



## **Denefields Volunteer Rangers** **Quarter 1 25/26 SLA Report** **April – June**



The Denefields Volunteer Rangers meet every Thursday to help in the management of the four following sites: Denefields Reserve, Bailey's Tump, the Wild Thyme Garden, Megdale Orchard and the nature area at Wellfield Allotments. The sessions are facilitated by two project offices from Groundwork – Rish Mills & Thomas Hollier

The report provides a detailed summary of the volunteer sessions conducted for conservation efforts during Quarter 1 of the year 2025/2026. The focus of the activities ranged from coppicing to finishing Hagrid's steps alongside other maintenance duties.

### **Outputs**

During Q1 2025, a variety of maintenance and conservation tasks were completed to enhance site biodiversity, accessibility and aesthetics. Work was started to establish a traditional rotational coppice on the site. This should increase ground flora over time by creating different levels of shade throughout the woodland. Due to the nature of a rotational coppice, these different levels of shade will eventually be available at any given time, allowing multiple niches to be available at any given time. The coppice is being compartmentalized by 'hurdles' or woven dead hedges. These are very aesthetically pleasing and have already garnered compliments. The re-stoning of Hagrid's steps was completed with the stone remaining after some was stolen during the winter. This allows for people to walk the steps with greater ease and accessibility due to the more even surface.

### **Tasks completed**

#### **03/04/2025**

**Task:** Completion of Hagrid's Steps

**Description:** The final steps were weeded, topped up and tamped to produce a nice walkable surface. For the volunteers who were unable to assist in this task they carried out some willow weaving by the pond.

#### **10/04/2025**

**Task:** Dividing and transplanting of Daffodils.

**Description:** A few Daffodils had grown in the grass adjacent to the bee border. This meant that mowing couldn't go right up to the edge of the border. So, these plants were dug up, divided and spread out to fill out the actual daffodil border that underlines the woven willow wall nearby. Hopefully this should fill it out and increase the aesthetic appeal of it.

17/04/2025

**Task:** Dividing Snowdrops and Primroses across the site.

**Description:** To quicken their spread the plants were divided. These plants usually take a long time to colonise an area, so this process helps to speed things up. Once recovered the process can be repeated and so on and so on until a carpet of the plants have formed or numbers have reached a satisfactory level. This reduces the need to spend money on new plants.

**24/04/2025**

**Task:** Cuckoo Flower propagation and path maintenance

**Description:** Cuckoo flower is a foodplant of the Orange Tip butterfly and one of our earliest flowering species. At this time of year there is not much in flower in the meadow bar lesser celandine, a single cowslip and a few Cuckoo Flower. Theoretically it should have a vivid display of cowslips and cuckoo Flower we believe. Cuckoo Flower can easily be propagated via taking cuttings of the plant (basal leaves only) and lying them flat in damp soil for several weeks in Tupperware. By the end of summer, they can be cut into sections and places in plug trays to mature and then planted out next year. This is an easy activity for the volunteers, and they enjoy learning something new. Cuckoo flowers are one of the more expensive plug species and so this would save a lot of money. In preparation for summer growth the paths were pushed back.

**01/05/2025**

**Task:** Willow weaving and flower bed weeding

**Description:** Volunteers took part in willow weaving to create natural borders and features around the flowerbeds, while also weeding flower beds to improve their appearance and support healthy plant growth.

**08/05/2025**

**Task:** Continued willow weaving and trimming

**Description:** The smaller willows by the borders were completed while the large willows by the pond were started with a harsher cut back due.

**15/05/2025**

**Task:** Cancelled due to staff leave

**22/05/2025**

**Task:** Trimming of willow by pond, cutting back vegetation around fruit trees and newly planted trees.

**Description:** Quite a hard trim was given as it was getting too tall and hard to manage even with the ladders. Given age of volunteers I think it is unwise to let it continue at that height hence the reduction in height. More will be done at a later date, but recovery time is needed for the plant now.

**29/05/2025**

**Task:** Bee Border Weeding

**Description:** Focusing on weeding of meadowsweet, Docs and other competitive species that were slowly taking over.

**05/06/2025**

**Task:** Cancelled due to poor weather conditions.

**12/06/2025**

**Task:** Continued bee border weeding

**Description:** As above

**19/06/2025**

**Task:** Pond Clearance work

**Description:** The pond had been choked up by plants, to such a degree in places that moss was growing on the surface - succession into a bog. It was from the pond floor to water surface plants with no open water at all at any depth. As a result, almost no animals that swam were present as there was no room to swim. The main species found were dragonfly larvae – a species that crawls through the water. It is advised that a wildlife pond should be 60% open water, so we cleared 60% of the plants, piling most at the water's edge for fauna to get back into the water. Some were placed in buckets to use at a different site.

| Quarter 1 (April to June) Statistics                    |       |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| A. Total no. of volunteers                              | 6     |
| B. Average hours worked by volunteers per week          | 3.5   |
| C. Total no. of weeks worked during quarter 1           | 11    |
| D. Total Volunteer Hours                                | 227.5 |
| E. Hourly rate for volunteer based on national guidance | £14   |
| F. Total Volunteer value x D & E                        | £3185 |
| G. Total number of GGN staff members involved           | 2     |

## **Photo Highlights**





