assurances, we, the HBNRS Trustees, in agreement with the HBNRS Committee, are unanimous in our decision that this is the best way forward for both the Reserve and the membership. At the AGM 23rd April 3pm, **a proposal will be put to the vote that:**

"The Hay Bridge Nature Reserve Society be dissolved and the Trustees, on confirmation of this resolution, will proceed immediately to realise the assets of the Society and, after discharge of liabilities, donate the residue to the John Strutt Conservation Foundation for the purpose of Conservation and Education on the Hay Bridge Nature Reserve."

We would welcome any questions before the AGM. Please direct them to:

secretary@haybridgereserve.org.uk or post to Jane Chaloner, 32 Danforth Way, Ringmer, Lewes, BN8 5GF.

Roderick Smith (President)

Jane Chaloner

Andrew Sykes

Hay Bridge Nature Reserve Trustees

March 2022