

Trustees' Annual Report – The Melton and Oakham Waterways Society

The Melton and Oakham Waterways Society (MOWS) was formed in 1997 with the aim of restoring the Melton Navigation. It is a limited company and charity based in Melton Mowbray and supported via member subscriptions, book sales, donations and grant aid. Presently MOWS has around 150 subscribed members and around 2,000 Facebook members. The loss of members following the Covid years is being addressed but it remains a challenge to make up. Much of the societies' regular activities involve the upkeep of the River Eye, that loops through the town's Egerton and Wilton Parks, through work parties of volunteers. The River Eye becomes the river Wreake a mile or so downstream in the direction of Syston. The growth of reeds and grasses in both rivers was particularly bad last year, like many of the UK's waterways. MOWS brought back rowing boats to the River Eye in 2024, the first time for over 100 years that boats have been available for hire on the local river. Mid year, the society started preparations of the trip boat 'Wreake Voyager', for passenger trips along the river to the Eye Kettleby lock. The society was fortunate enough to win a grant of £20,000 from the UK SKPF community fund, also known as the Government's levelling up fund. This grant was awarded to the society via Melton Borough Council to clear the river for passage and to pay for the landing stage in Wilton Park. Further river work will continue in 2025/26, when the necessary wildlife surveys and other surveys required by the Environment Agency, have been completed. A hut on land leased by the society has been restored to create a ticket office for boat operations. MOWS has suffered spates of vandalism by adolescents over the year, a continuing set-back for a society that relies upon voluntary effort and cannot afford non budgeted expenditure to replace damaged or stolen equipment. The society has now increased security at its two riverside sites. The society won two further significant grants towards the end of 2024, one from the Severn Trent community fund of nearly £10,000 to replace an ageing work boat and another of around £20,000, for a Heritage Fund multi faceted project to raise the profile of the local waterways amongst the town's population and prospective visitors. The society plans to start trip boat operations along the River Eye in 2025. The Melton and Oakham Waterways Society (MOWS) charity does not need an external audit of its accounts