

Wessex Waterways Restoration Trust

Report and Accounts

Year ended 31 March 2024

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Introduction

The Trustees present their report and accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024

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)

Description

Hours worked by volunteers during the year	1807.5	hours
Hours worked by volunteers translated to cash value	£19578	pounds sterling

Chair's Narrative

During the year we have continued our work towards a restored navigable canal through Wiltshire, Swindon and Oxfordshire. We have been represented at most meetings of the Wiltshire Swindon and Oxfordshire Canal Partnership, where we report on the work we are doing on the ground.

Early in the year, we learned from National Lottery Awards for All England that the relevant documentation regarding the £10,000 award they made early in 2019 had not been provided by the trustees who were in post at the relevant time. The necessary evidence could not be found in the records, and we were required to repay about 75% of that grant. This was to put us onto a sound footing to be able to submit a new application for funds to buy a tractor for towpath maintenance. We did contact those individuals who had resigned in the intervening period but found no willingness to put right the damage they had caused. An application was submitted to Awards For All towards the end of the year – a decision was awaited at that time.

Two 20-foot-long shipping containers were ordered and delivered to land to which we have access, by consent of the landowner with whom we have continuing dialogue. We were helped by a local farmer with his telehandler to move the containers from the delivery vehicle to the required locations. Since then, we have adapted them for use for storage and as a plant repair workshop.

We contacted a local committee which distributes funds locally from a Solar Energy Park near to one of our worksites. We found they were not able to help us with costs of materials for work on structures for the canal, but we were successful in our application to them for funds to buy machinery for restoration work and for our plant repair facility.

We were invited to attend a meeting of our local Parish Council to deliver a presentation and to respond to questions. We were very pleased that, on completion of our contribution to that meeting, one of the councillors proposed a cash donation to support our work. This was agreed unanimously, and the cheque arrived in the post very promptly afterwards. We are very grateful for this support, and for this demonstration that the work we do is seen as a benefit for our local community.

Another outcome from our dialogue with our local parish council was the opportunity to provide material for publication in the (online) parish magazine. We were required, for the first article, to explain the background to Wessex Waterways (rather than Wilts & Berks Canal Trust) doing the ongoing maintenance. The article was published after having received comments from WBCT and from our contact with the Cotswold Canals Trust and having made requested revisions to our initial draft.

One of our members, who runs a local plumbing business, offered to help us with his drone. The outcome of this is that our website now includes aerial video of all the sections of the canal where we are working – including those sections where we are not able to grant public access.

The volunteers of Waterway Recovery Group regional team, BITM, have visited us on occasions, for weekends and additional days, and given valuable help in the repair of a spillway where root damage since it was built had weakened the structure. At the time of writing the repairs remain sound – a much stronger arrangement than had been constructed initially.

Our work parties with local volunteers have continued for a day each week with very few interruptions. Most of our resources are utilised keeping up with vegetation management on sections of the canal totalling 3.5 miles. These are sections cleared by Wilts & Berks Canal Trust but which they are now unwilling to maintain. We hope that our having taken over responsibility for these sections helps to maintain public respect for the project – at least in our local area.

The demountable van body which served as a plant repair workshop for many years on the land at Dauntsey was left with us when Wilts & Berks Canal Trust removed other items they owned. We have continued our efforts to arrange to replace the original door, but for much of the year it was not possible to gain access to the items stored inside.

We have continued our efforts to attract more volunteers, particularly to help with the leadership, including making posts to a website aimed specifically at people willing to volunteer as trustees. We have yet to succeed on this route but will continue with our presence on this website.

A wooden pedestrian lift bridge across the canal at Foxham suffered the unwelcome attention of vandals during the summer. This bridge carries a well-used public footpath over the canal so, in addition to the report to the local police, we made our local parish council and Wiltshire Council aware. We sourced the relevant materials and made a sound repair to the structure within a few weeks of the incident. We learned that Wiltshire Council has a continuing obligation to fund repairs to public crossings of the canal, such as this one, under the Act of Abandonment. We submitted an invoice supported by receipts for the materials we had used and were pleased to receive the appropriate re-imburement. This incident prompted a response among the local community at Foxham, with posters displayed making the point that the local population valued the amenity we are providing. This support is welcome.

An excavator was damaged at the same time as the bridge. The repairs were done and, after some years of not being run, the engine was successfully started. Work to bring the machine back to a mobile and usable state was being arranged at the end of the year.

At Dauntsey Lock, by permission of the landowner with whom we have regular dialogue, we tackled the narrow strip of land along the back of the lock chamber wall on the towpath side. Paving slabs and block paving have been placed in position and resulting in a significant visual improvement. Following this, a short article was written and a photo provided for publication in the Waterway Recovery Group national magazine 'Navvies'.

During the year our local unitary authority, Wiltshire Council, held a consultation regarding their plan for the period to 2038. We were pleased to note that the route protection for the canal through their area is to remain in place. We took the opportunity to participate in this consultation – warmly welcoming this and stressing how vital it is for our continuing work programme towards the successful re-connection of a navigable waterway linking the River Thames, the Kennet & Avon Canal and the Cotswold Canals.

We held our AGM for the year ended 31 March 2023 in January after our annual report for that period had been produced and distributed to our members.

As has become a regular annual event, our Chair participated in, and successfully completed, the Thames Bridges Trek in September. This provides an opportunity for friends, relatives and members of Wessex Waterways Restoration Trust to sponsor him. The outcome was a significant element of our income for the year.

A meeting was arranged at County Hall in Trowbridge with the Chair of Partnership, the Chair of WBCT and the Wiltshire Council Projects Officer. Our Chair delivered a presentation to encourage discussion of ideas for the future and opportunities for more co-operation.

Our Chair has had dialogue with senior people within the Inland Waterways Association and now has regular meetings (online using Zoom or in-person) with a senior IWA contact from their South East region. This individual also attends meetings of the trustee board of WBCT.

During the year we continued to prepare to start our first significant structure task which will involve partial dismantling and re-building of a farm access bridge over the canal. A particular issue to resolve was the supply of the necessary materials to protect the existing steel beams (not part of the historic structure) which we will re-use. Removal of the beams is an early task in our programme of works, and we intend to remove the rust and paint the beams so they are ready to place in position when the brickwork of the abutments has been repaired.

We remain grateful to our local friends and supporters, to our members, and to the many suppliers and others who support us in so many ways. We remain confident that our work is appreciated and valued – that spirit of goodwill is a great asset for us and a great encouragement to us.



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
	01/04/23		31/03/24

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 £
A1 Receipts					
Donations and Memberships	4962		-	4,962	3,854
Grants		4,000	-	4,000	-
Refund of repairs to footbridge	586	-	-	586	-
Trustees loans	-	2,900	-	2,900	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	5,548	6,900	-	12,448	3,854
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	5,548	6,900	-	12,448	3,854
A3 Payments					
Insurance	-	-	-	-	633
IWA Membership	69	-	-	69	54
Webhosting	270	-	-	270	270
Marketing	-	-	-	-	-
Surveys	900	-	-	900	-
Refund to Awards for All	-	7,706	-	7,706	-
Accommodation	300	-	-	300	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	1,539	7,706	-	9,245	957
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
Purchase of assets	-	6,352	-	6,352	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	6,352	-	6,352	-
Total payments	1,539	14,058	-	15,597	957
Net of receipts/(payments)	4,009	-7,158	-	-3,149	2,897
A5 Transfers between funds	-7,158	7,158	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	6,112	-	-	6,112	-
Cash funds this year end	2,963	-0	-	2,963	2,897



Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

CC16a

For the period from	Period start date	To	Period end date
	01/04/23		31/03/24

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Bank	2,963		-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	2,963	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets			-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets		Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use		Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
	Tangible assets	6352	-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities		Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
	Creditors	2900	-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
		Luke Walker	31/01/2025