

Wessex Waterways Restoration Trust

Report and Accounts

Year ended 31 March 2023

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## Introduction

Since before the application to register Wessex Waterways as a charity, volunteers who have continued to work with us were working on sections of the former canal in Foxham and at Dauntsey Lock in Wiltshire. An extension of about 100m to our area of work was agreed with a Trustee of Wilts & Berks Canal Trust in 2021 so the sections of the canal within our care and maintenance at the start of April 2023 had a combined length of 4520m (2.8 miles). We have kept the towpath clear, the towpath hedge trimmed, and the canal bank trimmed on those sections, to the best of our ability with the resources we have, to the end of March 2023 and will continue to do so. There is a short section at Dauntsey Lock where we have not kept the towpath completely clear to full width under a short-term arrangement reached with our neighbours and the landowner to discourage public access along the towpath for the time being. We do expect and intend that the canal towpath will become fully accessible to the public in the coming years.

We received a communication from the Charity Commission in the months prior to the publication of this Annual Report, that one of our already-submitted Annual Reports did not give much mention of the activities of our charity. Our previous annual reports have not included the relevant statistics to demonstrate the scale of our activities in the way that has become the norm for voluntary organisations. We have been recording hours worked by our volunteers since the WBCT stopped treating those hours as part of its mission. The total value has been calculated using the rates published by the National Lottery for the different grades of volunteer work. The actual numbers will be greater than is quoted below as it is not possible to capture and record all the hours spent by our members, trustees, and our other friends, supporting our work.

Description	Quantity	Units
Hours worked by volunteers up to the end of March 2023	7007	hours
Hours worked by volunteers translated to cash value	£61,882	pounds sterling

## **Chair's Narrative**

Wessex Waterways came into being from a constructive response to a decision made by the long-established Wilts & Berks Canal Trust. We see ourselves as a companion organisation working in a complementary and non-competitive way, and we communicated that posture to the then Trustees of Wilts & Berks Canal Trust almost immediately when the news reached us that the regulator (the Charity Commission) had approved our application. That was the moment when Wessex Waterways Restoration Trust was born.

The annual report for year end March 2023 is the first time that our founder chair has had a direct hand in producing the formal report for publication. He was unable to stand for re-election as a Trustee at the first AGM following formation, and several subsequent annual reports have been produced by others who have not taken the opportunity to put on record what Wessex Waterways exists to do and what it has done. We have a clear charitable objective which an officer of the Charity Commission helped us to write as part of the processing of our application. We also have the great benefit of having adopted a model form constitution provided by the Charity Commission with input from many experienced people within charities across the vast range of charitable activity in England and Wales. The 'Association' model form constitution for a Charitable Incorporated Organisation gives clear steps to take to handle issues and situations that can arise – and are probably to be expected in the early years as a new organisation finds its feet and establishes its path forwards.

In the months after we published the annual report for year ended March 2022, we received a criticism that our annual report should provide more coverage of our activities. That comment could be applied to several reports that have been produced in the years since our first annual report which was for the period to the end of March 2017. This annual report is therefore being taken as an opportunity to tell the wider world what we have been doing and why, across all the areas where we are able to contribute to the restoration, including necessary ongoing maintenance, of the Wilts & Berks Canal.

In the early period after formation, we expected to be able to also contribute to the maintenance and restoration of a section of the North Wilts Canal but the land agent there opted to work with Latton Basin Restoration on a 'probably not for navigation' maintenance regime. The charitable objective of Wessex Waterways is very clear that we are to focus our efforts on restoration for operation as a navigation, so Latton Basin Restoration is now a distinct charity and Wessex Waterways is currently limited to working on the line of the main line Wilts & Berks Canal. We are constrained by our stated charitable objective to work only on sections of the canal which form part of the projected through route for navigation.

As a parting gift when the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust decided that it would not continue to support the work at Latton Basin, the telecommunications cabin it had placed there as a storage hut was handed over to Wessex Waterways. The cabin remains on the site for the use of Latton Basin Restoration on a continuing basis. It was relevant in the discussions that resulted in the decision to form Wessex Waterways that there is a protected through route for the canals to connect the Kennet and Avon Canal near Semington with the River Thames near Abingdon and with a connection to the Cotswold Canals near Latton.

The origins of Wessex Waterways can be traced back to the work undertaken by the Wilts & Berks Canal Amenity Group (which subsequently adopted the name Wilts & Berks Canal Trust) in the early 1990s when a team came together for a day each week to restore structures on the canal at Foxham in Wiltshire. Back then, the W&BCAG also had a formal arrangement covering work on the line of the canal at Lyneham, extending over several of the former lock chambers there, and had started, but stopped, work there.

In the early 1990s two members of Wilts & Berks Canal Amenity Group based in Calne had become aware of an opportunity to buy a long section of the former canal either side of the B4069 at Dauntsey Lock. There were plans for W&BCAG to restore the former canal workers cottages there as a tourist attraction and educational resource, but the plans foundered and it was one of those two W&BCAG members, specifically Rachael Banyard, who put arrangements together to buy the relevant land and to restore the cottages for sale. This made it possible for the local work party team of W&BCAG to work on that land to restore the structures supported by other volunteers from along the canal and from the wider waterways movement. The trustees of the WBCT did agree that this project came under their auspices, though an unusual feature was that the landowner was also directly involved in the leadership of the work and funded the materials and the hire of plant needed.

A key moment in the story of canal restoration in the Foxham/Lyneham area occurred during a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in May 2012 when Chris Coyle, then a Vice Chair of WBCT, explained to Luke Walker that he was taking steps to regularise the suite of restoration projects which were then underway within WBCT. Chris had read a Charity Commission publication containing guidance about the need for conservation charities to be able to show meaningful public benefit. Out of his consideration of the matter came a Policy Document, and the work WBCT had been doing at Foxham and at Dauntsey did not comply. The site signage was removed and the work party team, under the leadership of Gordon Williams, agreed directly with the landowners to continue their maintenance and vegetation clearance work. One of the farmers agreed to extend the benefit of his insurance to cover the team's work. Thus, the work continued on these sites, but outside the compass of WBCT.

By late in 2016 news had reached Luke of the appointment of a new chair at WBCT with a stated intention of supporting and accelerating the restoration of the canal by volunteers. Luke had conversations with him, and with the newly appointed Chief Executive, and had expected to become part of a new group of WBCT officers helping to initiate and deliver more restoration work on the line of the canal. Luke was also hopeful that the Policy regarding worksites would be reviewed in the light of the full extent of the charitable objective of WBCT (pure conservation isn't the whole story). He expected that, after some consideration of the issues, WBCT would resume the work at Foxham and elsewhere. This was not to be, and Luke decided early in 2017 to resign his life membership of WBCT.

Luke felt that the only constructive option available to him to prevent the sites that WBCT had abandoned falling into dereliction was to apply to form a new charity to work alongside WBCT. He was not confident that the application would be approved and therefore it remained a closely guarded secret for many months. Two former members of the Inland Waterways Association Restoration Committee (of which Luke had been a member) agreed to add their signatures to the application and to serve as the foundation trustees (three being the minimum number to form a new charity). The application resulted in WWRT's formation in September 2017.

In the months while Vaughan Welch and Luke were awaiting the decision of the Charity Commission regarding the application, and feeling very uncertain that the application would be accepted, only two significant steps taken. These were to arrange for a graphics design company to design a logo and provide the materials for headed stationery and business cards to be printed if that became necessary; and to take control of several relevant internet domain names so that a website could be established if Wessex Waterways Restoration Trust did come into being.

In the first few months after the Charity Commission gave their approval for Wessex Waterways to form, Geraint Coles, who had been one of the foundation trustees, was very seriously ill. Vaughan Welch (the other foundation trustee) persuaded Roger Holmes to come in to make up the number and enable WWRT to function, allowing Geraint's resignation to be accepted. Roger had previously been a trustee of Inland Waterways Association and had been their nominated trustee to the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust for some years. During the first eighteen months of operation there were several physical meetings of friends Luke knew in WBCT who he felt would be likely to support and work within the new charity. From these people, the first few membership applications were received.

Also, in that start-up period, a bank account was opened and WWRT became a Corporate Member of Inland Waterways Association and joined their insurance arrangements. An application for £10,000 was made to Awards for All for funding to buy publicity kit and equipment for restoration volunteers to use. The application was a success, but in the weeks following receipt of the grant, the first AGM was held but Luke was unable to attend – and thus unable to be elected to continue to serve as a trustee. The incoming trustees did not encourage Luke to continue to participate by attending their meetings, nor offer to co-opt him as a trustee (which would have been possible).

The Annual Report for the year to the end of March 2021 gives an account of how the board of trustees that was elected in February 2019 dwindled to a single trustee, and two new trustees were quickly brought in to enable WWRT to continue to operate.

Some of our highlights and achievements since then are mentioned below:

We launched a new name for our irregular newsletter, The Oriel, in April 2021 to achieve a very clear break from the style and some of the content from the previous Wessex Waterways publication. At that time, we promised that a new website would be launched – the previous one having been taken ‘off air’ when several of the previous board of trustees resigned. Since it was launched, this website has been updated as we’ve had capacity to do so, with significant items of news. Each issue of The Oriel is published there some days after it’s been sent out to our members and to a short list of friends of Wessex Waterways.

Wessex Waterways has use of some of the plant maintenance facilities which were established by WBCT on Rachael Banyard’s land at Dauntsey Lock. In the years since then, two second-hand 20-foot ISO shipping containers have been deployed alongside The Toybox, and the electrical power has been re-configured to provide power and light in those shipping containers and in a small tin storage shed.

From day one, maintenance of the canal land previously worked on by WBCT was a priority for Wessex Waterways. We also wanted to bring back into operation the team of structures restoration volunteers who had achieved so much during most of three decades starting in the early 1990s. There are two target projects available, but preparations including a technical solution and raising the funding take time. A very early work party once the restrictions on movement to control the spread of Covid were relaxed was a one-person session to clear the vegetation from around Oriel Bridge at Foxham so that the volunteer civil engineer who would design and draw the solution for us could inspect the damage to the historic structure.

It was possible to bring Luke back onto the board of Trustees in May 2021, a decision which was endorsed by the members at the next Members Meeting, which was the AGM in February 2022.

By July 2021 we were gathering the necessary building materials – sharp sand, ballast, and cement - to put a quoin stone in position at the head of the chamber of Dauntsey Lock. This task had been waiting for many years for a large piece of stone to become available. We were grateful – the stone needed was given to us. Following on from that, our team was setting sections of paving slab on edge in concrete and filling the area behind the top of the lock chamber wall with brindle paving. This gave a much smarter and safer lock chamber edge along the section of towpath that serves as a driveway for our neighbours living at Wharf House. We’re grateful to them for their patience with us and for the friendly exchanges we have with them on the occasions when our paths cross.

We were as quick as we could be in putting up signs on the sites where supportive landowners allow us access to work. Our signs quote our website address so we couldn't put any up before the website went back onto the air - a complete overhaul done for us by a professional company. Since then, we've been grateful to Alan Mynard, who's a member of the Buckingham Canal Society and manages their website, for doing updates to our website.

Our website has the very useful facility of being able to receive incoming donations – and behind that button to click on was Virgin Money Giving who provided a service to us and many other charities where they collect the payment from the donor's bank account, do the Gift Aid declaration for us, and put the money into the relevant charity's bank account. There are other providers of this service, and more recently the arrangement has been with Charities Aid Foundation which has a specific objective of helping other charities with fundraising. Helping us in this way is thus very firmly in their charitable remit.

In August 2021 WWRT booked a space and took the publicity marquee to participate at the Festival of Water arranged by the Inland Waterways Association near Worcester. Following on from our attendance at that festival we have continued to make efforts to draw in some help from people in IWA. At the end of March 2023 this area of activity has yet to deliver the intended outcome and is therefore ongoing. More on this subject will be included in a future annual report.

The two trustees who had joined the board in November 2021 live some miles from Wiltshire. Matt lives near Crawley and Mike in Hinckley in Leicestershire. One thing that was widely learned about when movement was restricted to control the spread of Covid was a web-based product called Zoom. This brings video conferencing within the reach of anyone with an internet connection. Our trustees' meetings have all been on Zoom since October 2020, apart from just two occasions. In August 2021 we published a photo of all four Trustees in one place. This was a demonstration that the constraints introduced to stop the spread of Covid had been relaxed. Perhaps predictably we met at Rachael's home where the canal is a few steps away from her front door.

The work party has continued on a very regular weekly basis with a stable membership. The usual pattern in 2021 to 2023 has been Luke turning up early on a Saturday morning to get tools into place for a prompt start when others arrive. There are often useful things that can be done with a head torch and the lights in the plant maintenance area before the sun is up enough to give adequate illumination for a work party on the line of the canal.

Wessex Waterways values the strong connections it has, and the availability of support from, the Inland Waterways Association and its Waterway Recovery Group (WRG). The BITM regional group of WRG has visited Dauntsey Lock and worked with us on several occasions in recent years – always pushing our work forward much faster than we could with our regular small team.

Since the late 1990s there has been a formal arrangement to enable the relevant local authorities to connect with the waterway restoration charity and to further the project to bring the Wilts & Berks Canal back as a valuable public amenity. Initially this organisation was named the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, but this was soon changed and is now the Wiltshire Swindon and Oxfordshire Canal Partnership. The name Wilts & Berks Canal Trust was taken over when it became available by what was initially formed as the Wilts & Berks Canal Amenity Group.

In the initial year of operation of Wessex Waterways, opening a dialogue with the Partnership was one of many pressing priorities on the one trustee who lived (fairly) locally. Luke met with Ken Oliver at Chippenham so that Ken was aware of the formation and purpose of Wessex Waterways. It was not until after the present board came together in November 2020, and various urgent issues had been resolved, that the dialogue was resumed. Luke delivered a presentation to a meeting of the members of the Partnership on Microsoft Teams early in December 2021 and initially it appeared that Wessex Waterways would be accepted into membership.

There was then a hiatus where someone whose identity we do not know chose to inform the Partnership that they had raised a concern against Wessex Waterways with the Charity Commission. It is also evident that this individual was not well-informed about the nature of waterways restoration. In the UK canals do not generate wealth for those that own the corridor of land occupied by the canal. The value enhancement for landowners that arises when a canal is restored goes to those who own the land alongside the canal – improved land drainage and improved views come to the land beside the canal. Thus, there was no real case against Wessex Waterways, but trustees' time was spent in discussions and in correspondence arising until the decision was taken to complete the acceptance of Wessex Waterways into the Partnership – this took fifteen more months to achieve.

The actions of that individual also put Wiltshire Council into an awkward position, well outside their remit as a local authority, of having to decide on a matter of correct charitable governance. Very clearly the issue was one for the Charity Commission, as the UK Government's team of relevant experts, to investigate and understand and determine. We hope that the individual concerned appreciates that they have shown a lack of wisdom and have done damage to a charitable organisation and to a worthwhile charitable cause.

Our story will continue in our next Annual Report, for the period starting 1 April 2023.



The Trustees present their report and accounts for the year ended 31 March 2022.

### **Principal Activities**

The charity's principal activities during the year continued to be, working with volunteers, to further necessary maintenance work and to advance construction and restoration for a navigable waterway between the Kennet and Avon Canal and the River Thames and the Cotswold Canals.

### **Trustees**

The following persons served as trustees during the year:

Rachael Banyard (re-elected for a further term of three years on 22 January 2022)

Matthew Carpenter (re-elected for a further term of three years on 22 January 2022)

Michael Handford (re-elected for a further term of three years on 23 March 2023)

Luke Walker (ratified by members at AGM on 22 January 2022 following co-option in May 2021)



CHARITY COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Wessex Waterways Restoration Trust

No (if any)

1174586

## Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from	Period start date	To	Period end date
	01/04/22		31/03/23

### Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
<b>A1 Receipts</b>					
Donations and Memberships	3,854	10	-	3,864	2,802
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total (Gross income for AR)</b>	3,854	10	-	3,864	2,802
<b>A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).</b>					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total receipts</b>	3,854	10	-	3,864	2,802
<b>A3 Payments</b>					
Insurance	632.8	-	-	633	532
IWA Membership	54	-	-	54	54
Webhosting	270	-	-	270	-
Marketing	-	-	-	-	50
Deprecoiation	-	-	-	-	1,356
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	957	-	-	957	1,992
<b>A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)</b>					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total payments</b>	957	-	-	957	1,992
<b>Net of receipts/(payments)</b>	2,897	10	-	2,907	810
<b>A5 Transfers between funds</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>A6 Cash funds last year end</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Cash funds this year end</b>	2,897	10	-	2,907	810



No (if any)
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1174586

**CC16a**

<b>For the period from</b>	Period start date 01/04/22	<b>To</b>	Period end date 31/03/23
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## Categories

## Details

**Restricted  
funds  
to nearest £**

**Endowment  
funds  
to nearest £**

## B1 Cash funds

Bank	2,897	10	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
<b>Total cash funds</b>	<b>2,897</b>	<b>10</b>	

(agree balances with receipts and payments  
account(s))

OK

OK

OK

## Details

**Restricted funds to nearest £**

**Endowment funds**  
to nearest £

## B2 Other monetary assets

[illegible]

## Details

**Cost (optional)**

Current value  
(optional)

### B3 Investment assets

	Accounting	-	(Optional)
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

## Details

**Cost (optional)**

**Current value  
(optional)**

#### B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use

[illegible]

## Details

Amount due  
(optional)

**When due**  
(optional)

## B5 Liabilities

Creditors	Liability related	(Optional)	(Optional)
	1075	-	
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	

Signed by one or two trustees on  
behalf of all the trustees

Signature

Print Name

Date of approval

Arthur Tappan

Luke Walker

25/01/2024