

## KTAT Annual Report for 24<sup>th</sup> June 2019

written by Gary Cowell, non-Trustee volunteer

Six Trustees were elected at the last AGM on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2018 – Angie Zelter (Secretary & Treasurer), Camilla Saunders, Jamie Ritchie, Kate Mclean, Annie England and Robert Todd.



After many years of sterling work for KTAT, founding Trustee, Company Secretary and Treasurer, Angie Zelter, stood down during the year. We owe her a huge debt of thanks for her support for KTAT and all the hard work she has put in over the years – both in the woods and behind the scenes. It was Angie whose vision set up KTAT and it was largely her vision that took it where it is today. To give an idea of her dedication, each year between 2015 and 2018 Angie contributed at least one fifth of all the volunteer hours contributed to KTAT – peaking in 2015 when she gave over one-third of all the hours contributed! We will miss her contribution as a Trustee but I am glad to report that she is still coming out to the woods. Annie England is now our Company Secretary and Mark Tait is now our non-Trustee Treasurer and we thank them both for taking on those roles.

We currently have 76 registered volunteers, 16 of whom have joined since the last AGM. Over the last 12 months we have removed 2 volunteers from our list, who have asked to be removed; we are shortly due to remove those who have not communicated with us over the last year. Approximately 26 volunteers are active in the woods and all of those volunteers are also members who support our work and can vote at the AGM. We send a big thank-you to all trustees, members and volunteers for their continuing enthusiasm and good company.

KTAT had another excellent year working in the woods and meeting new volunteers. We have held 37 woodland task days in the 12 months to the end of March 2019, which is down on the 42 we held with the support of a paid Co-ordinator the previous year, but compares well to the 33 and 19 task days held in each of the 2 years prior to that. We do not have task days in August and we lose task days due to bad weather or occasionally having insufficient volunteer numbers.

Our volunteers have now contributed well over 8,700 volunteer hours since KTAT began. The number of volunteer hours contributed to KTAT continues to increase, reaching 1,983 hours for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 - up from 1,415 hours in 2017-2018 and 831 hours in 2016-2017.

From planting, weeding, coppicing, thinning and felling, to processing firewood and producing hedging stakes and bean poles, we have made good progress in managing some of the nearby local woodlands, thus conserving and protecting wildlife as well as bringing the woods back into sustainable production. At the moment we are in the midst of distributing this year's allocation of 39 cubic metres of firewood that was cut and dried in the previous year - 26 member volunteers are in the process of collecting it. This is our highest recorded distribution of firewood, the 3 previous years being: 2018 – 37m<sup>3</sup>; 2017 - 13m<sup>3</sup>; 2016 – 24m<sup>3</sup>.

At the time of the last AGM, KTAT was awaiting the decision on a resubmitted bid for a large grant from Heritage Lottery Fund to continue and expand our work on a 3-year programme. Our application was to support a larger group of well-trained volunteers and to make KTAT more self-sufficient in terms of expertise and financially. The bid included having recognised experts train volunteers in biodiversity surveying and in making woodland products such as hurdles, charcoal, 3-legged stools and hazel baskets - products that would widen our appeal and could be sold by KTAT to fund our overheads. Those trained would then be able to embed and practice the skills learnt through expanded volunteering opportunities with KTAT. The project would also have involved a lot more outreach work and had the support of Knighton Primary School and local Scout and Guide groups.

Our resubmission was, unfortunately, also unsuccessful. Without the funding we have not been able to do all that we had planned and have only worked consistently at Castle Ring and Weir Cottage in the last year. I have continued much of the Co-ordinator role in a voluntary capacity and other volunteers have stepped in to keep as many task days going as possible.

One great success this year has been the increase in volunteers who are First Aid trained and volunteers who are qualified to use a chainsaw. KTAT successfully applied for training subsidies from the EU / Welsh Government funded Forestry Focused Future scheme but we would like to thank the trained volunteers for the donations they made to KTAT that allowed the training to take place. Nine volunteers attended various chainsaw courses and passed the assessments; twelve volunteers have achieved First Aid + Forestry qualifications. This will make our work safer and increase our work rate. It also means that task days are less dependent on certain qualified individuals attending in order to go ahead.

KTAT held two training courses in 2018-2019. The first was on Preventing, Identifying and Reporting Tree Diseases led by Barnaby Wilder of the Forestry Commission on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2018. This free training was well attended despite being on the same night as England played in the football World Cup semi-final. The second was a three-day training course on "*Introduction to Woodland Management*". This classroom and woodland based course was an important milestone for KTAT as it was our first "for-profit" training course. It was a great success making £329 profit which was shared equally between KTAT and Lightfoot – a local organisation that paid for the development of the course in 2017. This coming year we will be repeating the "*Introduction to Woodland Management*" course and running additional ones on hedge laying and, possibly, making a shave horse. These courses will earn an income for KTAT.

A brief summary of the work in each woodland:

### **Weir Cottage, near Knighton**

We have continued with our planned management of Weir cottage. No thinning was due to be carried out the winter of 2018-2019 but we will thin a coupe in January 2020. We have processed into logs the trees that were thinned in the winter of 2017-2018. The owners have continued selling our bean poles at their garden centre.

### **Samatha Centre, Llangunllo (Greenstreete)**

We were asked to manage the Greenstreete Wood on this site but were unable to do this as our Heritage Lottery Fund bid was unsuccessful. We have currently paused in our work at the Samatha Centre other than cutting cordwood arising from previous work.

### **Castle Ring, Beggar's Bush**

This is now the main focus of KTAT's work. The woodland has continued to provide a lot of firewood and the hedging stakes and bean poles that we are selling locally. We have now coppiced all the hazel in the first coupe and, at the request of the woodland owners, are heavily thinning the birch to allow in more light for the regenerating hazel and other species. The work rate here will now increase with additional chainsaw operators.

### **Knucklas Castle**

We were asked to manage the wood on this site but were unable to do this as our Heritage Lottery Fund bid was unsuccessful.

### **Conclusion**

This has shown that KTAT has developed and progressed over the last year. We have delivered a near-weekly task day programme, new volunteers are joining the organisation and we are managing woodlands. However, KTAT is still very dependant on a 'Co-ordinator' type role, paid or otherwise, to organise and lead task days and training, to do much of the administration and support the Trustees in their role. KTAT therefore needs to either raise the minimal funds to employ a co-ordinator or it needs to have a group of volunteers fulfilling the various parts of the co-ordinator role between them. This could be achieved through an expanded Board of Trustees, or possibly a management committee of non-Trustees. It is not healthy for an organisation to rely on so few individuals, so please stand up and offer yourselves for sacrifice at this AGM.