

Annual Report

Friends of Combe Valley

October 2022 to September 2023



Friends of Combe Valley

Combe Valley Countryside Park
Café & Discovery Centre
Freshfields, Bexhill,
East Sussex, TN38 8FB
email: team@friendsofcombevalley.co.uk
website: <https://friendsofcombevalley.co.uk/>

correspondence to
William Ackroyd
501 Bexhill Road
St Leonards on Sea TN38 8AT
01424 539 73

Combe Valley website <http://combevalleycountrysidepark.com/>

Groundwork South website <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/hubs/south/>

Friends of Combe Valley is a Registered (in England) Charity Number: 1163581

Introduction

Another successful year for The Friends of Combe Valley, we have continued to connect people with nature by developing our ties with the local community including schools. We have progressed with improving the parks beautiful landscape to offer opportunities for good health and well being. Promoting park, people and nature.

Events

Coronation weekend

Following on the success of the Platinum Jubilee last year, we held a successful community lunch on May 7, with 30 people coming to enjoy cake and games in the sunshine. On Monday May 8 we joined the King's call for a volunteer day with a litter pick along the beach at Glyne Gap.



The Great Big Green Week

In June we held our second Great Big Green event, to increase awareness of the Park's role as a green space and its importance in developing a diverse and healthy environment, with emphasis on preventing further climate change. Around 90 participants attended taking part in a herbal health benefits, awareness walk, recycled paper pot making, various nature related crafts plus a large photographic exhibition of local nature. A small history of the park was also exhibited.



A number of local organisations assisted with Happy Harold Bus providing transport from Central Hastings. We enjoyed cakes, biscuits and pastries made by members of Friends of Combe Valley, Uzbek samosas and pancakes and plates of Syrian dolmas and sweets, made by refugees who wanted to make a contribution to the community involvement event.

Open day and showcase on September 16

The open day was a chance to welcome people to the Discovery Centre and the park generally, to show case all the work that we do and to encourage people to join the Friends and become volunteers in the park. Around 50 people attended and we gained 10 new members, with many offering to volunteer.



Nature Detectives

Emma Ramsden, who is employed by Groundwork South (GWS) on behalf of the Combe Valley Countryside Park CIC (the CIC) continued to provide discovery and



play sessions in the park for families. The Friends continue to provide support for these sessions with volunteers and they are an important way of connecting children with nature.

Cliff Willard /Pete Clarke have been working with local scouts and cubs building bird boxes, bug poles and other nature related projects.

Social Evenings

In January Wednesday social evenings began to give people connected to the park an opportunity to get together, to relax - natter, do craft work, play board games and whist drives. This has become a regular feature on the third Wednesday of the month and provides an informal venue for members and subscribers. Please check out Facebook for up to date social events.



Conservation work

Paths in the park

The backbone of our work in the park is helping to keep the paths clear and passable



supplementing the work of East Sussex County Council who have responsibility for the rights of way in the park and Rother DC and Hastings BC who own land in the park. The hard working volunteers eagerly respond to reports of paths being blocked by fallen trees as well as regular work parties clearing path rides as well as litter picks which unfortunately still includes picnic waste, drink cups and dog waste.



Community Garden

In 2021 we started re-wilding round the Discovery Centre, using funds from the Cooperative Community Fund to plant wild flower seeds and lay wild flower turfs on the mound to the north of the Discovery Centre, this has expanded into a project for a Community garden around the Discovery Centre. In the summer Hastings BC agreed to extend the area of land leased to the CIC up to the drainage ditches to the East and South of the Discovery Centre.



With money from the Green Recovery Grant received by the CIC and working with GWS and Annie Brown, a landscape designer who was employed under the grant, plans were drawn up for the area and some of this was achieved: in particular a compacted gravel (Hoggin) path beside the car park, giving safe access to the Discovery Centre for wheel chair users and pushchairs.



The mound beside the path has been turfed with wild flower turfs and six semi-mature birches have been planted.

The raised beds around the Discovery Centre have been cared for by volunteers and work is continuing to allow much of the area to become naturalised, with a mown area outside the Discovery Centre for events, and mown paths for access across the site.

With support of a Chalk Cliff Trust a grant we were able to paint two sides of the Discovery Centre, the third side was painted with funding from the CIC and a donor. The paintwork was completed by Wave Art, a community group now installed at the compound on the site of the old tram depot in the Bexhill Road.



Work on the area round the container store which was installed last year has been completed, establishing an exterior working area with fencing to define the area and the ground surfaced with wood chips. Two large composting bays have been constructed with pallets. A fixed circular picnic table with benches has been donated and installed and is used regularly by the friends working parties.

Signs for the park

The production of new signs for entrances to the park has been an ongoing project, finally this year the signs were sent for printing, with financial support from funding to the Friends from the Police and the CIC from the Green Recovery Fund. The installation of the signs will begin early next year by the Friends & volunteers.

Furniture



The long standing hope of building furniture for the park started this year, with two rustic benches beside the wild flower mound at the Discovery Centre, using wood from local woodlands. With the Tesco grant for outdoor furniture and under the guidance of Cliff Willard and Pete Clarke, two permanent picnic tables have been constructed and installed outside the centre. In a variation on the normal design for such tables, the tops have been extended at either end so they can be utilised by wheelchair users.

Warden service

The warden service has continued with the wardens walking the park and picking up on issues needing attention, most of which can then be dealt with by our volunteers. The presence of the wardens helps contribute to the peace of the park, with probably rather less incidents than in the past. Many park maps get distributed by the wardens increasing the awareness of its beauty, size and opportunities.

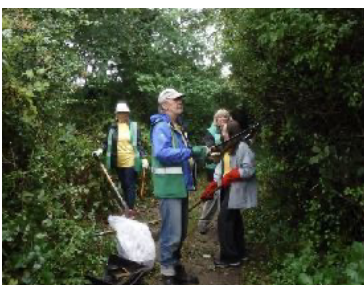
Volunteers

As has been reported many times the activities outlined in this report rely on volunteers and their contribution is substantial. The following are the totals, from our records and estimates of time spent on:



- i. Conservation work around 2100 hours, including the regular Thursday mornings and numerous other tasks around the park and helping the local scouts to build bird boxes and bug hotels.
- ii. Other events – around 500 hours over the three events set out above, the social evenings and events in partnership with GWS for the CIC
- iii. Wardens – around 950 hours over the year with 7 wardens until September.
- iv. Administration, including dealing with calls about security and planning issues around 1000 hours.

Overall around 4,500 hours during the year, with a comparatively small band of volunteers. We continue to welcome new volunteers and all their help is very much appreciated.



Path clearing, New Orchard tree planting and installation of a new kissing gate.

Recognition Awards

We were delighted that Cliff Willard's substantial contribution to our work was recognised with his award as a volunteer of the year by Rother Voluntary Action at their AGM in December 2022.

Members and Subscribers

Currently we have 91 online mail subscribers and 38 fully paid members. This includes 26 who have set up a regular annual payment which comes to £266 a year. We are very grateful for all these contributions to our work and would like to encourage more members to set up a regular payment through our webpage or by standing order.

Thank you, Thank You, Thank you to all our supporters.

Issues affecting the Park

Unfortunately the park continues to attract problems: there is some antisocial behaviour, unauthorised overnight campers and still too much litter is left behind, but more importantly a continued pressure as development proposals threaten the park.

Bulverhythe Recreation Ground:

HBC withdrew planning for 192 houses on lower flood plain.

Future plans - possible new reed beds linking Filsham reed bed and Glyne Gap marshes, Souther Water involved but this will be a slow process.

Pebsham Farm: Sold to a development company over a year ago. This information comes from the land registry, but no planning applications has been made to date.

Biffa Site: Sold by Biffa in early 2022 and leased to 1066 M/C training, a company who are providing a service to local people, particularly the young adults and most of the training work takes place away from the site so it has little impact on the rest of the park. We supported their planning application and expect to work with them in the future to increase sympathetic wilding of the surrounding area using local species.

The golf academy: the proposal for a driving range on the upper tier of the Bulverhythe Recreation Ground was reported last year. The developers apparently dropped that idea, but have now suggested that it should replace the Discovery Centre and take up the top half of the middle tier. They have also proposed as an inducement to Hastings BC that they would install an all weather football pitch, which in essence would be a plastic covering and flood lighting to enable it to be used all year round.



Apart from the loss of the facilities of the Centre and destruction of the work we the Friends with the CIC and GWS and others have done over the last few years, the proposal would be very damaging to the park and the environment generally. It does not appear to be in the interest of local residents. We hope that the whole scheme will not be proceeded with within the park.

Glyne Gap

RDC have refused permission for a drive through Starbucks cafe. We, along with local business and residents made strong objections.

Antisocial behaviour

Reference has already been made to the problems of litter in the park.



There was also an attempt by travellers to take over the field round the Discovery Centre as they did in the summer of 2022. Fortunately the presence of our chair, Pete Clarke at the time plus the increased security in the form of raised beds and posts deterred them and they went elsewhere.

Use of the park by trail bikers continues, however one such user was caught by the police and the bike was confiscated.

We hope that 1066 M/C training will help provide a place for the bikers to ride safely and without disturbing other users of the park.

Funding

Having had several successful grant applications, we are consolidating our work with the funds we have. A grant we did obtain this year was the Police Property Act Grant which assisted the operation of the successful Great Green Day. We also received contributions of food and drink for events from Tesco and Iceland.

A special thanks is due to Julie Willard, who for the last three years has run a plant sale from her home raising money for Friends of Combe Valley

Conclusion

Although there are many challenges ahead for the park, we believe that Friends of Combe Valley have provided a vital service in helping to make the park be better known, better used and in better condition. We thank our members, supporters, grant givers and all who attend our events allowing our open, caring community to grow.



Friends of Combe Valley

Registered Charity Number: 1163581

Trustees Annual Report and Financial Statements

For the year ended

30th September 2023

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FOR PERIOD ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER 2023

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**TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER 2023**

The committee of Friends of Combe Valley presents its annual report and financial statements for the year ended 30th September 2023

ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

Name of Charity:	Friends of Combe Valley
Principal Address:	501 Bexhill Road, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex TN38 8AT
Legal Status:	Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
Registered Charity Number:	1163581
Governing Document:	Constitution adopted 15/09/2015 Amended on 03/04/2019 Amended 23/02/2021
Trustees:	Peter Clarke (Chair) (re-appointed 06/12/2022) William Ackroyd (Treasurer) (appointed 18/12/2020) Christopher Dadswell (Vice Chair) (appointed 08/12/2021) Will Kemp (re-appointed 06/12/2022) Karl Beaney (re-appointed 06/12/2022) Cliff Willard (appointed 18/12/2020) Elise Liversedge (appointed 18/12/2020) Anna Sabin (appointed 08/12/2021) Emma Ramsden (appointed 08/12/2021) Virginia Vilela (appointed 08/12/2021) Stephanne Collins (appointed 08/12/2021) Joanna Brewerton (appointed 08/12/2021)
Bankers:	The Co-operative Bank
Independent Examiners:	Lorraine Brown Blue Ridge Accounting Services Ltd The Old Court House North Trade Road Battle East Sussex TN33 0EX

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER 2023

The trustees submit their annual report and financial statements for Friends of Combe Valley for the period ended 30th September 2023.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Friends of Combe Valley (FCV) has a committee of Trustees governed by a constitution adopted 19/09/2015, Amended 03/04/2019 and 23/02/2021. Day to day management of the Charity is vested in the Trustees, who are elected and co-opted under the terms of the constitution.

The Committee of Trustees shall have no less than three and no more than twelve members. Trustees are appointed on a 3-year rotational basis at the Annual General Meeting. The names of the Trustees are shown on page 2 of this document.

The method adopted for the recruitment and appointment of new trustees is contained within the constitution.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

The objects of FCV are to work within the Combe Haven Valley and in particular within the boundaries of the Combe Valley Countryside Park:

- a. To promote the conservation, protection, and improvement of the physical and natural environment, including biodiversity. In particular but not exclusively by, encouraging the public to use and enjoy the area and its fauna and flora.
- b. To advance the education of the public in the conservation, protection, and improvement of the physical and natural environment.

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The Trustees have considered their duty to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission, and in their opinion the enclosed report on the achievements and performance demonstrates that they have complied therewith.

BACKGROUND

FCV was registered as a charity with Trustees in 2015, it became inactive for a number of years, after which it was restructured in the Spring of 2019 and became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, a membership association with limited liability for its members.

In May 2019 FCV took over the running of the café at the Discovery Centre in the Combe Valley Countryside Park. The café closed in March 2020. It re-opened for nearly three months in the spring of 2022 but was forced to close because of the lack of volunteers. Currently it is open for special events.

The Combe Valley Countryside Park CIC is responsible for the management of the park and does that through Groundwork South CIC (GWS), who are their agents under a Service Level Agreement.

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER 2023 (Cont'd...)

ACHIEVEMENTS, PERFORMANCE AND FUTURE PLANS

FCV's work and activities have continued to expand. Membership have increased to 125, including both active members who are able to offer direct assistance with the work and informal members who offer support and assistance as and when they can.

This year it has done fewer fund-raising activities, instead consolidating the work being done with the benefit of existing funding.

It did receive a grant from the Police Property Act Fund for £500 used for the Great Big Green Walk event held on June 18.

Future Plans

1. Continue to develop the relationship with the Combe Valley Countryside Park CIC and Groundwork South CIC in expanding its work in the park.
2. To continue conservation work within the park, in conjunction with Combe Valley Countryside Park CIC and Groundwork South CIC.
3. Continue discussions on the future development of the park, to protect its environment and as appropriate enable access, working with the Combe Valley Countryside Park CIC and Groundwork South CIC.
4. More information is contained in our full Annual Report for the year.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Financial Position

FCV reported that the finances are in a stable and creditable condition.

Receipts in the year were £5,984 (2022 £11,999) and payments were £8,751 (2022 £16,754) resulting in a deficit of (£2,767) (2022 £4,755 deficit) for the year, the increase in payments being due to expenditure of grant income received in earlier years. The net fund reserve at 30th September 2023 totalled £6,999 (2022 £9,766), of which £3,559 are protected funds.

RISKS, POLICIES AND SAFEGUARDS

The Trustees have considered the major risks faced by the organisation to establish policies and systems to mitigate those risks.

RESERVES AND INVESTMENT POLICIES

In line with guidance by the Charity Commission, the trustees endeavour to build up its reserves to enable the charity to fulfil its objectives and financial plans.

**TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER 2023 (Cont'd...)**

This report was approved by the Board of Trustees on 5th Decem 2023 and signed
on its behalf by:

P. J. Clarke

Pete Clarke
Chair of the Committee of Trustees

William Ackroyd

William Ackroyd
Trustee and Treasurer

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF FRIENDS OF COMBE VALLEY CIO
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER 2023**

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of Friends of Combe Valley Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) for the year ended 30 September 2023.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act 2011, and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act 2011; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act

have not been met; or

2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: 

Lorraine Brown
Blue Ridge Accounting Services Ltd
The Old Court House
North Trade Road
Battle
East Sussex TN33 0EX

Date: 10/01/2024

Receipts and Payments account
For the year ended 30th September 2023

		Unrestricted	Restricted	2023	2022
		Funds	Funds	Total	Total
	Note	£	£	Funds	Funds
				£	£
RECEIPTS					
Grants	5		2,665	2,665	9,792
Café takings				-	184
Membership & donations		1,026		1,026	1,029
Centre hiring				-	-
Events		158		158	354
Income from CIC		1,991		1,991	640
Sundry/Misc income		145		145	-
Total Receipts		3,320	2,665	5,985	11,999
PAYMENTS					
Grant disbursements	5	519	7,380	7,899	5,451
Café expenditure				-	
Materials				-	423
volunteer expenses				-	-
Food		12	-	12	105
Hiring				-	-
Administrative expenditure:					
Misc expenses		100	-	100	-
Stationery				-	-
Postage				-	2
Telephone				-	-
Professional fees	6	350	-	350	225
Insurance		157	-	157	157
Training				-	-
Bank charges		29	-	29	-
Travel				-	-
Activities		79	-	79	533
CIC costs				-	-
Equipment purchased		125	-	125	9,810
Total Payments		1,371	7,380	8,751	16,754
Net receipts/(payments)		1,949	(4,715)	(2,766)	(4,755)
Funds at start of this period		1,492	8,274	9,766	14,521
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	-
Funds at end of this period		3,441	3,559	7,000	9,766

**Statement of assets and liabilities
at 30th September 2023**


	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2023 Total Funds £	2022 Total Funds £
Cash funds				
Bank account	2,996	3,559	6,555	9,428
Cash in hand	420	-	420	313
Cash float at café	25	-	25	25
Total cash funds	3,441	3,559	7,000	9,766

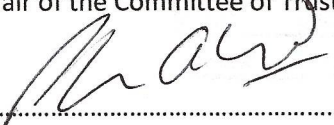
	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2023 Total Funds £	2022 Total Funds £
Other monetary assets				
Debts owed to the charity				
Groundworks CIC	-	-	-	2,031

	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost	Current value
Assets retained for the charity's own use			
Equipment / Tools	Various	11,995	10,932

	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due	When due
Current Liabilities			
Debts owed by the charity	-	-	-

These financial statements are approved by the Board of Trustees on 5th Dec 2023
and signed on its behalf by:


.....
Pete Clarke
Chair of the Committee of Trustees


.....
William Ackroyd
Trustee and Treasurer

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER 2023

1. Receipts and Payments accounts

Receipts and payments accounts are statements that summarise the movement of cash into and out of the organisation during the financial year. In this context "cash" includes cash equivalents, for example, bank accounts where cash can be readily withdrawn to pay for debts as they become due.

2. Trustees' remuneration and benefits

Trustees received no remuneration or benefits in this period.

Trustees' expenses

During the year reimbursable expenses totalling £3,483 were paid to 4 Trustees for out of pocket expenses relating to purchases made on the Charity's behalf.

3. Staff Costs

The Charity had no staff costs in the year.

4. Previous period comparison

The financial year end of the charity is 30th September 2023. The previous period's figures have been included for comparison.

5. Restricted fund

These are funds given to the charity, subject to specific restrictions set by the donor, but still within the general objects of the charity.

Grants	2023			
	Bfwd	Incoming	Outgoing	Bal cfwd
Police grant1 - wardens	1,000	0	-1,000	0
Police grant 2 - school	294	0	-294	0
Police grant 3 - wardens	0	0	0	0
Police grant 4- wardens	0	0	0	0
Police grant 5 - wardens	0	0	0	0
Hastings Direct	2,220	0	-635	1,585
Coop Community Fund	0	0	0	0
Rother District Council	0	0	0	0
Art Project	400	0	0	400
Beach Hut Project	509	2,165	-2,287	387
Bexhill Town Council	1,000	0	0	1,000
Tesco Community Grant	400	0	-400	0
Great Big Green Week	0	500	-500	0
Chalk Cliff CIC	2,451	0	-2,264	187
Total	8,274	2,665	-7,380	3,559

**NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER 2023**

6. Governance Costs

Independent Examination fee for year-end accounts 2023 £350; (2022 £350).

7. Assets retained for the charity's own use

	Equipment/Tools £
COST	
Bfwd at 1st October 2022	11,995
Additions	-
At 30th September 2023	11,995
REDUCTION IN VALUE	
Bfwd at 1st October 2022	(1,063)
Charge for the year	(3,998)
At 30th September 2023	(5,061)
CURRENT VALUE	
At 30th September 2023	6,934
At 30th September 2022	10,932

