

Summary of Reset changes for Volunteers

This document is to give Volunteers a summary of the main changes arising from our cost savings programme, some of which will change some aspects of National Trust Volunteering. It doesn't give detailed outcomes of how individual members of staff or properties are affected. Property teams will be in touch with volunteers about local changes.

A message from Tiger de Souza, Volunteering, Participation and Inclusion Director

First let me begin by thanking all of you for your ongoing support for the National Trust during this challenging time. The past six months have been difficult for all of us and your words of support and steadfast commitment have helped us to navigate the pandemic. Despite the challenges of social distancing, I am delighted that we have managed to safely welcome back over 13,000 volunteers and we hope to offer many more of you the opportunity to return to volunteering over the coming weeks.

My thanks also to those of you who responded to our consultation proposals and gave your feedback. We have read, analysed and reviewed all the helpful comments we have received and have ensured that the suggestions and concerns you have put forward have been part of our review.

Our property teams will be reaching out to you as soon as they can to share more detail on whether there are any changes affecting where you volunteer. I ask that you be empathetic and understanding with these teams as they manage the difficult process of managing changes alongside continuing to support our (re)opening to the public.

I would like to close with a final thank you to all of you for your understanding, consideration and patience. We recognise this is a difficult, challenging and unprecedented time and we remain truly grateful for your support.

Background

We need to make changes to our organisation following the coronavirus outbreak. Since we predicted £200m of lost income in Spring 2020, we have taken lots of action to deal with this. However, we still need to reduce our running costs by around £100m a year for the next few years.

Although most of our members are staying with us, since closure there has been some decline in memberships and we expect them to visit less in the foreseeable future, and also spend less. This reflects recent patterns for all visitor organisations.

The measures we are taking are putting us in the right shape to reduce our running costs: including stopping project spending, freezing recruitment, furloughing staff, drawing on Government schemes and of course saving costs for our organisation through this Reset Programme.

The Reset Programme

Driven by the need to save costs, and with great regret, on 8th October we announced 514 compulsory redundancies, together with 162 project role redundancies already announced in July. We have also accepted requests for voluntary redundancy and have stopped recruiting to jobs when they become vacant. These changes take account of the decline in visits to our properties, but also put the Trust in the best position to regrow, as conditions improve. The changes should also make us resilient to other future shocks, for example economic recession. And they mean we will keep our reserves in the health they need to be to cope with the uncertainty and risk of the months and years to come. We need to do this to be able to keep looking after beautiful places, for everyone, for ever.

The Reset Programme will make us a leaner and more flexible organisation ready to refocus our efforts on achieving everything in our 2020 strategy. We have a plan, the Renewal Plan which sets out how we'll get there.

We have made every attempt to minimise the impact on our conservation work, our member value and our ability to provide public benefit through the places in our care. Despite the impacts of the pandemic, we remain committed to world-class conservation, to providing the fullest possible access to the beautiful places we care for, and to living the values that have served us throughout this very difficult period. We simply couldn't do any of this without the support of our volunteers.

Volunteer Feedback Themes

Our 45-day formal consultation on the Reset Programme proposals attracted a lot of responses from our staff. We have made some changes to the proposals as a result of the large volume of constructive feedback, and we are convinced these changes make our proposals better. Alongside this, we ran a feedback process with volunteers. Through a number of activities, we received 7374 volunteer responses in total, all of them thoughtful and helpful. We have reviewed all of these, and the top 3 themes raised by volunteers were:

- proposed changes for **small properties** and the impact this would have on visitor experience and the future of volunteering
- proposals for **houses and gardens** and their impact on property care, maintenance and - changes in standards, as well as the impact this might have on visitor experience

- as a result of proposed **learning and education** cuts, the impact on our ambitions for diversity, inclusion, and opportunities for children and young people.

There was also a strong feeling that volunteers were keen to return to their volunteering roles, to give their support to the Trust and to enjoy the **wellbeing benefits** that volunteering brings.

This document provides further information on the main areas highlighted by volunteers and any changes made following their helpful feedback.

Feedback theme: Small properties

In our proposals, we put forward that some small properties would have reduced opening, move to a booking only model, or remain closed and find different opportunities for use. These types of properties are sometimes described as 'Little Gems'.

Volunteer feedback

We received 726 responses related to this theme and the main points were:

- Concern about commercial and visitor experience changes at small properties - that the closure of cafes and shops will have a detrimental impact on visitor numbers and visitor experience
- There was some concern that volunteer roles, such as conservation cleaning, might be impacted as a result of reduced house opening at a small number of properties.

What is the outcome?

We really welcomed feedback in this area and there were many positive comments about the proposal to change our opening arrangements at small properties to a 'booked-only' model. General Managers will have the flexibility to adapt opening hours and cleaning regimes in response to the resources they have available. All properties will have minimum opening requirements agreed through the normal budget process, so our members continue to benefit. No properties will close permanently.

There are a small number of houses which we propose will stay closed longer, and which will reopen in a different way. These changes will be talked through in more detail at the individual properties affected.

We recognise that as a result of reduced resources and opening times, we may risk delivering less benefit for some visitors at some of our smaller properties. We will do all we can to minimise the impact on members by clearly communicating the opening times and information about the visitor experience.

Feedback theme: Houses & Gardens

To avoid the impact on important conservation work in our houses and gardens, there are no significant reductions in staffing, but some local changes to resourcing were proposed which would prioritise houses and collections with conservation

significance. This would include our 26 'Treasure Houses' where a new role of Property Curator was proposed to replace House & Collection Managers.

Volunteer feedback

We received 679 responses that related to this theme and the main points were:

- Some worry that loss of experienced staff will affect property integrity, care and morale in some areas
- Concern about contractors carrying out house or garden work
- Some concern that property care and maintenance may deteriorate, impacting gardens or collections
- Changes in conservation/presentation standards negatively affecting visitor experience

What is the outcome?

It was heartening to hear and see so much feedback about our houses and gardens. Our proposals for collections care and management are staying the same, as we are confident we have the right levels of resource for essential day to day cleaning, preventive conservation and inventory control.

In our gardens, there was recognition that efforts have been made to reduce costs without negative impact, but we will have to find new ways of doing things in some places. This includes the ability to take local circumstances into account and to consider staffing structures for consistency at similar-sized gardens. Property teams have looked again at some specific gardens, and any changes will be talked through in more detail at individual properties.

Feedback theme: Learning & Education

Our original proposal was to close learning roles which were delivering curriculum-based content and formal education sessions, with the aim of providing more self-led and partner-run learning activities.

Volunteer feedback

We received 506 responses that related to this theme and the main points were:

- A lot of volunteers feel very passionate about the benefits of the education and learning programmes and are strongly opposed to potential cuts
- There is concern over equality, diversity & inclusion for young disadvantaged or urban audiences
- This is essential engagement activity for potential members of the future
- Concern was felt most keenly at specific properties that currently offer education and learning programmes

What is the outcome?

It is important that we continue to offer places that provide children with rich insights into our history and nature, and despite the coronavirus crisis and the pressure it puts on our resources, this will continue. In response to feedback, we have decided not to remove so many roles, although we will be changing our current learning and education roles so our people can focus on ensuring children and young people get the best out of their

visits and learn more about Trust places and wildlife. These roles will be introduced at properties with the greatest potential to engage children and young people, either because of the communities they are close to or the high numbers of school visits they welcome. They will also be vital in helping us develop our work with children in the future.

Our volunteers will continue engaging with school groups to facilitate their visit in many places. We will involve volunteers and staff in developing new ways to they can support children and young people to visit.

Feedback theme: Commercial

The proposal for commercial services – which includes Food & Beverage, Retail and Holidays - was to move accountability away from properties to a Trustwide team. Because of the financial impact of coronavirus and lower numbers of visitors expected next year, a number of loss-making outlets were also proposed to close.

Volunteer feedback

We received 447 responses that related to this theme and the main points were:

- A feeling that commercial offers are an essential part of the overall visitor experience, especially tea rooms
- Tea room closures will discourage repeat local visits or one-off stops on longer trips which could result in a loss of income, particularly at smaller properties
- There were questions about why shops and cafes haven't opened yet and whether these closures were interim or permanent

What is the outcome?

There were many good insights from volunteers in this area and, following feedback, the opening and closing proposals for our retail and catering outlets have been modified. We looked again at the assumptions that were used to identify whether outlets were profitable enough. As a result, an additional 7 shops will now remain open. In addition, 3 cafes that were originally to stay open will now close, but 3 that were proposed to close will now stay open.

Feedback theme: Membership

Under the proposals, property teams would increase their focus on service and experience and less on membership recruitment. It was proposed that more membership recruitment and admission transactions would be online, supported by improved digital experiences for our supporters.

Volunteer feedback

We received some feedback about our new membership approach - the two main themes were:

- Concern about online membership recruitment, and a feeling that this cannot replace the personal recruitment process at properties

- Some suggested changing the membership offer during these difficult times e.g. a monthly subscription or free membership for those on universal credit

What is the outcome?

All the fantastic conversations at properties between staff, volunteers and supporters that lead to visitors joining the Trust will continue. So, if someone wants to join as a member when they visit us in person, we will certainly help them to do so. What will change is that a larger share of the physical transaction of joining or paying will be done on visitors' own phone, tablet or laptop.

We are already seeing large growth in members joining online. Coronavirus is accelerating this trend; helped by the current requirement for advance bookings to visit our properties, and as more people adopt digital options for safety reasons. People can join the Trust online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. It's a faster and more efficient way for visitors to become members.

Reducing the amount of face to face recruitment we expect from our properties also allows the teams to focus more on visitor needs. We can be more flexible and promote a wider range of ways for people to support the Trust.

Feedback theme: Volunteer roles

Thinking about the combined impact of all potential changes outlined in the original proposals, some volunteers helpfully shared their feedback about their roles with the Trust.

Volunteer feedback

We received 434 responses that related to this theme and the main points were:

- Some worry whether there will still be volunteering roles for individuals
- Openness to doing other volunteering roles and utilising skills and experience in order to support the Trust where they can
- With staff being made redundant there was concern that the Trust will expect more from volunteers in order to replace paid staff
- Volunteers are often loyal to their local place or context and if not engaged locally, may feel undervalued and unwilling to return
- Many volunteers have emphasised the benefit of volunteering to their physical and mental health and wellbeing

What is the outcome?

We simply couldn't operate without volunteers. The commitment, energy, and support we continue to see is hugely valued and highly regarded.

Our staff are working hard to bring back volunteers to properties where it is safe and practical to do so. At present we have brought back just over 13,000 volunteers. We hope that number will significantly increase as we move through Autumn and into Winter. We must highlight that we will need to make changes to the way we have engaged volunteers in the past, but we will actively seek to involve volunteers in any changes that we need to make to the way we operate or volunteering roles.

We are also exploring ways in which volunteers could perform new roles and are keen to introduce a volunteer skills register. However, it is important to mention that we have clear and strict guidance related to job substitution and we will not be deploying volunteers into roles to displace staff.

Next Steps

Local property changes will start being shared with volunteers on or before 16 October. We recognise that we will need to consider how we best support our volunteers in the future and we will be reviewing our structures for enabling and enhancing volunteer involvement in the New Year.

Looking further ahead

Our 2020 strategy reiterates that nature, beauty and history are for everyone. Our mission is to help people access green space wherever they are. As Octavia Hill put it: 'the need of air, the sight of sky and of things growing, seem human needs, common to all men.'

We have a clear renewal plan which says we need to move away from a very standardised approach to our properties. This means making the most of our most valued assets, in a way that excites and inspires our visitors. As our Director-General said earlier in the year: 'The things we care for belong to everyone. We must allow people a more active role in care, conservation and creativity – on and off property. They can and must play a greater part in our mission. In funding and advancing it.'

Here is a reminder of the priorities that will help us get this right. They are to:

- keep our focus on **increasing biodiversity** and **access to green spaces** and **reducing our carbon footprint**
- take a **more responsive approach to visitor experience and care for places and collections**
- create efficiencies through a new approach to property management by **not treating all places the same** – we need to open up our places to more activity, to more communities and charity partners
- retain and **grow our membership**
- **become more efficient** so estates and commercial activities have dedicated management teams
- change the way we work between central and regional teams
- **increase diversity and inclusion**
- **embrace a more digital future** and rely less on printed materials as we work toward net zero.

As the UK continues its fight to manage coronavirus and government restrictions remain in place, we will continue to open more of our places where possible so we can move to some sense of business as usual.

The places and heritage the National Trust cares for are needed now more than ever. Our focus will remain on the benefit we deliver to people, every day. We will emerge from this crisis in the strongest position possible to keep on protecting and caring for places so people and nature can thrive.

We are readying the National Trust for a changed world. We are changing to meet it, staff and volunteers working together so we can emerge from this crisis in the strongest position possible.