

National
Trust

Nature Haven News

Your autumn / winter update from National Trust Formby



© Image NT volunteer Andrew Ray

Longhorn legends moo-ve to Formby

This winter we're excited to be trialling cattle grazing to help restore the dune grasslands.

We're working in partnership with Lancashire Wildlife Trust and eight English longhorn cattle from their charming herd. The cattle will be on site in the Ravenmeols area from November to April 2026.

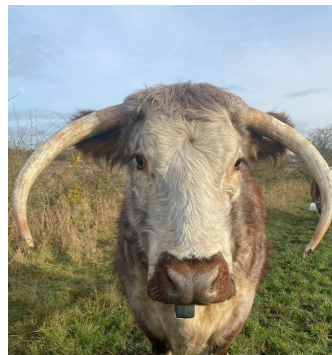
English longhorns are one of Britain's oldest established, native breeds. Often described as gentle giants, they are known for their calm and placid nature. Their resilience and ability to graze a wide range of vegetation make them ideal for conservation grazing. Hardy and adaptable, they thrive in the coastal climate and rugged dune landscape.

Having grazed nearby public areas such as Freshfield Dune Heath, the herd are used to being around people and dogs.

The cattle are trained to be safely contained using a virtual fencing system. Each animal wears a GPS collar that gently guides them with sound cues, allowing them to graze freely while staying within invisible boundaries. This means you are still welcome to wander where the cattle are grazing.

Here's our top tips for wandering in the cattle grazing area:

- ✓ Give the cattle plenty of space.
- ✓ Stay calm and quiet when passing.
- ✓ Do not approach or feed the cattle.
- ✓ Feel free to leave the path if cattle are on it.
- ✓ Keep dogs on a short lead as required by the Sefton Coast PSPO.
- ✓ If approached by cattle let go of your dog's lead.
- ✓ Follow the Countryside Code.



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Scan the QR code to see the live location of the cattle.

👁️ Look out for the information and safety signs around the cattle grazing area. You can also find out more about the benefits cattle grazing will bring to the dune grasslands at Formby and get answers to common questions on our website [click here](#).

Ranger round up



Every time you pay to park, scan your membership card, donate or give your time as a volunteer, you're supporting important conservation work at Formby's nature haven - thank you.

Creating safer spaces (image 3)

The rangers have carried out our annual Tree Safety Management inspections. This involves risk assessing trees for potential defects that could impact their stability. The woodlands are split into zones from high (e.g. near popular paths and seating areas) to low usage. Each zone is inspected at different frequencies dependent upon how well used it is. Tree safety inspections are also done after every storm.

Trees that need to have branches taken off or to be felled for safety reasons this winter have a spray paint mark put on the trunk.

The power of nature in action (image 1)

In September and October, the ranger team worked with our amazing regular volunteers to create brushwood fencing in the Victoria Road dune restoration area. We're delighted to report that it's already working by capturing windblown sand. This will help stabilise areas of the new dunes.

We're also excited to share that further signs of nature responding to our conservation efforts include new marram grass shoots starting to grow in the area.

With around 80,000 tonnes of rubble now removed from the dunes at Victoria Road a huge space, around the size of 4 football pitches, has been given back to nature. Thank you for giving the restoration zone time and space to evolve into a healthy dune habitat where rare wildlife can thrive.

Building bridges (image 2)

Our marvellous regular volunteers have been supporting the ranger team with major repairs to Wicks Lake bridge. Repairing older structures can be challenging, as the full extent of the work often only becomes clear once it's underway. We're sorry it's taken longer than expected but our aim is to open this much-loved spot before the end of December.

Restoring nature

We've been working to restore the natural balance of the dune grasslands and woodlands in the Ravenmeols and Lifeboat Road area. This has involved clearing dense patches of invasive grey poplar and thinning mature plantation pine trees to create space for native species to thrive.

Most of the trunks and brash have been chipped and recycled as biomass. In quieter woodland areas, some fallen timber has been left to create valuable dead wood habitats for wildlife.

The results may look stark at first, but over time nature will embrace the space and these changes will create healthier habitats where a much wider variety of wildlife, trees and shrubs can thrive.

Nature will do most of the restoration work, but we'll be lending a hand in the woodlands by planting around 2,500 sapling trees and shrubs in spring 2026, mainly in the areas where thinning has created enough light for these young trees to succeed.

Community Matters



Thank you for not lighting fires or BBQs and taking your litter home with you. Together we can keep Formby special for people and wildlife.

Balancing nature and access

In November we were delighted to welcome members of the Formby Access Support Group to the Victoria Road project site. The group, which includes local people with a range of access needs - from visual impairments and mobility challenges to cycling enthusiasts. Their input is helping us improve signage and strike the right balance between accessibility, protecting the wildlife that lives here, and the natural character of the site.

A life-saving gift (image 1)

Thanks to a kind donation from a local supporter, we now have two defibrillators. To help make sure they can quickly get to where they need to be they will be with our mobile team rather than in fixed locations. Our team is on site every day, and it's great to now have two defibrillators alongside the publicly accessible ones nearby. In a medical emergency, please call 999 first. Then, if you're able to, let the NT Formby team know.

Craft inspired by nature (image 2)

Our regular volunteers have been creating all kinds of woodland craft including besom broomsticks and reindeers. Each one unique and made using timber left over from our tree safety and woodland conservation work. Thank you to everyone who has made a donation for one - every penny raised helps us care for this special place.

We also recently worked together to host a craft session at Woodland's Primary School's lunch time "Calm Club", helping over 30 children take time out to get creative and connect with the natural world. They made their very own woodland critters using natural materials.

Talking Formby

This year, our Community Engagement Manager Laura has connected with over 1,700 people at 29 local events. Thank you to everyone who stopped by to chat - your support and feedback is really important.

Improving access for everyone (image 3)

Fleetwood Beach Wheelchairs have kindly donated another sand wheelchair, bringing our total to five available to borrow for free. The most recent chair includes extra features like a padded chest harness, headrest, and full recline option. A huge thank you to Fleetwood for donating three chairs in total this year. Visit our website to find out more and book a chair to help you enjoy this special place.

Winter warmers - crepes and coffee

Green Beach Coffee will be at Lifeboat Road car park throughout the winter bringing you delicious crepes, snacks, hot and cold drinks. Look out for the van at weekends and during the Christmas holidays. Check out their social media for more details.

Volunteer impact September to December

Our amazing regular volunteers have given 1,506.5 hours. Here's a snapshot of what we have achieved:

- ❖ 100m of path resurfacing
- ❖ 300m of brushwood fencing installed
- ❖ 45m of boardwalk and bridge repairs
- ❖ 3 natterjack pools maintained
- ❖ 20kg of pinecones collected for propagation

A natter with...

Justin Pearce - General Manager

How long have you worked at NT Formby?

My official start date is 1 January, but I've already been getting to know the properties, teams, landscapes and local communities I'll be working with.

What was your previous job?

I spent 12 years with the John Lewis Partnership running stores. A few people were surprised at the move, but the skills are surprisingly transferable. At their heart, both roles are about people, places, and creating meaningful experiences.

Describe your role at NT and more specifically Formby

I work with our local teams to care for NT places across the Liverpool City Region – from the Tudor splendour of Speke Hall, to the newly planted woodlands at Lunt, the coastal nature haven at Formby, and the mid-20th-century time capsules at Hardman House and the Beatles' childhood houses.

My role is about ensuring these sites receive the special care they need to protect their ecological and cultural value, while keeping them relevant, accessible, and enriching for everyone. Creating spaces where everyone can connect with nature and history is so important.

At Formby, my focus is on caring for the protected landscape and ensuring people and nature can thrive here for generations to come. I'm particularly excited about the Victoria Road conservation project and witnessing nature restore a huge area of rare dune habitat, as well as seeing people enjoy a safer, more natural space.

What are your aspirations for the future of Formby and the Liverpool City region properties?

Our mission can only be achieved by working in partnership with local communities and organisations with similar aspirations.



Together we can tackle issues like unequal access to green spaces, as well as celebrating the social history that makes Liverpool unique.

At Formby, the Victoria Road conservation project is a big step towards strengthening the landscape's resilience and creating an environment where wildlife and people can flourish side by side, today and in the future. I'm also committed to continuing our work with partners along the Sefton Coast to help manage the pressures that busy days at Formby bring to the local community.

What's your favourite spot to enjoy nature at Formby and why?

I love the contrast between the open coastal views and sheltered woods – it really highlights the site's diversity. From rare wildlife to shifting sands, Formby's dynamic landscape always has a way of showing you why it's so special and protected.

How would you describe NT Formby in 3 words?

Dynamic, restorative, inspiring.

What's your favourite National Trust place to visit (other than Formby of course)?

Marloes Sands in Pembrokeshire, a coastline both dramatic and restorative, something I see echoed at Formby.

Winter wildlife to spot

- ❖ Rare **red squirrels** are more active in January, chasing each other in the trees during mating rituals.
- ❖ Flashes of rich, green **holly** providing winter berries for birds to feast on.
- ❖ The sweet sound of **robins** with their rosy red breasts, perched in trees on crisp winter days.
- ❖ Take a wander along the shoreline for a spot of **beach combing** to see what you can find. Watch out for harmful bits and pieces too.

Blast from the past

We recently discovered an un-opened packet of crisps from the 1980's in the dunes! A fascinating find and striking reminder of how long litter lingers. Thank you for helping to protect this special place by taking home everything you bring.

