

Chairman's Report for year 2020/2021

We have all spent this year managing life and work under Covid 19 restrictions continuing from last year's total lockdown, and it has been no different for Quarrendon Leas. Some consequences have been unexpected, and have led to difficult challenges, such as the site continuing to be overwhelmed by visitors, putting pressure on farming, as well as on the archaeological and environmental assets of the site as a whole. The work programme has been affected by the knock on effect of both the restrictions and the weather on the timely availability of contractors

Inevitably the visitor pressure on the site has seen misuse by a minority of the public, as experienced in many beauty spots, wildlife reserves and places of historic interest across the country. For us, by far the most distressing has been the repetition of sheep worrying, one incident in particular from human agency resulting in several dead sheep and unborn lambs. To balance that, we hope that the therapeutic effect of accessible open space on the doorstep of so many people has supported the wellbeing of many in such difficult times, and made far more people aware of the value of the site. A positive outcome for us has been the increase in numbers of volunteers coming forward.

Without a doubt the work programme for the year has suffered, but due to continuing effort to optimise every opportunity our CEO Mike Woods has, in the main, been able to deliver all the essentials, although a small number of projects have been put on hold to be carried forward to 2021/22.

A further programme of pollarding Black Poplar took place, hedge management and managing the new tree and hedge planting including the shelter belt along the Western Link Road.

Funding was allocated to enable the programme of fence repairs and renewing farm gates to be continued. A process of inspecting and recording all structures has been created and it is hoped to use a similar process for individual trees and hedges both of which at the moment exist in hard copy only.

Further tree planting has taken place with Mike again working with Buckinghamshire Berkshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT), who are managing a section 106 scheme on behalf of Buckinghamshire Council for the loss of farmland birds due to the development of Berryfields.

The Trust was contacted by the Rural Payments Agency thanking us for taking part in the Countryside Stewardship (CS) scheme and for our contribution to the conservation and enhancement of the farmed environment over the previous 5 years, and offered an extension of 1 year to our present CS agreement due to expire in December 2020. The Trust has since been offered a 5 year mirror agreement, this will provide a continued stream of income and will assist with the loss of income from the Basic Payment Scheme and help bridge the gap between these two funding streams and the Environmental Land Management scheme ELM.

As CEO, Mike has taken part in a number interactive online seminars for farmers, foresters and land managers and it is our belief that the Trust is well placed to transition to ELM during the period 2021-2027 when direct payments will be phased out, moving away from a subsidy-based approach to a more business-like partnership. The Trust has also registered with ELM's Test and Trials to hopefully assist the process whilst at the same time learning more about it.

Buckinghamshire has been selected as one of 5 areas nationally to pilot the approach to producing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). And through the Natural Environment Partnership (NEP) of which the Trust is a member we will be closely involved.

The Trust has met with the team responsible for the Buckinghamshire Councils (BC) Garden Town initiative and in particular regarding a section of the Aylesbury Gardenway as part of the northern section goes through Quarrendon Leas. The Trust's Board have agreed to the route and several on site meetings have now taken place with BC and Greenways and Cycloroutes Ltd. The plans are now well developed and it is hoped, subject to planning, Environment Agency and Archaeology, that work may commence later in 2021 to be completed 2022.

The Trust applied for the Green Challenge Fund in April, a difficult and time consuming process. It is a joint bid with Groundwork South and would provide 10 Green Team jobs created for local unemployed residents, aged 16-24, in grounds maintenance and management. These will be recruited and trained and will have the opportunity to work towards City & Guilds qualifications in horticulture and gain a valuable 6-month paid work placement (funded by Kickstart) as they undertake a wide range of nature conservation and restoration activities at Quarrendon. Although this is an exciting prospect it is a challenge fund so no guarantee of success but as the bid document followed a HLF format we hope the work we have carried out may be suitable for a future bid to the HLF.

This year the Trust has succeeded in being regularly represented at the Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum, and thanks to endless form-filling remains in a reasonably strong financial position in a time of significant change.

Avril Davies

Chairman of the Trustees 1 July 2021

**Income and Expenditure Account
for the year ended 31st March 2021**

2020		2021	
£	£	£	£
INCOME			
5,010	Historic England		
16,183	RPA Farm payments	16,622	
16,773	Countryside stewardship	13,401	
-	Rural Development Agency		
1,073	Rents & wayleaves	1,073	
919	Other income / grants	505	
	39,958		31,601
EXPENDITURE			
11,307	Professional fees	12,000	
-	Site management	3,584	
-	Site security	388	
-	Countryside stewardship		
6,299	Conservation / restoration		
	IT related expenses	593	
-	Marketing & interpretation		
40	Maintenance & materials		
	Equipment & tools		
	Project expenditure	450	
127	Bank charges	170	
422	Insurance	697	
13	Companies House	13	
1,946	Miscellaneous	1,247	
	20,154		19,142
	19,804 Suplus / (deficit) for the year		12,459

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