

Planning a woodland visit

Below is a list of some of the key preparation points committees typically consider when planning their annual programme of visits. There is also a basic woodland visit planning form in the Appendices which can be adapted to suit each Division's specific needs or tailored from visit to visit.

- Engagement of hosts – as early as late Summer/early Autumn of the year before the visit is due to take place, to ensure hosts and any other stakeholders are properly engaged and committed to a date.
- Involvement (if relevant) of local bodies or experts such as a local FC officer, Tree Wardens, Wildlife Trust, ecologist, archaeologist etc to broaden interest and promote interesting discussions.
- Risk assessments – an essential part of the planning process. A risk assessment should be completed when assessing the potential venue and repeated closer to the visit date to ensure that no additional risks have presented themselves. A risk assessment template is available from RFS HQ and an example is included in the Appendices of this document, item c).
- Accessibility – please consider whether the planned walk is inclusive towards those with mobility limitations and if possible, find ways to mitigate this in the planning process (e.g., can a support vehicle follow the group and pick up anyone that might be struggling)
- Parking – is there sufficient parking for member's vehicles? Is it safe (i.e., not by a very busy road)?
- Toilet facilities – if possible, please ensure that there is access to toilet facilities especially for all day meetings. Consider using Divisional Support fund to rent a portaloos or even a village hall or similarly inexpensive venue (if there is one nearby) which could also be used as the muster point or lunch / refreshments venue in case of bad weather.
- Safeguarding – check the policy for safeguarding of children - item d) in Appendices - and consider how any under 18s or vulnerable adults might be safeguarded.
- First Aid – it is useful to identify a designated First Aider that has received suitable First Aid training. This does not need to be a committee member; a host, a guide, or a Divisional member could volunteer. First Aid training is inexpensive and RFS HQ can give guidance on good training suppliers and typical costs.
- Biosecurity and COVID 19 measures - As an educational charity, the RFS must lead by example on the biosecurity measures recommended by the Forestry Commission (FC) and Defra to minimise the risk of spreading soil-borne tree infections. Clean boots are a first step! More information on Biosecurity and COVID 19 can be found on the RFS website [here](#) HQ can advise on where to purchase suitable disinfectant sprays for use if needed.
- Dogs policy – it is for individual Divisions to decide on their policy in relation to dogs and whether members can bring theirs to woodland visits. Not all members are keen on dogs and for larger events such as the Whole Society meeting, dogs are not permitted. If committees are open to the idea, the issue can potentially be controlled by stating dogs are by prior request only and must be kept on a lead at all times.
- Sponsorship of meetings – Divisions have successfully invited relevant organisations to sponsor meetings in the past, especially organisations that are corporate members of the RFS. If this is of interest, please contact HQ and we will look to connect you with a Divisional committee member with experience of this.

- Host visit certificate – notify HQ of the correct name for the visit certificate so that they can issue it in plenty of time for it to be despatched to the Divisional Chair for signature. HQ can advise on where to buy low cost wooden certificate frames if needed.
- Identify a committee member to write up the visit for the Divisional activity pages of QJF. For guidance on visit write-ups, see Section 8 (QJF).

To encourage good attendance:

- Notify members with plenty of notice, via email or post as preferred (see Section 4 Membership for more information about communication with members)
- Inform the Communications Officer Wendy Nekar at communications@rfs.org.uk if you would like a specific visit to be given extra publicity on RFS social media accounts – for example, If you've booked a particularly interesting speaker, or if are visiting a host venue rarely open to the public. Meetings can also be highlighted in the fortnightly e-news bulletin for similar reasons. Contact Dr John Jackson on condorito@hotmail.com
- Route planning and directions – members may need extra directions or maps if the location isn't easy to find or is known to baffle sat navs!
- Signage – put our RFS signs to help members if it would help them to find the meeting point.
- Remind members to bring lunch, bottles of water, flask of hot drink, waterproofs, or whatever they might be required for a particular visit.
- Let members know if there are any refreshments being provided by hosts. Free tea and cake can dramatically positive effect on meeting attendance!
- Remind members that woodland visits contribute towards CPD (Continuing Professional Development).

Things to take on the day:

Divisions have different practices to suit their local membership, but below is a very basic list of useful things to take on the day:

- Divisional PA unit (remember to charge it and bring spare batteries for the cordless mic!)
- Camera or good quality smartphone for photos (see Photography guide under Section 10).
- Signage to help members find the venue/where to park.
- Disinfectant spray for biosecurity and any other COVID 19 control materials.
- Name badges (HQ can advise on where to buy badges and badge infills cheaply if needed). If you have guests attending (i.e. non-members) it is often useful to give them a different type of badge to differentiate them, so that they can be welcomed (and encouraged to think about joining!).
- List of members due to attend for cap collection.
- First Aid kit.
- Framed visit certificate (and host gift if relevant).

On the day:

- Member engagement – welcomes and introductions, issue name badges, cap collection (if relevant), use PA units (remember to charge it and take spare batteries for the cordless mic)
- Health & Safety – make members aware of any risks; remind them not to attempt anything that might jeopardise their safety or that of others.
- Engage guests and try to sign up as new members (have membership forms on site!)

- Write a report for QJF
- Photography and consent – establish consent from members to be photographed and check whether the photographer would like crediting for any photos used by the RFS in the QJF or other publication.