



10-Year Vision for Queenswood & Bodenham Lake:

Queenswood & Bodenham Lake are nationally acknowledged as model sites for best practice conservation, visitor experience & engagement; and the promotion of sustainable development

Introduction

We, the Partners, manage Queenswood and Bodenham Lake under a 99-year asset transfer lease from Hereford Council (in place since March 2016). This update to our joint Vision reflects our growing experience and is informed by feedback from a range of stakeholders. It includes a framework for how we aim to achieve our ambitions.

The Sites

Queenswood is Herefordshire's most popular outdoor visitor destination with significant capacity to host events. It is a designated open space, one third of which is an arboretum and two thirds of which is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) under the Wildlife and Countryside act 1981. A major visitor attraction of the site is the Arboretum which is managed in partnership with the Coronation Fund: an independent charity formed in 1953 to support the planting and management of the Arboretum. Their vision "to provide a space in the English countryside for trees from around the world for the peaceful enjoyment and education of all" is entirely complementary to ours.

Bodenham Lake is Herefordshire's largest open water body, offering important breeding and over-wintering areas for wildlife such as wildfowl and otters. Its primary function is a nature reserve and therefore best suited to low impact public access in keeping with its quiet enjoyment.

Our Management Principles

We appreciate Queenswood and Bodenham Lake as unique natural assets and places of intrinsic beauty. We will ensure that their essence is maintained and enhanced. We will ensure that the Site of Special Scientific Interest, the arboretum, the overall woodland and the lake and its environs are all carefully managed to benefit biodiversity whilst preserving their character and promoting their respectful use by the public.

We see Queenswood and Bodenham Lake becoming demonstration sites for a *sustainable* Herefordshire: a vibrant, healthy, naturally flourishing and resilient place: providing a resource for improving peoples' wellbeing. This will require site management and infrastructure, buildings and interpretation that showcase the values and objectives of HWT and New Leaf and deliver this Vision.

Delivering our Vision

Three main *areas of activity* are required to deliver our Vision. Each is broken down into its key components below:

- 1) ***Show-case how nature conservation, sustainable development¹ and human wellbeing, are inter-related, worthwhile objectives***
 - a) ***Improve biodiversity***
 - Improve further the long-term ecological integrity of the sites via best practice conservation
 - Ensure that the SSSI woodland areas of Queenswood maintains its favourable status
 - Ensure ongoing protection of significant species (e.g. otters & dormice) and the improvement of habitats, as well as improving public access and viewing facilities, etc

¹ defined by UN's World Commission on Environment and Development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

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- Actively manage Queenswood as a working woodland to promote biodiversity and produce sustainable woodland products
- Actively monitor biodiversity, develop case studies and promote best practice
- Promote landscape-scale conservation by working with adjacent landowners
- Manage Bodenham Lake to SSSI standard and enable it to become a premier, flagship wildlife site for the county

b) Promote wellbeing

- Help to promote public appreciation of the health benefits of engaging with nature and promote a deeper respect for wildlife and the natural environment
- Enhance people's awareness of natural beauty; enhancing their experience through better interpretation, guided walks and a range of educational programmes for people of all ages
- Promote wellbeing for all, working with statutory and voluntary bodies and develop programmes that target disadvantaged groups, including those with physical and mental disability, poor health, and alienation

c) Promote Sustainable Development

i) Food

- Promote a localised food economy to engage residents in how their food is produced; its impact on their health and the environment²
- Support local sustainable food enterprises and retail through on-site shop(s) and cafe
- Develop Bodenham as a source of sustainably-produced, wildlife friendly orchard produce

ii) Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy Generation

- Develop the on-site buildings into visible exemplars of sustainability – with the associated financial, environmental and wellbeing benefits of:
 - Improving existing buildings to reach the highest standards possible in consideration of their age and condition.
 - Commissioning any new buildings as demonstrators of best practice energy efficiency, renewable energy generation and water use
- Install renewably powered heating and energy systems at Queenswood and/ or Bodenham
- Make Queenswood into source of sustainably-produced, wildlife-friendly wood fuel and timber produce

iii) Water, Transport and Waste

- Install water-use minimisation measures and explore potential natural waste water purification systems at Queenswood
- Introduce measures to reduce the impact of car journeys to the sites and promote more sustainable alternatives such as walking, car sharing, electric vehicles and cycling
- Substantially reduce on-site, and everyday waste generation via awareness raising about prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse

2) Raise public awareness of sustainable development and wildlife conservation.

a) Education & events

- Promote our Vision through signage and information boards
- Develop both sites as centres of experiential learning, working with partners and educational providers to deliver:
 - a vibrant calendar of events to attract new visitors & encourage repeat visits
 - courses on heritage skills, nature, sustainable living and wellbeing
 - a range of revolving exhibitions that tie into our Vision
 - relevant initiatives opportunities for independent groups to use the sites
- Build a new education and/or visitors' centre at Queenswood

b) Community engagement

- Involve as broad a sector of the community as possible in the running and developing the sites through volunteering, consultation and a range of other approaches
- Create a sense of ownership, mutual responsibility and social cohesion around the sites and the principles and practices they will increasingly exemplify

² In-line with the Herefordshire Sustainable Food Strategy

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3) Manage the sites on an economically viable basis:

a) Promote Queenswood as a top tourist & cultural destination

- Build on the popularity of Queenswood (already the most visited outdoor destination in Herefordshire) to develop it as a green tourist destination and sustainable development centre
- Maintain high standards of facilities, that the public really value, thereby attracting a wider range of new visitors and increased repeat visits
- Promote opportunities for the creation of new art works across a full range of media and disciplines, providing a way of communicating our Vision to a wide range of people

b) Maximise and demonstrate the value of the sites to the communities of Herefordshire and beyond

Promote the public benefits derived from the Partners values and aims by:

- Demonstrating best practice in cost-effective public open space management whilst delivering the ambitions inherent in this Vision
- Developing a robust, diversified business model that enables us to manage the site at break-even or better entirely on site-generated income
- Attract major project donor investment to enhance the sites for wildlife conservation, wellbeing and sustainable development
- Construct case studies that demonstrate the true contribution of the sites to the local economy
- Link into wider local economic, ecological and sustainability initiatives to maximise the connectivity and effectiveness of the development of the sites