



Bury Water Meadows Group CIO
Charity Number: 1185321

**Trustees' Annual Report & Financial Statements
for the Period
1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024**



Bury Water Meadows Group CIO

Trustees' Annual Report

for the Period from 01-01-2024 to 31-12-2024

Section A: Reference & Administration Details

Charity Name	Bury Water Meadows Group CIO
Registered Number	1185321
Principal Address	27 Victoria Street, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 3BB

Names of the charity trustees who manage the Charity

Name	Office	Date Appointed (if during year)	Resigned (if during year)
Elizabeth Ranzetta	Chair		
Ian Campbell	Treasurer		
Julian Case	Secretary		
Jillian Macready	Secretary		
Iain Carruthers-Jones			
Richard Counihan			
Christopher Cross			
Gillian Evans			
Susan Feuerhelm			

Names of trustees holding title to property belonging to the charity

NONE

Funds held as custodian trustees on behalf of others

NONE



Section B: Structure, Governance & Management

Description of the charity's trusts

Type of Governing Document	Association model constitution with voting members other than its charity trustees
How the Charity is Constituted	Charitable Incorporated Organisation
Trustee Selection Methods including details of any constitutional provisions	There must be at least three trustees under the Constitution. We aim to maintain a minimum of six members on the CIO management committee and periodically ask the members via newsletter if anyone is interested in adding their expertise. The member would then attend and participate in the management committee for a three-month trial period and subject to this being successful they are invited to become a trustee. No body external to the charity has any entitlement to appoint trustees.

Additional information (optional)

Policies and procedures adopted for the induction and training of trustees	In accordance with the Constitution a copy including any amendments made to it along with a copy of the latest trustees' annual report and statement of accounts will be made available to each new trustee. Having already served on the management committee the new trustee will be familiar with all discussions regarding the running of the CIO.
Other Governance	<p>The CIO management committee normally meets once per month and the secretary maintains minutes of each meeting's actions and decisions.</p> <p>Policies & procedure in respect of the following areas are in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ internal charity financial controls➤ safeguarding➤ financial reserves➤ complaints➤ serious incident reporting➤ internal risk management➤ trustee expenses➤ trustee conflicts of interest➤ equality & diversity➤ volunteer management

Statutory declaration on public benefit

The trustees declare that they have complied with their duty to have due regard to the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers or duties.

Section C: Objectives & Activities

The purposes of the charity as set out in its governing document are

To conserve, preserve and improve the rivers Lark and Linnet in Bury St Edmunds and adjacent areas for the benefit of the public in particular but not exclusively by:

1. Improving access and encouraging the appropriate use of the rivers and their environs by members of the public
2. Educating the public about the rivers and their environs
3. Facilitating community involvement in the conservation of the rivers Lark and Linnet, Bury St Edmunds' water meadows and critical other local green spaces
4. Improving the biodiversity of the Lark and the Linnet
5. Working in partnership with like-minded organisations

Summary of the main activities in relation to these purposes for the public benefit by Bury Water Meadows Group CIO (BWMG):

➤ Access to the rivers and their environs:

Chalk streams are one of England's most important natural habitats and are globally rare. The Lark and the Linnet are chalk streams which flow through the town's floodplains and green spaces but are suffering from a lack of water and from poor water quality. The water that is in the rivers does not derive from the aquifer as it should but is often run-off and polluted both upstream and downstream of the town essentially due to over-abstraction for public water supply along with pollution from agriculture, roads, and water treatment works.

With there being limited scope to impact on the rivers themselves BWMG's main focus here remains to maintain and improve the existing accessible green spaces adjoining the rivers through activities including pro-active plant & vegetation management, ditch clearance, footpath maintenance, redundant fence removal, invasive species removal, and litter picking.

➤ River path access:

Public footpaths run alongside the river Linnet from Westley Bottom through Holywater Meadows to the Green King site with further footpaths through the water meadows along both sides of Cullum Road. There are also footpaths alongside the river Lark from Rougham Road past the Abbey Gardens and through Ram Meadow to Compiegne Way. There is then no access before the 13-mile Lark path which starts from Mildenhall Road in the town and continues downstream to Mildenhall.

Suffolk County Council (SCC)'s Rights of Way dept has confirmed to BWMG that work is underway to plan for the completion of the necessary actions to open a new river path from the A14 at Fornham Road to Barton Hill which would open up green space through extensive wood and meadow areas alongside British Sugar's land, accessed at the Barton Hill end via a strip of land owned by BWMG.

➤ Education and communication:

Our website contains features on work taking place in the various water meadow habitat locations, members newsletters, and the monthly column written for the local press. Our active Facebook page educates and informs readers on the regular activities of the group.

➤ BioBlitz Wildlife Day

The BioBlitz Wildlife Day event is flagship for BWMG's efforts to increase community involvement in its work on habitat conservation and the maintenance of biodiversity in the water meadow locations in the town. From a tented hub-zone in the Abbey Gardens this was a free, fun and informative event for the public who were invited to come and explore the biodiversity of the water meadows with a series of interactive walks, talks, trails, and art with local environmental organisations, experts and enthusiasts. Two schools took part on the Friday and we welcomed the general public on the Saturday.

➤ **Habitat conservation management and maintenance:**

The main activity of the charity is to facilitate community involvement in conservation in Bury St Edmunds' water meadow locations through our volunteer work parties. Written management plans that have been agreed with WSC are in place for the Crankles, No Mans Meadow and Ram Meadow. These provide the framework under which BWMG develops its programme of maintenance and management for these green public areas through the year.

poplar.

➤ **Invasive species control:**

An invasive species is one that out-competes other species in a new environment where it is not native. Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) has become one of the UK's most invasive weed species, colonising riverbanks and reducing native biodiversity. As an annual plant Himalayan balsam dies back in the winter and, where it grows in river systems, it can leave riverbanks bare of vegetation and liable to erosion. BWMG's volunteers led by trained in-channel leaders continued with its annual summer activity of surveying and pulling these plants from the riverbanks in partnership with River Lark Catchment Partnership (RLCP) volunteers who work downstream.

White poplar is non-native but naturalised in the UK. It is fast growing and spreads rapidly by suckering. Hemlock is a native poisonous plant that spreads in huge colonies along riverbanks and ditches. It germinates in autumn as a low rosette and then from the spring develops a tall flowering stalk. BWMG's volunteer work parties attempt to restrict the spread of both these invasive species through digging and cutting.

➤ **Biodiversity surveying:**

BWMG's survey volunteers continued to record species of birds, butterflies, moths, mammals, plants, insects, invertebrates and fungi found across the town's water meadows covering Ram Meadow & Ram Meadow East, North and South Crankles, No Mans Meadow, the Abbey Gardens, the Great Churchyard, Saxon Gate Nature reserve, the Butts and Harp Meadow. The surveys continue throughout the year, yielding useful data about the change in species through the seasons.

➤ **Partnerships:**

The charity's role is to work in partnership with other organisations who are set-up and structured to engage on river and environmental policy. BWMG is a founding member of the Chalk Aquifer Alliance which unites independent chalk stream groups to both raise awareness of and to campaign on the plight of chalk streams. BWMG is also an associate member of the River Lark Catchment Partnership (RLCP), a group of organisations and individuals that have come together to promote a cohesive approach to the environmental challenges facing the Lark.

BWMG works with WSC to help manage and maintain council owned and leased green spaces and with other conservation groups and local organisations to contribute to on what they are planning. We have formal links with the Bury Society, the Friends of the Abbey Gardens, Bury in Bloom, and we are a member of the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership. We have built strong links with Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT), both on the water vole habitat project and in working with their planning officer, and with Bury St Edmunds Rugby club who allowed us to install our equipment storage container on their site and in return we help maintain the ditches and the river Lark that border their lower playing fields.

➤ **Planning Policy:**

We look to review planning applications that we consider will impact on the rivers Lark and Linnet and adjacent areas from an environmental perspective. Currently this sees us working closely with SWT's planning officer in relation to the ongoing matter of satisfaction of the River Lark corridor planning condition affecting the Abbots Vale site, and the proposed residential development of the St James School site which overlooks both the River Lark and the landscape setting of the Abbey Ruins Scheduled Monument. We also worked with the Abbey of St Edmunds Heritage Partnership to participate in the West Suffolk Local Plan Examination in Public (held in December 2024) focusing on keeping the Leg of Mutton as amenity public open space within the town's River Lark corridor.

Section D: Achievements & Performance

➤ Membership:

The charity saw a small increase in its membership through the period at 238 members at the renewal date of 1st November 2024 compared with the previous year's 230. We attracted 27 new members in the year. New members are often attracted through personal contacts with existing members, through seeing volunteers in action, and through our press & online presence.

➤ Education and Communication:

We believe that there is an on-going need to seek to engage more residents in the appreciation and recognition of nature and the environment. The main focus of BWMG's efforts to increase community involvement was the successful hosting of the third Bioblitz event. The group contributed a monthly feature to the local press and continues to publicise its informative newsletter on its website.

➤ BioBlitz Wildlife Day:

The third BWMG BioBlitz Wildlife Day event took place over the weekend of Friday 17th & Saturday 18th May in the Abbey Gardens. The overall objective was to continue to raise the status of the Lark & Linnet for the town, and specifically to showcase, explore and raise awareness of the diversity of life in the adjacent water meadows.

Friday was schools' day when students from St Edmundsbury and Sebert Wood schools took part in a programme of guided activity including a species and bug hunt followed by a participatory art activity making bunting flags showing the species found.

Saturday was the public day when visitors had the opportunity to join guided expert nature walks, attend a range of talks from local experts, and visit the tented hub zone staffed by enthusiastic volunteers and supporters from a variety of environmental organisations. The whole event was free, fun and informative. 28 BWMG volunteers contributed 174 hours over the weekend (plus significant unrecorded planning time).

➤ Habitat conservation management and maintenance:

BWMG volunteers continued to support its activities in the conservation, maintenance and the management of the rivers Lark and Linnet and their surrounding water meadows in Bury St Edmunds. Volunteer work parties typically lasting 2 to 4 hours take place throughout the year with activities including ditch clearance, meadow scything, vegetation & invasive species removal, planting & sowing and path maintenance. 43 work parties were run in the year with 67 members plus 12 non-members taking part clocking up 1248 hours.

At the end of 2024 two of our members re-started a programme of monthly litter picks which are both popular with volunteers and bring an obvious benefit to the public.

We have seen first-hand that volunteering brings benefits to the individual, to the local community, to wider society, and to the environment. It is good for the mind and body, providing a sense of purpose and helping people stay physically healthy. The social contact aspect of helping and working with others benefits overall psychological well-being and provides a solid support system with people keeping in regular contact with others.

➤ Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Corporate Volunteering:

As part of their ESG policies to support local communities two companies sent volunteers during paid working hours to support BWMG's habitat maintenance activities through scything, raking and hemlock removal. In particular this helped BWMG to add part of the Great Churchyard area to our scything programme.

➤ Invasive Species:

BWMG volunteers have for several years undertaken a programme to control Himalayan Balsam (HB) on 7km of the accessible sections of the rivers Lark & Linnet in the town. On summer evenings we worked downstream along the riverbanks, usually at water level, pulling up plants individually by their roots before the seed is set. This action effectively kills the plants but the scale of the task and the nature of the habitat with steep riverbanks and nettles makes this very labour-intensive work. The good news is that the process is working. Where we have

previously pulled HB plants they return significantly less abundant in the following year and because of this we were able in 2024 to complete the full stretch of the Lark in the town from Rougham bridge to Fornham bridge in less time than previously. Altogether volunteers clocked up 57 hours over 4 sessions on this activity.

BWMG volunteer work parties undertook hemlock removal along riverbank paths through digging them out in the spring before the plant flowers, and a resource-limited programme of cutting back poplars and digging out suckers which spread through the water meadows.

➤ **Biodiversity:**

The group's dedicated team of volunteers take part in a monthly biodiversity survey across the town's green spaces producing around 70-80 hours of observation per month. The results have identified up to 129 varieties of flowering plant and grasses in a single month (July), 53 species of bird (May), 57 types of insect and spider (July), and 17 moths and butterflies (July).

Mammals, fish, invertebrates, fungi, lichens and mosses were also recorded. Observers have increased their knowledge of insects and fungi leading to an expansion in the monthly species reports which can be found on BWMG's website.

Following a trial with two basic trail cameras, two solar-powered remote wildlife trail cameras were purchased and installed to look for evidence of water voles. The group has 6 open fronted bird boxes installed in Ram Meadow though no nesting has been recorded. In No Mans Meadow one of the two owl boxes was used by barn owls but no fledging was observed.

➤ **Partnerships:**

We are a member of the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership's Core Group, which works to care for, conserve and enhance the Abbey Precinct (including the Crankles & No Mans Meadows). The Heritage Partnership aims to help people to experience the international significance of St Edmund and the historic Abbey whilst BWMG speaks up for the rivers and the associated water meadows. We are working with the Partnership to help raise the status of the Lark and Linnet within the Abbey Precinct, with a particular emphasis on influencing the natural environment elements within the Abbey of St Edmund's National Lottery Heritage grant project.

We continued to work with SWT's planning officer in relation to the ongoing Abbots Vale planning application and the new St James School planning application.

➤ **River flow and water quality policy:**

Under the river Lark Flagship chalk stream recovery project Anglian Water Services (AWS) entered into partnering agreements in 2023 with Norfolk Rivers Trust (NRT) for the project design and with RLCP as the community partner to which BWMG contributed. At the time of publication of this report the project design is not yet published.

➤ **Purchases & Equipment:**

The major expenditure in the year was £3,450 for the BioBlitz event which was fully 3rd party funded. The group spent £1,012 on work party tools & PPE with the most expensive item being an electric brush cutter. New signage to explain the water vole habitat and the circular walk cost £541.

➤ **Training:**

In the year two BWMG Trustees completed NSPCC child protection training, and two trustees completed Emergency First Aid training. Trustees and members attended a training day run by SWT on water voles and otters.

Section E: Financial Review

Review of the financial position at the end of the period

The charity held a total of £9,811 in funds at the end of the period, of which £3,000 was held as restricted funds and £6,811 as unrestricted funds.

The corresponding sum last year was a total of £9,069 all held as unrestricted funds.

Principle sources of funds

The charity's total income in the period was £8,617, compared with £5,289 last year.

The charity received a contribution of £3,000 from West Suffolk Council for an urban wetlands feasibility study, and £3,450 from Abbey 1000 CIC for the costs of the 2024 BioBlitz event.

The balance of income of £2,167 was primarily received from membership dues and donations.

Statement of the charity's policy on reserves

The charity's aim is to broadly match its annual income with its expenditure but will keep financial reserves on the following basis:

The charity's operational spend is mostly discretionary with a low level of fixed overhead (eg insurance). This spend is more than covered by the annual membership income and donations which can be reliably expected to be in the range of £2,500.

However, we also have the intention to maintain our commitment to annual public events with the centrepiece being the Bioblitz. These event costs have so far been covered by 3rd party funding but there is no guarantee that this will continue to be the case.

We should also be aware of the risk of having to meet the cost of an unexpected need (eg) the replacement of storage container or high value equipment, or to be able to spend money ahead of funding being received as has been the case with the water vole habitat project.

The total reserve to cover these requirements will be held equivalent to the annual membership and donations income of £2,500.

The actual level of reserves at £6,811, though reduced from last year remains higher than the reserves policy. The trustees are confident that this excess will be spent on activities in line with the group's charitable purposes.

Details of any funds materially in deficit

The Trustees declare that the charity had no funds which were materially in deficit at the date of the statement of assets & liabilities.

Particulars of any outstanding guarantee given by the charity

The trustees declare that the charity has given no guarantee where potential liability is outstanding at the date of the statement of assets & liabilities.

Particulars of any outstanding debt

The trustees declare that the charity has no outstanding debts which are secured by an express charge on any of the assets of the charity at the date of the statement of assets & liabilities.

Declaration

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

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature	<i>Ian Campbell</i>
Full name	Ian Campbell
Position	Trustee & Treasurer
Date	21 st April 2025



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Bury Water Meadows Group CIO

1185321

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

01-Jan-24

To

31-Dec-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					
Membership & Donations	2,144			2,144	2,540
Booklet Sales	23			23	24
West Suffolk Hive CIC				-	1,225
Suffolk Wildlife Trust Water Vole Project				-	1,500
Abbey 1000 CIC Bioblitz	3,450			3,450	
West Suffolk Council Wetland Study		3,000		3,000	
				-	-
Sub total	5,617	3,000	-	8,617	5,289
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
				-	
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total Receipts	5,617	3,000	-	8,617	5,289
A3 Payments					
Work Party Tools & PPE	1,012			1,012	763
Scythes	97			97	-
Chainsaw & PPE	60			60	-
Wildflower Planting	303			303	370
Contractor Expenses	289			289	-
Work Party Expenses	388			388	99
Survey Expenses	354			354	228
Training	200			200	174
BioBlitz Expenses	3,450			3,450	1,334
Water Vole Project				-	5,109
Bird Boxes				-	568
Deer Exclosures				-	380
Signage	541			541	-
Insurance	326			326	319
Legal & Professional				-	6
Zoom/Webinar Expenses	220			220	491
Trustee/Membership Event Expenses	453			453	301
Equipment Storage	144			144	67
Publicity	31			31	-
Other	7			7	-
				-	-
Sub total	7,875	-	-	7,875	10,209
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	7,875	-	-	7,875	10,209
Net of receipts/(payments)	(2,258)	3,000	0	742	(4,920)
A5 Transfers between funds				0	0
A6 Cash funds last year end	9,069	-	-	9,069	13,989
Cash funds this year end	6,811	3,000	-	9,811	9,069

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	Current Account	6,811	3,000	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	6,811	3,000	-
	(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	Details	-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
	Land for Footpath Entrance	Unrestricted	-	-
	Work Party Tooling & Equipment	Unrestricted	-	-
	Personal Protective Equipment	Unrestricted	-	-
	Publicity Display Material	Unrestricted	-	-
	Storage Container for Equipment	Unrestricted	-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
	<i>Ian Campbell</i>	IAN CAMPBELL	21/04/2025	