



THE BYTHAMS WOODLAND TRUST
(Registered Charity 1182600)
CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

Introduction

I am very pleased to introduce the twentieth Chairman's Report for the Bythams Woodland Trust (BWT).

Constitution

There have been no changes to our constitution. We remain a registered charity and have an up to date and strengthened constitution.

Our annual returns to the Charity Commission have been submitted. Committee co-options were confirmed at the AGM in 2023 and all of these have made a positive contribution to the work of the Trust. The Management Committee met on five occasions, including the AGM.

Funding

It was an incredibly successful year in respect of our fund raising – arguably our best ever.

In June, we were awarded £98,988 from the FCC Communities Foundation towards the refurbishment plans that had been submitted for their consideration. This was a wonderful contribution without which the works could not have proceeded. The third party contribution which is integral to the working of this landfill-tax scheme was generously provided by Electrical Installations.

The award also had a positive match funding impact to secure further fund valued at £60,000. This was awarded in September from South Kesteven District Council as part of their UKSPF levelling up programme.

Taken together we were able to invest £159,988 in the new equipment.

We also received regular funds from the SKDC Lottery and funding from our local Parish Councils and the Castle Bytham Midsummer Festival.

Refurbishment Works

Our plans for the refurbishment works had begun in the previous year when we had secured planning permission and had already successfully tendered for Playscape Playgrounds to carry out the works. After contractual negotiations, they were able to start on October 30th.

It was initially anticipated that the works would be completed before Christmas. However, the wettest winter in many years, alternating with ground that were frozen and undiggable, meant that this target was not met. Subsequent completion dates in January, February and March were missed, because of the

continuing poor weather conditions where the ground surface was very much a quagmire for weeks on end.

Indeed, by the end of the financial year, the final site works had still not been completed, though progress had been achieved.

We also had new gates fitted and damaged fences repaired by Gilbert Elson, while Tim Smith of Complete Maintenance was poised to upgrade the main pathway and car park.

Main Site Works

The main focus of our regular work sessions is to maintain the site in a good condition to ensure a continued enjoyable use by visitors. When we were open, our schedule focussed on general maintenance - mowing, strimming, leaf clearing, tree felling and gleaning fallen branches, coppicing and general tidying, repairing play equipment, planting and weeding the sensory garden by hand!

The Meadow is looking very much like the wildflower site we have always wanted and our seed planting during the past couple of years has paid off with a wonderful sward of meadow flowers in the summer - with most of the ragwort now pulled.

We were delighted to install a new noticeboard and information point to advise visitors of the breadth of flora within the meadow. Special thanks must go to Elizabeth who was able to secure funding from the NFU to make this happen. We had a formal sign in day event on September 13th

Events

In view of the closure of the site, we were not able to organise any significant events during the year.

Publicity and Promotion

As the site was closed for nearly 6 months, publicity was kept to a minimum, though keeping our visitors updated with the recurrent delays did cause disappointment. We were able to comply with the press relations required of both our funders.

Gavin Pye regularly updated our website at www.bythamspinney.co.uk and took the lead on social media.

Health and Safety

This remains a key priority and a continuing requirement of our insurance arrangements. The Spinney is a natural wild woodland and there will always be an element of risk and adventure in what we do.

We had our annual ROSPA Play Area Safety Inspection Report in August and it is very pleasing to note that in all areas, there were no major issues. We used the report to guide us with the nature of our refurbishment programme.

Future Plans

Our key plan has been to complete the major upgrade of the majority of our play equipment

Volunteers

The BWT is always looking for more volunteers to help with what we are trying to achieve at The Spinney and we welcome all offers of support. And of course, while the adults are working, we want to encourage children to come to the site to take part in some of the most fantastic play experiences that nature can offer - adventurous, dirty, rough, creative, destructive, imaginative, active, physical, healthy - the sort of play opportunities many of us probably had thirty or so years ago but sadly do not seem so prevalent today.

In a post pandemic world, there remains a strong national drive to compensate for the stresses and pressures put on children and families, and what is called the 'nature deficit' for children who may have missed out on the wonders of the natural environment. It is pretty clear that there is no such deficit at the Spinney.

What is more, as usage of the Spinney is free, it becomes a good place to enjoy at minimal cost something that helps mitigate the present cost of living challenges.

Thanks

There are so many people who deserve to be thanked for the tremendous time and effort that they have put into the Spinney during this year.

All the Trustees and Advisors use their different skills and experiences to ensure that the BWT is well managed to do what needs to be done. We have a really solid Saturday morning maintenance crew who put in the time week in, week out. Many thanks to Sam, Gavin, Simon G, Richard, Simon C, Tim, Luke, Gillian, James and Thomas.

We have had great support from Donald and James who have been our Duke of Edinburgh students.

Thanks to The Glenside News for regularly publishing our news and stories; Trevor Harris who services all our mechanical equipment; Tim Rasell who advises on plants and good horticulture tips; Aqualoos who provide toilets for our events; Gilbert Elson, who cuts the hedges and the meadow.

Aside from the main funders referenced above, we are very appreciative of the help given by the local Parish Councils, the Castle Bytham Mid-summer Festival Committee, and all those individuals who have made very kind donations throughout the year. This continued support is greatly valued.

Finally, our warmest thanks must go to the local community and especially the children who use the site for their play, adventure, learning or simple relaxation and without whom, the whole thing would simply not be worthwhile.

Dr Patrick Candler, Chairman of BWT
13.6.24

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Candler', with a large, sweeping initial 'P'.

26.6.24

Annual Accounts **1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024**

Date	IN For	Amount	Date	Type	OUT For	Amount
	Opening Balance	£ 5,945.97				
12-Apr-23	Lottery SK	£ 32.00	13-Apr-23	bacs	Gavin Pye - Notice board repairs	£44.36
24-Apr-23	Amazon Europe Core	£ 5.36	4-May-23	bacs	Aqualoos - repairs	£46.80
10-May-23	Lottery SK	£ 32.50	7-Jun-23	bacs	Gavin Pye - Postcrete	£8.15
19-May-23	Amazon Europe Core	£ 22.03	2-Aug-23	bacs	Nature Sign Design	£272.00
31-May-23	National fund donate	£ 103.38	2-Aug-23	bacs	Gavin Pye - Fuel	£13.13
13-Jun-23	Lottery SK	£ 42.50	2-Aug-23	bacs	Gavin Pye - Postcrete	£24.44
26-Jun-23	Paypal	£ 34.57	29-Aug-23	bacs	Hedge cutting GH Eisen	£660.00
4-Jul-23	Lottery SK	£ 34.00	13-Sep-23	bacs	Gavin Pye - Signage	£11.09
8-Aug-23	Lottery SK	£ 42.50	14-Sep-23	bacs	Playsafety Ltd RSPA	£119.41
11-Aug-23	Castle Bytham Mid Fair	£ 400.00	10-Nov-23	bacs	Playscape Ltd	£8,968.00
13-Sep-23	Lottery SK	£ 33.00	10-Nov-23	bacs	Fencing GH Eisen	£2,280.00
3-Oct-23	Lottery SK	£ 30.50	12-Dec-23	bacs	NFU insurance premium increase	£55.85
10-Oct-23	SKDC Grant	£ 60,000.00	2-Jan-24	bacs	Gavin Pye - mince pies	£8.28
7-Nov-23	CoOp donation	£ 1,669.62	10-Jan-24	bacs	Playscape Ltd	£23,683.00
8-Nov-23	Lottery SK	£ 38.00	6-Feb-24	bacs	Gavin Pye - gazebo repairs	£102.58
12-Dec-23	Lottery SK	£ 30.50	18-Mar-24	bacs	NFU insurance premium 2024	£1,321.98
28-Dec-23	CBVH Raffle	£ 80.00				
9-Jan-24	Lottery SK	£ 32.00				
29-Jan-24	Western Power	£ 70.96				
7-Feb-24	Lottery SK	£ 43.00				
12-Mar-24	Lottery SK	£ 36.00			Closing Balance	£31,139.32
		£ 68,758.39				£ 68,758.39

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AUDITORS REPORT

I have examined the receipts and payments account for the year ended 31st March 2024 together with the documents on which they are based. Accordingly, I can confirm that they represent an accurate record of the charity's receipts and payments for the year and the bank balance at the year end. RT Goss - Chartered Accountant