

The River Wey Trust

A Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Registered No. 1177871
Passfield Lodge, Passfield, Liphook GU30 7RU
secretary@riverweytrust.org.uk



Annual Public Meeting 1 November 2023

Canada Room Millenium Hall, Liphook

Minutes

Attendees: A Glass, A Thornhill, A Pope, A&J Gustard, A Williams, J Wood, R Miller, P Harris, E Bird, P Jordan, K Kavanagh, D Curnow-Ford, S Cameron, J&M Carne, R Belcher, S Bleach, J Kirby, J Smith

Apologies: A Young, M Croucher

Chair:

Once again, we have had a very busy year. My thanks as always go to our very able Trustees, including our Secretary, who give so much of their time and effort to ensuring that our stretch of the River Wey is maintained and tested on a constant basis, to ensure that it is safe, and that the water quality is as good as it can be. They are joined by a willing band of volunteers who help them in this task, and who have done so for many years since the River Wey Trust's foundation, and without whom the maintenance of the river would be much more difficult.

In addition to our efforts on the river, there has been outreach to, and liaison with different groups, to whom we have given our support, and with whom we interact. Alistair Young has also taken his augmented reality sandbox far and wide this year, which has also helped to advertise the Trust, and all that it stands for.

Of the parcels of land that the Trust owns, Allees meadow in Bramshott is perhaps the jewel, and it is where a lot of time is spent generally maintaining the meadow. It had been hoped that in 2023, the land would be used for the grazing of sheep, but that intention has fallen by the wayside for the time being. We are very grateful to Bramshott and Liphook Parish Council for their grant in kind, that has enabled us to help maintain the area more easily.

We very much enjoyed seeing so many people at our annual Pimm's Party, which was held this year in the lovely setting of The Old Mill in Bramshott, by kind permission of Janet and Ian Airey. We had a new musical entertainer, Jack Trinder, who gave us a variety of music on that hot and sunny day while picnics were eaten, and strawberries and cream consumed.

2024 marks the 40th Anniversary of the founding of The River Wey Trust by Adrian Bird, and the evolution of the Trust from the foundations that he built. We are so grateful to Adrian for his foresight in ensuring the continuation of the preservation of the river, the history of the rural life of Bramshott and Liphook, and the keen architectural eye that he cast over the heritage of this lovely place. The strong family tie remains, with daughter Emma a very active Trustee. We will celebrate all that Adrian achieved at our Pimm's Party by the River, next year.

2022 Annual Public Meeting Minutes:

It was noted that these Minutes erroneously contained the minutes of the September 2022 Executive Sub-Committee at Appendix 2, rather than the year's formal executive report. The Minutes were unanimously approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting, with no matters arising.

Treasurer:

A synopsis of the accounts was presented. A copy of the audited accounts is at Appendix 1.

It had been noted that Allees Meadow was not included as an asset, but this had been remedied in the 2023-24 accounts as a £1 nominal asset

The treasurer explained that online banking had been agreed with Lloyds Bank, a PayPal account had been set up to allow payment of expenses and receipt of income, and a card reader account had been established to allow cashless receipt of subscriptions, sales and sundries.

Executive Report:

S Bleach, Facilitator of the Executive Sub-Committee, presented a comprehensive summary of the Report, a copy of which is at Appendix 2.

He brought to attendees' attention the recent advances in water testing the trust is carrying out, its adoption by other organisations along the river and the centralisation of results which are so important in restricting riverine pollution by sewage disposal companies. He outlined the Trust's active involvement with several other organisations in a Water Vole Recovery Programme along the River Wey; the first phase involves the eradication of the alien invasive American Mink which has decimated native water voles as well as predated on many other native species. Three 'smart' mink traps are to be positioned between Liphook and Frensham, overseen by volunteers.

The recent expansion of the Trust's activities and the number of volunteers has led to the need for grants from external sources: it is appreciated that fund-raising is a time-consuming specialist field and the Trust is attempting to recruit a volunteer to take on this important task.

Any Other Business:

There was no further business

Presentation – "Water Meadows":

R Miller presented an illustrated discussion of the history and workings of water meadows to increase hay production, concentrating especially on those fed by the southern branch of the River Wey in the Liphook area. He highlighted the conservation work that had been initiated and overseen by Adrian Bird, the founder of the River Wey Trust, which has led to the restoration of the river in many places.

Appendix 1

The River Wey Trust

Statement of Accounts for the year ended 30th April 2023

	Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Total Funds	2022
Income				
Subscriptions	1,195		1,195	865
Gift Aid (note 1)	0		0	108
Grants received		9,350	9,350	50
Internal allocation		1,000	1,000	0
Donations	250		250	0
Sale of merchandise	20		20	15
Fees received	0		0	352
Fund raising activity	1,898		1,898	0
Interest received	799		799	30
	<u>4,162</u>	<u>10,350</u>	<u>14,512</u>	<u>1,420</u>

Expenditure

Administration	391		391	456
Donation	18		18	0
Fund raising activity	826		826	0
Repairs, maintenance & projects	2,380		2,380	1,223
Water testing		2,088	2,088	0
Internal allocation	1,000		1,000	0
	<u>4,615</u>	<u>2,088</u>	<u>6,703</u>	<u>1,679</u>
Net income/expenditure	<u>-453</u>	<u>8,262</u>	<u>7,809</u>	<u>-259</u>

Balance Sheet as at 30th April 2023

Fixed Assets (note 2)

Current Assets		<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Cash book account		13,597	5787
CCLA Deposit account		<u>39,000</u>	<u>39000</u>
		<u>52,597</u>	<u>44,787</u>
		<u>52,598</u>	<u>44,788</u>
Represented by			
Unrestricted Funds		39,144	39647
Designated Funds		<u>13,453</u>	<u>5141</u>
		<u>52,597</u>	<u>44,788</u>

Notes:

1. Gift Aid claims for 2020/21 to 2022/23 are being made.

2. This is the nominal value of land acquired. The true value is considered to be too immaterial to incur the cost of a

Appendix 2

Executive Sub-committee report for the APM – November 2023

Introduction

The pattern of a successful and exciting time for the Trust, that was established last year, has continued this year. The high level of activity has been maintained and awareness of the Trust has been increased. Work and kick-testing at Allees Meadow has continued throughout the year; the water-testing initiative has expanded; the RWT and

the enhanced reality sandbox have been presented at a large number of events; many new contacts in the river protection and conservation arena have been made; and an exciting Water Vole recovery project has just begun. Although several projects that started last year have not come to fruition overall the Trust's activity levels have increased and its reputation has been broadened and enhanced. Hopefully, we are continuing to protect the future and longevity of the Trust.

Activities during the year

Allees Meadow:

- Four work parties have been held this year. A temporary bridge was installed over the water carriers at the Tunbridge Lane end of the site, there has been significant tree and debris clearance along the bank of the river and work has started on clearing the upper water carrier.
- The BLPC has approved a grant-in-kind of four-man days per year for this year and the following three years. This resource will be used for fallen tree and scrub clearance and grass cutting. The Trust would like to thank both the Parish Council and their ground works team, for their assistance.
- Last year, the trustees agreed to spend up to £5,000 over two years, on maintenance of the meadow. £800 was spent last year and a further £480 has been spent so far this year on clearing and 'chipping' the brash from the fallen trees.
- The trustees are considering several new projects at the meadow. These include completing the clearance of the upper carrier and exposing the remains of the sluice, completing the clearance of all the remaining scrub and improving the surface of the parking area. Funding opportunities from local councils will be explored. Hopefully the trust will be able to combine these funds with those of the Trust, to complete this work.
- Three new information signs have been installed at the meadow, to provide some background to the history of the meadow and other explanatory information.
- A 'mink print' trap has been installed on the river. This has revealed the presence of mink at the meadow.
- The project to permit the grazing of sheep on the meadow, that began last year, has not come to fruition. The legal arrangements were put in place, but the farmer appears to be no longer interested in progressing the project. For the future, a consortium of sheep farmers (to reduce fencing costs) has been mooted. This will be considered once the clearance work at the meadow, has been completed.

Griggs Green:

- The negotiations with one of the homeowners at Griggs Farm Court, regarding the granting of an easement for access over land owned by the Trust, have continued throughout the year. A draft planning application was submitted to the trustees, and this was subsequently amended to take into account our concerns. Also, agreement on the amount to be paid for granting the easement has been agreed. The homeowner has recently submitted a formal planning application to EHDC and the outcome is awaited.

Land at Radford Bridge:

- As last year, there has been no progress or communication regarding the proposed development by Green Construct (Liphook) Ltd.
- The Trust is becoming increasingly concerned about the expansion and potential spread of Japanese Knotweed on this site. The Trust has written to the owners about our concerns, but has not received a reply. The trustees discussed this issue at their meeting in October. It was noted that eradicating the knotweed is likely to cost several tens of thousands of pounds. Accordingly, the trustees agreed that: (1) the RWT should not consider taking ownership of the land unless the knotweed infestation has been completely cleared (2) the financial reserve previously maintained for improving the land (should it come into RWT ownership) should be reduced to £10,000 (3) the Trust should consider how the balance of the funds previously reserved, can be utilised for improvements at Allees Meadow and other projects.
- The Trust has continued to communicate with Thames Water and Damian Hinds MP, regarding the condition of the suspended sewage pipe on the site. Thames Water have still not visited the site to assess the problem, and have suggested that they need the land owner's permission to do so. As far as we are aware, they, like the trust, have received no response to attempts at communicating with the land owners. The trustee representing Hampshire County Council has recently contacted Thames Water directly on this matter.

Fish Protection project at Pitt Farm:

- Last year, the Trust was investigating a project proposal for the supply and planting of suitable trees and saplings at Pitt Farm in Frensham. The objective was to provide tree cover on the banks of the Wey, thereby enhancing fish protection. After further investigation, it was confirmed that it would not be practical to provide effective fencing to stop the cows that are kept in the field, from eating and destroying any new trees and saplings. Therefore, the trustees agreed not to proceed with this project.

Kick-testing:

- The Trust continues to perform monthly kick-tests at Allees Meadow. All the tests have produced positive results with the level of invertebrates exceeding the minimum acceptable levels. Many new 'friends' have attended these sessions and have joined the RWT as a result.

Water quality testing:

- The water quality testing programme has again proved to be one of the most exciting developments of the year. The number of testing volunteers and the number of testing sites has greatly expanded. In addition, the protocols and equipment used by the RWT (developed by Water Rangers in Canada) have been adopted by organisations operating beyond the southern branch of the Wey, and this has improved awareness of, and the reputation of the Trust.

- Godalming Town Council provided a grant of £7,850 to the RWT to enable it to establish a testing hub and to fund work that will allow for the combining of results along the Wey catchment. The hub has been established, additional local sponsorship has been obtained, and testing at numerous sites has begun. Additionally, web development has taken place to provide data and demonstrate upstream and downstream comparisons at various points on the river. Although this work is outside the Trust's traditional geographical area of interest, it is in the Wey catchment. It has enabled the Trust to spread the word about water quality testing.

- As evidence of this, the Trust has received interest from groups in Bordon, Alton and Weybridge, who are keen to learn more about water quality testing.

- Additionally, Haslemere Town Council provided a grant of £2,500 to enable the RWT to establish a testing hub in Haslemere, which is now up and running.

- Working with Zero Carbon Guildford, the Trust is investigating setting-up an E.coli test lab in conjunction with Surrey University, which would be accessible to all the testers in the catchment. A fund raising 'River Run' in September raised £1,750 to start funding this initiative.

- The RWT's work on water quality testing has led to the acceptance of the RWT's methodology right across the country and has raised the profile of the Trust. Our trustee Kat Kavanagh (CEO of Water Rangers) has been asked to facilitate a seminar on the subject in Coventry and to speak at the Rivers Trust conference in November. Our thanks go to Kat and Water Rangers for all the work they have been doing on water quality testing on behalf of the RWT.

Water Vole Recovery Programme:

- The RWT, in association with the National Trust's South Downs West team, Surrey Wildlife Trust, the Haslemere Biodiversity Group, the Deadwater Valley Trust and others, has agreed to participate in a water vole recovery programme in the River Wey catchment.

- This follows a successful similar scheme in East Anglia, where the majority of invasive alien North American mink have been eradicated, allowing natural regeneration of the water vole population, in addition to reducing other wild life predation. Special 'smart' traps are used, to allow the humane despatch of mink and the release of other species.

- The programme will initially concentrate on the south branch of the River Wey. Work has recently started with the installation of several mink traps in Haslemere. The programme is planned to spread along the whole of the Wey and to link with a similar programme covering Greater London.

- The trustees confirmed a decision of the Executive Sub-committee that the Trust should take part in the first phase of the programme, at a budgeted cost of £1,500. Three mink traps will be operated at Allee's Meadow, Spreakley in Frensham, and Mellow Farm in Dockenfield.

Public Events:

The RWT has been represented at more than thirty public events this year. This is largely due to efforts trustee Alistair Young who has presented the 'augmented reality sandbox', together with details about the Trust's activities, to local schools, public fairs, scout groups and at many other events. In addition, presentations have been made at the Oxford University Natural History Museum, the Royal Institution and the Henley Rowing Museum.

- The Trust intends to investigate whether it would be practical to acquire a suitable vehicle for demonstrating the sandbox and invertebrate sampling at public events, in the future.
- The sandbox was presented throughout the summer school holidays at Dapdune Wharf in Guildford. The RWT gazebo, containing the sandbox and a sample of invertebrates, appeared on a prominent site at the National Trust's open day at Dapdune Wharf and was attended by several hundred people, including many enthusiastic children.
- These presentations have raised the awareness of the RWT, resulted in the recruitment of new 'friends' and have raised funds for the Trust through donations.

Other matters:

- The Trust continues to send a representative to the steering group meetings of the catchment-based Wey Landscape Partnership (WLP). This enables us to see what the larger organisations are doing and provides exposure to new initiatives and ideas related to the river. There has been considerable interest in the Trust's water quality testing programme, from other members of the partnership. Three trustees attended the WLP annual event in Woking on 30th October, which provided an opportunity to network with other groups concerned about the River Wey.
- The WLP has asked the Trust to assist in the coordination of water quality testing in the catchment and will begin working with the South East Rivers Trust in January, as part of their Water Quality Monitoring group.
- The Trust continues to monitor local planning applications, commenting where relevant. No new proposals, requiring comment from the Trust, have arisen this year.
- The number of 'friends' of the Trust has continued to increase. Payment of subscriptions by direct debit has been introduced and 'gift aid' receipts are being followed up.
- The Trust has decided to recruit a volunteer fund-raising coordinator with the objective of matching the Trust's requirements for project funding with the many funding opportunities that are available.
- The Trust has recently introduced a 'Conflicts of Interest' policy for all trustees, to improve governance and bring our procedures in line with best practice.
- Finally (again!) 'friends' are reminded that the trust has an excellent website. This is being continuously updated and contains lots of helpful information about the trust and its activities. The website can be found at www.riverweytrust.org.uk

Future Plans

- the proposed projects at Allees Meadow will be progressed as quickly as possible, hopefully before spring next year, and additional funding will be sought.
- in the longer term, the development plan for Allees Meadow including a riverside pathway will be pursued
- working parties will be organised at the meadow as and when necessary
- in addition to the projects at Allees Meadow, other new projects using existing RWT funds will be investigated and combined with outside funding, where possible
- the Trust will continue to negotiate with the homeowner regarding the request for an easement over the Trust's land at Griggs Green
- monthly kick-testing will be continued at Allees Meadow
- the Trust will aim to build on the success of this year by continuing to work on the water testing project, not only on the south branch of the River Wey, but also in conjunction with other groups outside the Southern Wey catchment, and the networking opportunities that result will be followed up
- the Trust will participate in the Water Vole recovery programme by installing and operating three mink traps on the river and will report all results to the relevant parties
- the augmented reality sandbox will be demonstrated and will be used to promote the Trust and its activities (and hopefully raise funds)
- the Trust will recruit a volunteer fund-raising coordinator
- the Trust will continue to seek to expand its membership.