

Report for Charity Commission Letcombe Brook Project

Registered Charity 1172111

01 April 2024 – 31 March 2025

Address

c/o Vale & Downland Museum
Church Street
Wantage
Oxfordshire
OX12 8BL

Names of Charity Trustees

Kiera Bentley, Chair
Anthony Harker
Julian Taylor-Gadd
Mike Stead

Type of governing document: Constitution

Type of Organisation: Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Trustee Selection Methods: Appointed by Trustees

Additional Governance Information:

Local concerns for the health of the Letcombe Brook led to the formation of the Letcombe Brook Project in 2003. Initially the Project was funded by the Environment Agency, the Vale of White Horse DC and the Grove and Wantage Councils and these bodies provided representatives of a Steering Group to manage the Project. Subsequently the Environment Agency stopped funding the LBP but remained on the Steering Group.

Later Both Letcombe and Hanney Councils joined the Project as funders with seats on the Steering Group.

The LBP was remodelled as a CIO in 2017 whilst retaining the Steering Group to advise and maintain local Community links.

All Trustees are provided with LBP Policies on appointment and subsequently all take part in the development and approval of modified or additional Policies, Procedures and Project Officer Work Programmes.

Objectives and Activities

The objects of the charity as set out in the governing document are as follows:

1. To promote for the benefit of the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment of the Letcombe Brook catchment , in particular but not exclusively by promoting biological diversity.
2. To advance the education of the public in the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment of the Letcombe Brook catchment.

Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit in relation to these objects

Introduction

This has been a busy year for the Letcombe Brook Project. We have monitored species, removed invasive plants, trained and worked with volunteers and landowners to enhance and protect the brook, helped the public to enjoy the brook and surrounding areas as well as worked with wider stakeholders to reduce flood risk.

Enhancing and Protecting the Brook

We have monitored biodiversity and worked to improve it over the last year by:

- Carrying out practical habitat management work, including reducing over-shading and bramble/nettle cover– our volunteer group has grown to around 16 active members and has met 19 times throughout this period, equating to over £3,500 in-kind support.
- Removed over 50 bags of litter from the brook and its corridor, including regular litter picking on VWHDC land
- Monitoring and control of invasive species in the brook corridor, including Himalayan Balsam, skunk cabbage, monkeyflower and American mink
- Completing surveys of water voles as part of BBOWT's Water Vole project, and coordinating a new proposal to reintroduce water voles into the upper catchment, where water voles were present until 2018
- Coordinating and recruiting volunteers in riverfly monitoring, enabling us to monitor water quality and pollution incidents
- Reporting five incidents of pollution or debris dams to the Environment Agency and Thames Water for their attention, and clearing a further three debris dams ourselves
- Working in partnership with Thames21 to establish a new water quality monitoring scheme on the Letcombe Brook, recording phosphate and nitrate levels as well as turbidity
- Liaising with Thames Water on the proposed reservoir scheme, identifying opportunities for habitat enhancement, should the scheme go ahead
- Engaging with 38 riparian landowners to discuss encouraging biodiversity on their patch
- Liaising with staff at VWHDC to discuss the future management of Willow Walk nature reserve, where we hope to take on a more active role.

- Working closely with the Environment Agency to identify opportunities for habitat enhancement and restoration of the chalk stream, including applying for funding from their grants scheme.

Helping People to enjoy the brook

We have organized and attended several community outreach events in the last year to encourage people to visit and enjoy the brook, reaching well over 150 people in total including:

- Health & Well-being event for local doctors' surgeries in Wantage in April
- Public engagement event at Grove in May
- Talk on the Letcombe Brook at the Vale & Downland Museum in June
- Family Day at Williams F1 in July
- Guided walk and river creatures day at Willow Walk in July, in partnership with the Vale & Downland Museum

We held two sessions at Charlton primary school teaching their Year 4 classes about healthy rivers, and ran four outdoor education sessions at Willow Walk nature reserve for Charlton, Stockham and Wantage Primary Academy primary schools, reaching around 120 children in total, teaching them about chalk streams, associated wildlife and water resources.

All in all, we have worked very hard in partnership with the community to protect and enhance the brook and its corridor, help people to enjoy the brook and ensure that flood risk is mitigated where possible.

Financial Stability

We have also worked to ensure that we have sufficient ongoing income to continue our activities and have been successful to some extent in diversifying our funding base. We will continue to explore the potential for securing additional funds from new sources to enable us to step up the work we are able to do to protect the brook.

Public Benefit Statement

The Trustees are aware of the definition of public benefit as laid down by the charity commission and are confident that all of the activities detailed above fall under those guidelines.

Summary of the main achievements of the charity during the year

We have improved the biodiversity of the brook and its catchment through co-ordinating active groups of volunteers to steward the flora and fauna in and around the brook.

We have also continued our commitment to outreach work to local schools and community groups to educate local people on how best to look after the brook for generations to come.

In addition, we have made progress liaising with riparian landowners to encourage environmentally sustainable practices on their land, as well as working with the Environment Agency to explore the potential for adding in bypass channels to improve fish passage around some of the obstacles in the brook.

We have also worked with and trained volunteers on water quality monitoring, encouraging people to report excess sewage discharge and incidents of pollution to the appropriate channels.

We hope to increase our involvement in the local community in coming years.

Charity's reserve policy:

We aim to have reserves which cover three months of the current running costs together with a nominal sum for fixed costs and insurance, communications and consumables.

Additional Information:

The majority of our funding has traditionally come from the local district council and the local parish councils, with some additional support from trusts and foundations. We are fortunate in having the ongoing financial support of the Williams F1, as the brook flows through their land.

Receipts and Payments Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025

	General unrestricted	Designated unrestricted	Restricted	Total 2025	Total 2024	Notes
	£	£	£	£	£	
Income						
Donations (Inc. Gift Aid tax recovered)	16,410					
Grants	30,300		13,750			
Other operating activities						
Bank interest	812					
	47,523		13,750	61,273	56,689	
Expenditure						
Project costs	31,105		5,985			
Fundraising	3,150					
Other expenses	1,885					Accountants, Insurance, Subscription, Training, Website
	36,140		5,985	42,124	57,672	
Surplus (Deficit) for the year	11,383		7,765	19,149	(983)	
Fund balances at 31 March 2024	1,288	-	29,366	30,654	31,638	
Surplus (Deficit) for the year	11,383	-	7,765	19,149	(983)	
Fund balances at 31 March 2025	12,671	-	37,131	49,803	30,655	
Represented by:						
Cash at Bank - current account	12,672	15,424	-	28,096	9,760	
Cash at Bank - savings account	-	15,457	6,250	21,707	20,895	
Total	12,672	30,881	6,250	49,803	30,655	

TOTAL in Designated/Restricted Balance as at 31/3/25
37,131

Donor	Category	Remaining	Des/Rest
EA	Dandridges Mill Fish Bypass	0	Restricted
Thames Water	Childrey Brook Project	6,250	Restricted
Stephen Brindle	Miscellaneous Projects	20,854	Designated
<i>Previous years</i>	Miscellaneous Projects	10,027	Designated
		37,131	
		TOTALS	
		6,250	Restricted
		30,881	Designated
		37,131	

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Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of the Letcombe Brook Project

I report on the accounts for the year ended 31st March 2025 which are set out on the attached pages.

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and Independent Examiner

As trustees of the charity, trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. They consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed. It is my responsibility to

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

Basis of Independent Examiner's Statement

My examination was conducted in accordance with the 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 treasurer concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in a full audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matters have come to my attention which give me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements

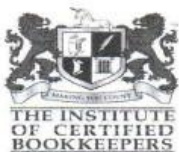
- to keep accounting records in accordance with s.130 of the 2011 Act; or
- to prepare accounts which accord with these accounting records have not been met.

Independent Examiner

Christine Lycett-Still
MICB PMDip



3rd August 2025



Company Registration: 08300333
Registered Office: Jesters, Tothill, Burghclere, Newbury RG20 9ED
Practice No. 23938

Declaration:

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature: *Kiera Bentley*

Full Name: *KIERA ALEXANDRA BENTLEY*

Position: *CHAIR*

Date: *22/01/2026*