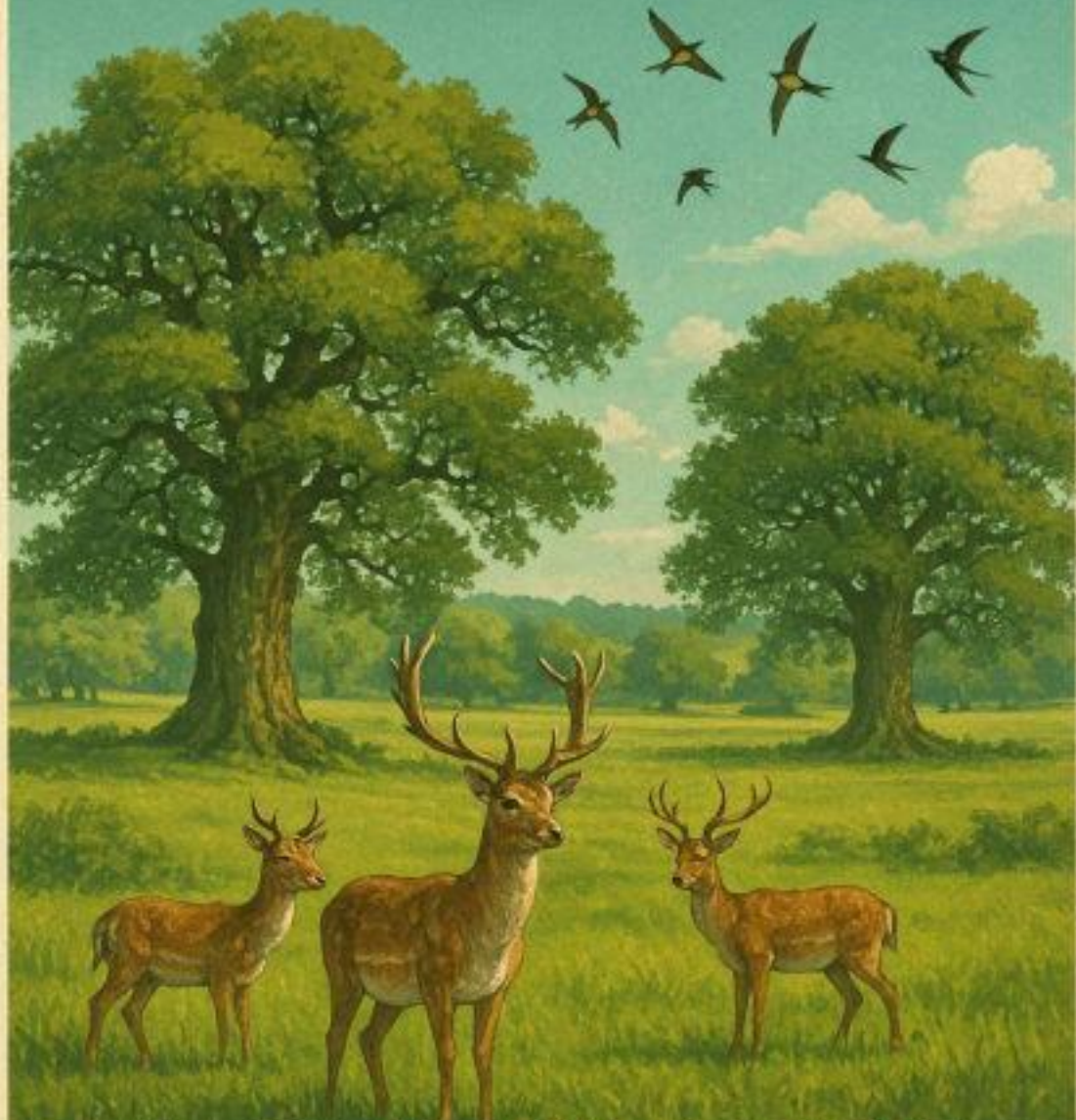


HEREFORDSHIRE PARKLANDS

CONFERENCE & PARKLAND VISITS



1-3 JULY 2026

HEREFORDSHIRE PARKLANDS CONFERENCE

1-3 JULY 2026



Venue: New Model Institute of Technology and Engineering (NMITE), Skylon Campus, Canary Lane, Skylon Park, Hereford HR2 6RB, with afternoon visits by coach to major parklands across Herefordshire.

This conference has been organised as part of the 175th anniversary celebrations of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club, with their theme of 'Heritage and Future'. A full programme follows, with details of speakers and those taking the chair at the conference.

CONFERENCE PURPOSE

The conference will unite landowners, land managers, the public, the scientific community, and those with expert knowledge of Herefordshire's parklands. A very strong range of speakers, from local and nationally leading organisations, as well as landowners, will address cultural and historical topics; challenges facing treescapes, such as climate change, tree diseases and overgrazing; and explore strategies for restoring parkland habitats, enhancing resilience, and adapting to future threats.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS FOR EACH DAY

Day 1: Parkland origins; cultural history; archaeology; geology; landscape art; mapping of trees, hedges, and woodland. Afternoon visit to Brampton Bryan or Gatley Park.

Day 2: Plant communities; biodiversity restoration; grassland restoration; long-term monitoring of species dependant on oak pasture - e.g., acute and chronic oak decline; the BACSTOP project; and the impact of environmental stressors on biodiversity and ecosystem services. Afternoon visit to Eastnor and Bromesberrow, or Moccas.

Day 3: Management solutions for treescapes, including microbial and naturalistic management strategies; soil rhizosphere considerations; oak landscape management; Forest Research mapping projects; and a high-level discussion panel. Afternoon visit to Kentchurch or Holme Lacy.

BOOKING AND WHAT'S INCLUDED

The conference will run for 3 days at a daily rate of £40 per person. You can book for a single day or multiple days, and your booking includes.

- A full programme of talks and discussion each morning
- Site visits each afternoon (by return coach) to one of two Herefordshire parklands, depending on your choice - the options change each day
- Exhibitions of estate maps, geological features and different aspects of biodiversity
- Refreshments

PLEASE BOOK EARLY since the conference is limited to 100 delegates per day and since the numbers that can visit each parkland are also limited. To secure your place, please download, complete and return the booking form provided to Prof. Rachel Jenkins at rachel@olan.org and make payment as indicated

OUR THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Woolhope Club is most grateful to the organisations - highlighted in the programme and the biographies - whose grants and sponsorship have made this conference possible.



HEREFORDSHIRE PARKLANDS CONFERENCE

1-3 JULY 2026

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME†

Venue: New Model Institute for Technology and Engineering (NMITE)

Skylon Campus, Canary Drive, Skylon Park, Hereford, HR2 6SR

With site visits by coach to parklands each afternoon

The Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club gratefully acknowledges sponsorship and grants from the following organisations, whose support has made this conference possible:

Herefordshire Community Foundation

Hereford and Worcester Gardens Trust

Hereford Council

Howard Bulmer Charitable Trust

The Mumford Memorial Trust



† The programme shown is as arranged at end February 2026.

DAY ONE:1 JULY 2026. HEREFORDSHIRE PARKLANDS: LANDSCAPE HISTORY, FEATURES AND CULTURE

TIME	TOPIC	SPEAKER
08:30	Registration and Coffee	
FIRST MORNING SESSION		Chairperson: Lord Lisvane KCL DL FLSW
08.45	Welcome and housekeeping	
08:50	Introductory Remarks	Edward Harley CBE, <i>Lord Lieutenant of Herefordshire</i>
08.55	Woolhope Club 175 th Anniversary	Prof. Keith Ray MBE, <i>Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club President</i>
09:00	Herefordshire Parkland: a brief history	David Whitehead, <i>Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club</i>
09:20	Archaeology of the Parklands	Prof. Keith Ray, <i>Woolhope Club</i> and <i>Cardiff University</i> Tim Hoverd, <i>Herefordshire Archaeology</i>
09:40	Parkland Art	Charles Watkins, <i>Professor of Rural Geography, University of Nottingham</i>
10:00	Discussion	Chairperson: Prof. Charles Watkins
10.20	COFFEE	
SECOND MORNING SESSION		Chairperson: Ian Grafton, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust
10:50	Geology and geo-conservation of the parklands	Moira Jenkins, <i>Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club</i>
11:10	Hydrology of the parklands: springs, marshes, water features	Will Watson, <i>ecologist and environmental consultant, Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club trustee</i>
11:30	Mapping of trees, hedges and woodlands	David Lovelace, <i>Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club</i> Neil Ford, <i>Ancient Woodland Inventory, Natural England</i>
11:50	Discussion	Chairperson: James Marsden, former Chair of the Herefordshire Climate & Nature Partnership Board
12.10	LUNCH	
AFTERNOON: SITE VISITS		
12:45	Coaches depart for SITE VISITS. To BRAMPTON BRYAN or GATLEY PARK, depending on preference	
14.00	BRAMPTON BRYAN	Welcome and Introduction: Edward Harley CBE Experts from the Ancient Tree Forum, Woodland Trust, Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club
14.00	GATLEY PARK	Welcome and Introduction: The Right Hon. Philip Dunne Experts from the Ancient Tree Forum, Woodland Trust, Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club
16:00	TEA and CAKE	Brampton Bryan Village Hall or the Church at Gatley
16.45	Coaches return to NMITE	Estimated arrival back at NMITE, Skylon Campus: 17.30

DAY TWO: 2 JULY. PROJECTS AND CHALLENGES FACING TREESCAPES

TIME	TOPIC	SPEAKER
08:30	Coffee and registration	
FIRST MORNING SESSION		Chairperson: Peter Clay, Brockhampton and Perrystone Estates, founding member of Herefordshire Meadows
08.45	Welcome and announcements for DayTwo	
08.50	Vegetation: the skin of the land	Stuart Hedley, <i>County Recorder for Herefordshire's vascular plants</i>
09:10	Flower-rich parkland swards: semi-natural habitats in a designed landscape	Caroline Hanks, <i>Director, Herefordshire Meadows</i>
09:30	Fungi in the life of trees	Lynne Boddy MBE, <i>Professor of Fungal Ecology at Cardiff University</i>
09:50	Tree population sizes required to ensure veteran tree ecological continuity in wood pasture and parklands	Nigel Pilling, <i>Wood Pasture and Parkland Senior Specialist, Trees and Woodlands Team, Natural England</i>
10:10	Discussion	Chairperson: Victoria Heffer, CEO, Radnorshire Wildlife Trust
10.30	COFFEE	
SECOND MORNING SESSION		Chairperson: James Hervey-Bathurst CBE DL, Eastnor
11:00	Acute and chronic oak decline, BACSTOP project	Sandra Denman, <i>Principal Pathologist, Forest Research</i>
11:20	The changing nature of forest pests in Britain	Daegan Inward, <i>Senior Researcher, Forest Research</i>
11:40	Collapsing foundations: The ecology of the British oak, implications of its decline and mitigation options	Ruth Mitchell, <i>Woodland Ecologist, Ecological Sciences Department at the James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen University</i>
12:00	Effects of pollutants and climate change on soil health	Elena Vanguelova, <i>Senior biogeochemist, Soil Sustainability Research, Forest Research</i>
12:20	Panel questions and discussion	Chairperson: Saul Herbert, CEO, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust
12.45	LUNCH	
AFTERNOON SITE VISITS		
13.20	Coaches depart for SITE VISITS. To MOCCAS or EASTNOR & BROMESBERROW, depending on preference	
14.00	MOCCAS	Welcome and introduction: Francis Chester-Master Experts: Tom Simpson, Natural England; Action Oak, Geraint Richards; Woodland Trust, Emma Gilmartin or Jeremy Evans

DAY TWO, Continued...		
14.00	EASTNOR & BROMESBERROW	Welcome and introduction at Eastnor: James Hervey-Bathurst CBE DL Experts: Natural England; Emma Gilmartin or Jeremy Evans, Woodland Trust By kind permission of the landowner, the visit to Eastnor will be extended to take in the adjoining Bromsberrow Park
16.00	TEA and CAKE	Moccas Village Hall or Woodshed Café, Eastnor
16.45	Coach from Moccas to NMITE	Estimated arrival back at NMITE, Skylon Campus: 17.30
16.30	Coach from Woodshed café, Eastnor to Bromesberrow followed by visit	Introduction to Bromsberrow: The Hon. Gilbert Greenall CBE DL MD
17.45	Coach from Bromesberrow to NMITE	Estimated arrival back at NMITE, Skylon Campus: 18.30

DAY THREE: 3 JULY 2026. MANAGEMENT PROSPECTS AND SOLUTIONS

TIME	TOPIC	SPEAKER
08:15	Arrival, coffee, newcomer registration	
FIRST MORNING SESSION		Chairperson: David Daniels, <i>Chair of Plantlife Int.</i>
08.45	Welcome and announcements for Day Three	
08.50	Harnessing the microbiome for tree resilience	James McDonald, <i>Professor of Microbiology, Birmingham University</i>
09:10	The social dimensions of Oak landscape management: Creating opportunities out of challenges	Mariella Marzano OBE, <i>Principal Social Scientist, Forest Research</i>
09:30	Soil rhizosphere and recommendations for naturalistic management strategies	Alice Dibley, <i>PhD Student, University of West of England, Bristol</i>
09.50	Climate change on oaks, My Forest mapping - potential for citizen science	Nathan Brown, <i>Forest Research</i>
10.10	Discussion	Chairperson: Richard Powell OBE, <i>Ancient Tree Forum Chair</i>
10.30	COFFEE	
SECOND MORNING SESSION		Chairperson: Jesse Norman MP
10.50	Tree declines through the lens of Regenerative Arboriculture - new perspectives, with a focus on restoring the health of declining trees.	Geoff Monck, <i>Treecosystems Ltd, Centre for Forest Protection and Birmingham Institute of Forest Research.</i>

DAY THREE, Continued...		
11.05	Managing trees in parklands and heritage landscapes- experience from a practitioner	Reg Harris, <i>Urban Forestry (Bury St Edmunds) Ltd</i>
11:20	Ancient and veteran trees - assessment and management	Ed Pyne, <i>Senior Conservation Advisor for Trees, Woodland Trust</i>
11.40	Averting loss. Recovering life. The restoration of Croome Park, 25 years on	Tom Oliver, <i>Chair, Council for Preservation of Rural England, Herefordshire</i>
SUMMARIES AND NEXT STEPS		Chair: Andrew McRobb, CEO of Council for the Preservation of Rural England, Herefordshire (CPRE)
12:00	Summing up-key issues arising from the conference.	Matthew Wainhouse, <i>Natural England</i>
12.15	A future research agenda	Carrie Brady, <i>Senior Lecturer, Microbiology, Centre for Research in Biosciences, University of West England (UWE Bristol)</i> Sandra Denman, <i>Principal Pathologist, Forest Research</i>
12:25	A future action agenda: final discussion panel to discuss future action for treescapes	Sarah Cattell, <i>Natural England</i> Ed Pyne, <i>Woodland Trust</i> Saul Herbert, <i>Herefordshire Wildlife Trust</i> Elissa Swinglehurst, <i>Herefordshire Council</i> Tom Oliver, <i>CPRE</i>
12:45	Final questions and discussion from audience	Chairperson: Annabel Narayan, CEO Action Oak
12.55	Closing remarks	Prof. Keith Ray, President, Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club
13.00	LUNCH	
AFTERNOON SITE VISITS		
13.30	Coaches depart for site visits to KENTCHURCH or HOLME LACY, depending on preference	
14.00	KENTCHURCH	Welcome and introduction: Joss Lucas-Scudamore and Tristan Gregory (Gardener). Experts from the Ancient Tree Forum, Woodland Trust, Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club
14.00	HOLME LACY	Welcome from Alys Probert (Deputy Head, Holme Lacy College). Experts from the Ancient Tree Forum, Woodland Trust, Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club
16.00	TEA and CAKE	The Bridge Inn, Kentchurch Holme Lacy
16.45	Coaches to NMITE	Estimated arrival back at NMITE, Skylon Campus: 17.30

EXHIBITIONS AVAILABLE ON ALL THREE DAYS

Display tables, banners or exhibitions from specialist organisations, likely to include:

- **Woodland Heritage**
- **The Woodland Trust**
- **Herefordshire Wildlife Trust**
- **Natural England**
- **The Ancient Tree Forum**

The **Woolhope Naturalists' Field** Club will show an exhibition about the geology, history, archaeology, biodiversity, and landscapes of Herefordshire's parklands



HEREFORDSHIRE PARKLANDS CONFERENCE

1-3 JULY 2026

DETAILS OF SPEAKERS (Pages 2-11)

DETAILS OF CHAIRPEOPLE (Pages 11-15)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

Landowners

The Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club is most grateful to the Herefordshire landowners who have encouraged this conference, are participating so actively in it, and have granted access to their parklands. After the full morning programme of talks and discussion, all attendees can visit a parkland by return coach in the afternoon, accompanied by relevant experts, with a choice each day as follows:

- Day One, July 1: Brampton Bryan or Gatley Park
- Day Two, July 2: Eastnor and Bromesberrow, or Moccas
- Day Three, July 3: Kentchurch or Holme Lacy

Organisations and Experts

The Club is delighted by the support of organisations (both national and based in Herefordshire) and experts from a wide range of historical, cultural, geological, scientific, biological, ecological, land management, and other disciplines. Through their contributions, a strong group of speakers and discussion-panel members has come together to offer leading-edge insight into a wide range of complementary topics, which address the heritage and future of the county's parklands. At a time of great change, many of these topics also have widespread relevance for healthy landscapes and thriving biodiversity elsewhere.

Chairpeople

We are most grateful to all those - landowners, estate managers, people in public office, scientists, leaders of organisations engaged in conservation, and experts in the culture, history, and landscape of Herefordshire - who have undertaken to take the chair and guide the conference through its varied sessions.

Grants and Funding

The Club gratefully acknowledges grants from the organisations whose support has made this conference possible. They are: Herefordshire Community Foundation; Herefordshire and Worcestershire Gardens Trust; Hereford Council; Howard Bulmer Charitable Trust; The Mumford Memorial Trust.

Their names and logos can be found on p.16 below and at the front of the conference programme.

DETAILS OF CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



EDWARD HARLEY CBE

Edward and his family have been based at Brampton Bryan for generations. After a career at Cazenove and Co., he was elected President of the Historic Houses Association, and he was subsequently Chairman of the Acceptance in Lieu Panel for 10 years. Edward is a trustee of several landed estates, including Burghley, and he has been Receiver General of the Duchy of Cornwall and on The Prince's Council for many years. He is a patron of a number of organisations in the county including the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust. Edward is His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Herefordshire.

PROF. KEITH RAY MBE

President of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club (March 2026-27), Keith is Senior Research Fellow and Professor of Archaeology at the School of History, Archaeology and Religion at Cardiff University. He holds degrees to doctoral level at Cambridge University. He is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and a full Member of the Chartered Institute of Archaeology. In 2007, he was awarded an MBE for services to archaeology and local government in Herefordshire. Keith is a trustee of the Herefordshire Victoria County History Trust and a trustee and Director of Research of the Offa's Dyke Association. He has published widely on the history and archaeology of Herefordshire, the early medieval March of Wales, and Neolithic Britain. Books include: *The Archaeology of Herefordshire: an Exploration* (2015); *Offa's Dyke, Landscape and Hegemony in Early Medieval Britain* (2016, with Ian Bapty); and, with Julian Thomas, *Neolithic Britain, the Transformation of Social Worlds* (OUP, 2018 and 2020).



TIM HOVERD

Tim attended Bournemouth and Sheffield Universities before working in commercial archaeology. He is currently the Archaeological Projects Manager at Herefordshire Council, where he manages a small, externally funded team, undertaking research and conservation projects within Herefordshire and neighbouring counties.



DAVID WHITEHEAD MA FSA

David moved to Hereford in 1970 to lecture in history at the Hereford College of Education. He subsequently became Head of Humanities at Hereford Sixth Form College. A member of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club since 1972, he has been President on three occasions and has published several articles on Herefordshire estates in the Club's *Transactions*. This work was extended and published as *A Survey of Herefordshire Parks and Gardens* in 2001, leading to several commissions for individual surveys as part of the government's Countryside Stewardship Scheme. David has also written a number of articles on the parks and gardens of the West Midlands, most recently 'Shobdon Court and its Landscape', published in the *Transactions of the Woolhope Field Naturalists' Club* 71 (2023).

PROF. CHARLES WATKINS

Charles Watkins is Professor of Rural Geography at the University of Nottingham. He researches the history of land management, nature conservation, and the geography of trees and forestry. His books include *Trees Ancient and Modern* (2025); *Rediscovering Lost Landscapes: Topographical Art in north-west Italy, 1800-1920* (2021); *Trees in Art* (2018); *Trees, Woods and Forests* (2015); *Europe's Changing Woods and Forests* (2014); and *Uvedale Price: Decoding the Picturesque* (2012). He is Chair of the Victoria County History Trust for Herefordshire and Chair of the Society for Landscape Studies.



MOIRA JENKINS

Moira Jenkins is a geology graduate of Aberystwyth University. She worked in oil exploration for Geophysical Services International and then returned to Aberystwyth as Map Curator / Research Assistant. Moira has an interest in education, derived from teaching in a variety of junior and infant schools, followed by work at the National Library of Wales. After having children, more teaching, and a time in the court service, Moira returned to geology in 2002, working for Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust on geo-conservation projects, mainly in Herefordshire. These included exploring the county and writing trail guides to present its geology to the general public. She has surveyed sites, helped with the designation of some as Local Geological Sites, and developed a Geodiversity Action Plan for Herefordshire. Moira has led many walks to show geological features to the public and,

with her interest in education, has developed worksheets for schools. She is currently the Geology Recorder for the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club.



WILL WATSON

Will is an ecologist and environmental consultant, specialising in freshwater ecology, with over 30 years of experience. He undertakes surveys covering the range of UK habitats. Recently, he has acted as Project Ecologist within the multi-disciplinary project on Ice Age Ponds in Herefordshire, supervised the restoration of Berrington Hall Pool for the National Trust, and drawn up the 'irreplaceable pond' definitions for DEFRA. Will is Ecological Advisor to the River Lugg Internal Drainage Board and a stock photographer with the Nature Picture

Library. He has a passion for water beetles and amphibians and, in 2008, found a water beetle new to science in Mozambique, which was named after him.

NEIL FORD AND DAVID LOVELACE

Neil Ford of Natural England is very much engaged in the Ancient Wood Inventory.

David Lovelace is a trustee of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club with long experience of woodland surveys and ancient trees.

Neil and David's details will be available soon.

STUART HEDLEY

Stuart is a freelance field botanist who has been fascinated by plants 'since meeting a field scabious at eye level when playing too far from home, aged six'. Although graduating in zoology, he has worked almost entirely in botany. A series of nature conservation jobs in the public sector has given him privileged access to much of the UK's finest wildlife habitat and the opportunity to benchmark natural and semi-natural ecosystems across Britain. A period in Spain, nominally working as an English teacher, then presented an opportunity to understand our plants and vegetation in their proper European context. He settled in south-west Herefordshire in 2013 and in 2019 took on the role of County Recorder for Herefordshire's vascular plants. He is a trustee of the charity Herefordshire Meadows, writes an annual botany report for the Woolhope Club, and is working towards a new *Flora* for the county, the last having been in 1889.





CAROLINE HANKS

Caroline is a Meadows Adviser and Director of Herefordshire Meadows, an organisation that champions the wide range of environmental benefits of flower-rich grasslands in the landscape - for example, for wildlife, food production, drought and flood resilience, livestock health, and human wellbeing. Founded in 2016 as a discussion group, Herefordshire Meadows now has four meadow advisers and has supported 1000 acres of meadow restoration using native seed, sustainably sourced

from local donor sites wherever possible. Herefordshire Meadows is an established partner in numerous grassland conservation, restoration, and creation projects across Herefordshire and adjacent counties; it offers floodplain meadow re-creation, Local Wildlife Site assessments, grassland surveys for agri-environment schemes, community outreach, and a volunteer Meadow Monitor programme with regular events. As a Conservation Adviser for Herefordshire Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Caroline was involved in Historic Landscape Management planning at Moccas, Kentchurch, and Holme Lacy, in addition to providing farm-environment advice to estates, farms, and smallholdings across Herefordshire. Caroline manages her own productive garden and orchard and is part of a community grazing group, managing sheep and cattle on SSSI, SAM, and common land in Eaton Bishop.

PROF. LYNNE BODDY MBE

Lynne is Professor of Fungal Ecology at Cardiff University and a past President of the British Mycological Society (2009-10). She has taught and researched into the ecology of fungi associated with trees and wood decomposition for over 45 years. Her research focuses on understanding how fungal mycelia behave in the natural world, climate-change effects on fungi, antagonistic interactions between fungi, and development of fungal



communities in wood. She is currently studying the fascinating communities of fungi and other organisms that rot the centres of old trees. Lynne is a prolific author, having co-authored *Fungal Decomposition of Wood* and *Fungi and Trees: their Complex Relationships* (2021), the DK children's books *Humongous Fungus* and *An Anthology of Fungi*, and DK's *Fungi*. She is an ardent communicator of the mysteries and importance of the amazing, hidden Kingdom of Fungi to the general public, including via TV, radio, popular talks, videos, articles, and exhibitions. She was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours list in 2019 for Services to Mycology and Science Outreach.



NIGEL PILLING

Nigel trained in conservation management and ecology and has spent just over two decades working in this field. His current role for Natural England is as the Wood Pasture and Parkland Senior Specialist in their Trees and Woodlands Team. He sees his role as pouring his enthusiasm for wood pasture and veteran trees into policy and practice. Recent work has included input into new protected site designation, English woodland and trees policy, agri-environment scheme design, regular habitat management and monitoring advice, and training for Natural England staff. Nigel is secretary to the UK

Wood Pasture and Parkland Network, a group of experts aiming to promote wood pasture and parkland conservation and management in the UK.

DR SANDRA DENMAN

Sandra, of Forest Research, is a Principal Pathologist with over 30 years' experience. She uses holistic, multidisciplinary research to investigate complex decline syndromes of oak and, over the past decade, has led several consortia working in this area. Her specific expertise is on host-pest-pathogen interactions and predisposition effects on host susceptibility, using traditional and molecular techniques to advance knowledge on this frontier and to help develop management guidance.



DR DAEGAN INWARD

Dr Daegan Inward is a Senior Researcher at Forest Research (Forestry Commission), specialising in the ecology and impact of invasive forest pests and their interactions with key British tree species. His entomological career began at the Natural History Museum, London, where he explored the biogeography and evolution of dung beetles and termites. Since then, he has continued to develop a research programme that bridges controlled laboratory work with real-world forest environments. Daegan and his team focus particularly on the most damaging insect pests of trees, including bark-feeding beetles capable of killing their hosts.





DR RUTH MITCHELL

A plant and woodland ecologist within the Ecological Sciences Department at the James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen, Ruth leads the biodiversity topic for the Scottish Government's Rural Affairs, Food and Environment Strategic Research Programme. Her research focuses on pressures on biodiversity, above and below ground, and on habitat restoration. Recently, she has specialised in assessing the wider environmental impact of tree diseases. She led the first assessment of the biodiversity implications of a decline in ash trees, identifying which species are at most risk and assessing which other tree species might mitigate some of these impacts. She has since worked on the biodiversity found on oak, Scots Pine and Sitka Spruce, and has led two UKRI funded Treescapes projects. The first, DiversiTree, studied how to increase resilience of current and future woodlands by working across a range of scales, from microbes to minds, to understand the methods to, and the impacts of, diversifying tree species composition. The second project, Tree of Knowledge, sought to better understand how species and genetic diversity and epigenetic effects might work together to increase the resilience of our woodlands, and when there might be trade-offs. Ruth's work is used by practitioners, policy makers, and government ministers. She was chair of the British Ecological Society's Scottish Policy group, and last year completed eight years on NatureScot's Science Advisory Group. Ruth is deputy chair of Defra's Trees and Woodlands Science Advisory Group.

DR ELENA VANGUELOVA

Elena is a senior biogeochemist and lead of Soil Sustainability Research in Forest Research. Her research over the past 20+ years covers the impacts of climate, atmospheric, and environmental changes; impacts and benefits of afforestation and forest management on forest soil functions; and soil health, with particular focus on forest and soil carbon and nutrient storage, stability and cycling as well as soil biodiversity. Recent research also includes the links between soil health and tree health. Elena is a nationally and internationally recognised expert in forest and soil biogeochemistry and has led and collaborated in numerous UK- and EU-based projects, initiatives, and research networks (e.g., BBRSC BACStop, DEFRA FPPH projects, EU COST actions, CLEANFOREST, EU ICP forest monitoring network, EU BioSoil, DEFRA tNCEA Soil condition and health project, a number of DEFRA NCF projects on soils under Natural colonization, ground preparation impacts on soils, agroforestry and soil ecosystem services, etc.). Elena has more than 80 peer-reviewed publications and more than 100 publications for the Forestry Commission and other Government Departments, EU reports, outreach and trade publications, contract reports, reports to industry and book chapters.





PROF. JAMES MCDONALD

James is a microbial ecologist and a leading expert on the tree microbiome. His research team has studied the oak microbiome in health and disease for over 15 years and, with collaborators, has contributed new insights into the role of microorganisms in Acute Oak Decline (AOD) and a conceptual framework for establishing the role of polymicrobial complexes in disease and tree microbiomes. He developed and led the BBSRC-funded 'FUTURE OAK' project, which characterised the microbiome of oak trees across the UK and developed disease-suppressive microbial inoculants that can decrease pathogens in trees. His team also study the response of the oak microbiome to drought and other stressors, with the aim of identifying plant-associated microorganisms that can be used as inoculants to promote stress tolerance in trees.

DR MARIELLA MARZANO OBE

Mariella is a social anthropologist and Principal Social Scientist at Forest Research in the UK, with over 20 years of experience in agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors. Mariella currently leads a number of interdisciplinary research programmes and projects related to the social dimensions of species management, tree and plant biosecurity, forest disturbances including windstorms and wildfire, risk management, and co-design and communication. Recent projects have covered the social dimensions of *Phytophthora sp.*, *Xylella fastidiosa*, Dothistroma needle blight, Asian longhorn beetle, Oak processionary moth, Acute Oak decline, Ash dieback, Emerald ash borer, and grey squirrels/deer. Mariella leads the Forest Research Tree Health and Biosecurity Programme and the forest disturbance theme in her social science group. She also established the IUFRO Working Party on the 'Social Dimensions of Forest Health' and is currently coordinating the IUFRO Division 7 Forest Health Entomology Research Group. Mariella is an Honorary Fellow at the University of St Andrews.



ALICE DIBLEY

A third year PhD student at the University of the West of England, Alice has a MSc degree in Conservation Ecology, and a BSc degree in Biological Sciences, both from Oxford Brookes University. She has worked for seven years as a teaching and research technician in various departments at the University of Reading, including Agriculture, Soil Science, and Microbiology. In 2025, Alice was awarded the 'Professor Pietro Luciano Young Scientist Prize' for the Best Poster at the 11th Meeting of the International Organisation for Biological

Control: West Palearctic Regional Section (IOBC-WPRS) Working Group 'Integrated Protection in Oak Forests'. Her PhD research examines the effects of soil decompaction and aeration on parkland oak (*Quercus robur* L.) showing symptoms of Acute Oak Decline (AOD). The research is supported by Forest Research (FR) and Woodland Heritage and is based in London. The project aims to determine if practical soil management techniques can improve the health of AOD affected oak trees, by measuring the effects on the physical health of the trees and assessing changes in the microbial composition of the rhizosphere soil, following decompaction treatments. The data collected for this project will be used to support the management of oak trees through producing guidance for stakeholders.



DR NATHAN BROWN

Nathan works as an Environmental Modeller at Forest Research. He works on Tree Health issues within the physical environment group, investigating the linkages between woodland condition and the environment. He is currently using disease distribution data to reveal the role of environmental predisposition on pest and disease occurrence and conducting research to support volunteer reporting activities ([Forest Lab](#) and [Observatree](#)). Nathan returned to Forest Research in 2022, after spending 9 years working with the epidemiological modelling group at Rothamsted Research, where he was most recently involved in the [SMARTIES](#) project, which investigated multiple threats to ash trees (Ash Dieback and the potential introduction of Emerald Ash Borer) across Britain. Nathan has a long-standing interest in monitoring woodland affected by Acute Oak Decline, which began in 2009 as a MSc project with Imperial College London and Forest Research. This has continued through a PhD program and has more recently formed a component of multiple interdisciplinary research projects including [BAC-STOP](#) and [Future Oak](#). Prior to this, he completed a Biology BSc, at the University of Sussex, and worked as a surveyor for an arboriculture and landscape design company.

REG HARRIS

Reg is an arborist and consultant who celebrates his 40th year in the arboricultural industry this year. Managing Director of Urban Forestry (Bury St Edmunds) Ltd, the company he founded in 1992, for the last 25 years he has worked throughout the UK and occasionally in Europe and Scandinavia, where he specialises in veteran and ancient tree management and micro habitat creation work (a.k.a. veteranisation). Reg is currently the principal arboricultural contractor at Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire, Hatfield Forest in Essex, Ickworth Park in Suffolk, and Blickling Hall in Norfolk, as well as several other key sites for ancient trees. He is an examiner for the VETcert qualification C and is a member of the Technical Advisory Panel for the Ancient Tree Forum.





GEOFF MONCK

Geoff is a VETcert qualified arboricultural consultant, with 20 years' experience, who specialises in ancient and veteran tree (AVT) survey and management, and has worked with several keystone AVT populations over the past 16 years. He also specialises in understanding and managing tree and soil health and is one of the pioneers in the field of applying informed and targeted remediation of the soil, and tree microbiome, to

improve tree health, which he calls 'Regenerative Arboriculture'. He runs his own specialist arboricultural consultancy business, Treecosystems Ltd, which specialises in AVT survey and management and Regenerative Arboriculture. Geoff has a MSc in Conservation and Forest Protection from Imperial College London in 2011, designing his own thesis project to evaluate the efficacy of different management interventions for AVTs. He is currently researching a PhD looking at complex decline of yew (*Taxus baccata*) in England. This is a collaborative project between Birmingham Institute of Forest Research (BIFoR), Forest Research, Myerscough University Centre and Treecosystems Ltd, funded by the Centre for Forest Protection.

DR ED PYNE

Ed has over a decade of experience spanning academic research and arboricultural practice. He holds a PhD in Fungal Ecology from Bangor University, with research focusing on fungal community ecology, veteranisation, and fungal biocontrols. Ed is currently the Senior Conservation Advisor for Trees at the Woodland Trust, where he provides scientific expertise to support the evidence-based conservation of ancient and veteran trees.



TOM OLIVER

Tom led the planning and implementation of the restoration of Croome Park for the National Trust between 1997 and 2002. He went on to be responsible for the Council for National Parks' role in the creation of the New Forest and South Downs national parks. From there he took on the role of Head of Rural Policy at CPRE national office for six years, including being closely involved with the formation of PPS7 and PPS9, national planning policy on rural development and biodiversity. Subsequently, as a Director of the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, he ran an All-Party

Parliamentary Group dedicated to the linking of productive land with wildlife conservation and recovery. Tom now runs his own farm on the fringes of the Black Mountains, with the objective of restoring and sustaining the historical and ecological

interest of a traditional rural landscape. He is Chair of CPRE Herefordshire.

MATTHEW WAINHOUSE

Matthew Wainhouse, a mycologist at Natural England, will summarise some key issues arising from the conference. His details will be available soon.



DR CARRIE BRADY

Carrie is a bacterial taxonomist by training. Her research focuses on tree pathogens, particularly acute oak decline (AOD) and, more recently, bleeding cankers of other broadleaf hosts, including *Tilia*. She uses molecular methods to identify and classify the bacterial species responsible for causing disease on tree hosts, to develop novel screening techniques to detect common bacteria isolated from diseased plant tissue and to examine possible synergistic relationships between the bacteria and routes of infection from possible reservoirs such as rhizosphere soil. Working closely with Forest Research and Westonbirt Arboretum, she has received funding from Woodland Heritage and Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum. Carrie leads a research group focused on tree health, with projects on bacterial communication in AOD, management of AOD in parkland oak, novel identification techniques for bacteria associated with disease and determining the threat to *Tilia* health.

SARAH CATTELL

Natural England. Sarah's details will be available shortly.

SAUL HERBERT

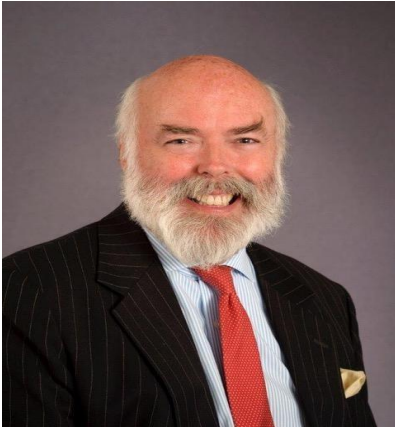
Saul joined the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust on 1 January 2026 as its new CEO and brings a wealth of experience from the conservation sector. His previous role was with the Woodland Trust, where he led the Conservation Outcomes team, shaping the organisation's conservation activity through advice, guidance and training, and supporting conservation projects across the UK. Prior to this, Saul worked more locally, managing Natural England's National Nature Reserves from the Wye Valley to the Wyre Forest, including the iconic Moccas Park National Nature Reserve in Herefordshire.



ELISSA SWINGLEHURST, Herefordshire Council

Cllr. Elissa Swinglehurst was first elected to represent Llangarron Ward on Herefordshire Council in 2015. She is currently the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Culture and the Environment. Elissa is also the Chair of the River Wye Nutrient Management Board.

DETAILS OF CONFERENCE CHAIRPEOPLE



LORD LISVANE KCB DL FLSW

Robert Lisvane was educated at Tonbridge School (scholar) and Lincoln College, Oxford (scholar, Judd Exhibitioner and Rhodes Research scholar). He was appointed an Assistant Clerk in the House of Commons in 1972, and served in every office of the House, becoming Clerk of the House and Chief Executive in 2011. He was knighted the following year. Upon retirement he received a peerage, and sits in the Lords as a Crossbencher, specialising in constitutional, legal, governance and rural issues. He was joint author of

several editions of the standard textbook, *How Parliament Works*, and has written two Parliamentary Miscellanies: *Order! Order!* and *Who Goes Home?* He chairs Hereford Cathedral's Fabric Advisory Committee, is a former Deputy Lieutenant for Herefordshire, an Honorary Fellow of Lincoln College Oxford, an Honorary Bencher of the Middle Temple, a Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales, and High Steward of the City of Hereford. He is a Past Master of the Skinners' Company.

PROF. CHARLES WATKINS

Professor Watkins is a speaker as well as taking the chair at the conference. His biography is given on p.3 above.

IAN GRAFTON

I Started my career (a long time ago) as a gardener with Birmingham City Council and then went back to college to train as a Countryside Ranger, before having a very happy 11 years or so as a Ranger in Jersey, Sussex and Northamptonshire County Council. I joined National Trust 26 years ago as Property Manager in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, and then 21 years ago came to Croft Castle. Over the last two decades I have managed all four of the Herefordshire Properties (Croft, Berrington, Weir and Brockhampton) as Operations Manager. My first love and passion is nature conservation, so to be able to work with such dedicated people at Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and in other like-minded organisations and communities who are committed to reversing the decline of habitats and species in Herefordshire is a real privilege. I am delighted to be able to play my part. Out of work, I am a keen gardener, folk singer, model maker and football fan, having supported Birmingham City all my life.





JAMES MARSDEN

James is a member of the Office for Environmental Protection 'College of Experts', member of the RSPB Conservation Committee, and former Chair of Herefordshire Climate and Nature Partnership Board and the Wye Catchment Partnership. James was a Board member of Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (2016-2022), Specialist Advisor to UK Parliament's Environmental Audit Committee (2016-2017), and Trustee and Board member of Herefordshire Wildlife Trust (2014-2017). Earlier in his career, James served as Director Land Management Strategy (2012-2014), Director Marine (2008-2012), and Director Policy (2006-2008) at Natural England; Area Manager (Gloucestershire, Herefordshire & Worcestershire) for English Nature (1991-1998); and as the Nature Conservancy Council's Upland Ecologist for England and Wales (1988-1991).

PETER CLAY

Peter runs the Brockhampton and Perrystone Estates. His focus is on sustainable farming and forestry practices. Although he read Agriculture at Harper Adams, Peter didn't return home to farm for nearly 20 years. His father's relative youth and desire to continue farming took Peter instead on a long and circular path. Having enjoyed a successful career in advertising, Peter founded the online Gardening Company, Crocus, in 2000. This fostered a teenage love of, and interest in, plants. It was also in 2000 that Peter began to create a meadow at Brockhampton on land that had been in permanent pasture, serving a Beef enterprise. Following an article he wrote on the meadow in *Gardens Illustrated* in 2024, which charted the gradual establishment of 8 native orchid species, Kew asked to do a 3-year research study on the meadow's orchids and their mycorrhizal hosts. This started in 2025. Peter's interest in meadows lead him and the Estate to become founding members of Herefordshire Meadows. Since 2016, the estate has worked with Caroline Hanks and her team to establish 8 different areas of wildflower meadows. In 2019, Peter worked with Forestry England to produce the Resilience Garden at the Chelsea Flower Show. The garden aimed to highlight the big climate and disease-based challenges facing our forests in the future. This won a Gold medal for designer Sarah Eberle and for Crocus and Peter who, in a career spanning 25 years, have won over 30 Gold medals at the Chelsea Flower Show. In 2027 Peter will be appointed His Majesty's High Sheriff for the county.



VICTORIA HEFFER

Victoria is CEO of the Radnorshire Wildlife Trust. Her details will be available soon.



JAMES HERVEY-BATHURST CBE

James Hervey-Bathurst was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, the College of Law, Guildford, and the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester. After a career in law, banking and executive recruitment, he took over full-time management of the Eastnor estate in 2000. Eastnor Park is not only an important natural asset but is also used for both music and mountain bike festivals and for daily public pedestrian access. It is an SSSI, with semi-ancient woodland and many veteran oaks, some in poor health. The Estate has contributed to a research project to identify the causes of

Acute Oak Decline and supported a project to reintroduce of the Pearl-Bordered Fritillary. James was President of the Historic Houses Association from 2004 to 2008, a Deputy Lieutenant for Herefordshire from 2008 and Vice Lord Lieutenant of Herefordshire from 2022 to 2024. He is a trustee at Longleat and Cirencester Park, Chairman of the Trustees of the Queenswood Coronation Fund, Herefordshire, and President of the Road Locomotive Society for 2026.

SAUL HERBERT

Saul is the new CEO of the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust as from January 2026. He is a speaker as well as a chair at the conference, and his biography is given on p. 11.

DAVID DANIELS

David is the Chair of trustees for Plantlife International and a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London. He has worked on humanitarian assistance and international development for over forty years, mainly in Africa and in South and South-East Asia. He has worked with NGOs, the UK government and the European Commission before setting up the MannionDaniels Group in 2008. David originally trained as a zoologist and has had a lifelong passion for natural history.



RICHARD POWELL OBE

Richard was born in Great Yarmouth and has always lived in Norfolk whilst working across the four UK countries and Europe. He is an environmental and Charity advisor, working on the climate change and sustainability agendas as well as Charity business planning and governance. He previously spent 24 years as Regional Director of the RSPB in the East of England. During this time, he oversaw the acquisition and landscape creation of over 10,000 ha of new nature reserves. Managing project teams and creating landscapes is his passion. Richard has also been Chair of the Regional Heritage Lottery Fund Committee for 9 years, a member of the Broads

Authority and Regional Forestry Advisory Committee, Chair of the Regional Sustainable Development Round Table: Market Towns Forum, and Vice Chair of Northumberland Water's Customer Challenge Group. Richard currently is Chair of the Regional Flood and Coastal Communities Committee for Anglian (Eastern), Chair of the Ancient Tree Forum UK and Patron of the Papillion Project in Norfolk. Richard was awarded an OBE for his work in the Environment and Sustainability in June 2005, is a Fellow of the Institute of Environmental Managers and Assessors and was awarded Chartered Environmentalist status by IEMA.



JESSE NORMAN

Jesse Norman has been the MP for Hereford and South Herefordshire since 2010. He is currently Shadow Leader of the House of Commons and serves on the House of Commons Defence Select Committee. In government, among other posts Jesse served as Financial Secretary to the Treasury from 2019-21, where he was responsible for management of the Covid furlough scheme and set up the UK Infrastructure Bank. As a backbencher, he was a member of the Treasury Select Committee and Chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee. He was made a Privy Counsellor in 2019. In Herefordshire,

Jesse has led a campaign to clean up the River Wye since 2020, helped to set up and run the Stronger Towns Fund and now the Pride in Place initiative, and co-founded Herefordshire's new university project, NMITE, which he chairs. Jesse is also the author of *Edmund Burke: Philosopher, Politician, Prophet* (Wm. Collins, 2013), *Adam Smith: What He Thought, and Why It Matters* (Allen Lane, 2018), and a historical novel, *The Winding Stair*. He was educated at Oxford (MA, Classics) and UCL (MPhil, PhD, Philosophy), where he also taught philosophy. He has been an Honorary Fellow at UCL and St Andrews, and a fellow of All Souls College, Oxford.

ANDREW McROBB

Andrew is CEO of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, Herefordshire (CPRE). His details will be available soon.

ANNABEL NARAYAN

Annabel is CEO of Action Oak. Her details will be available soon.

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