



Land of Oak & Iron Trust

Celebrating Heritage, Culture & Landscape

A Charitable Incorporated Organisation
Charity No. 1188152

Trustees' Annual Report April 2023 - March 2024



Derwent Walk, Ebchester

Photo © Peter Atkinson



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The Land of Oak & Iron



The Land of Oak & Iron (above) is centred on the valley of the River Derwent, which passes through Northumberland, Durham and Gateshead before joining the River Tyne.

Background

In 2016 Groundwork North East and Cumbria successfully bid for four years of Heritage Lottery funding to form the Land of Oak & Iron Landscape Partnership, which breathed new life into the history and heritage of the area via a range of projects.

These included environmental improvements - such as planting woodland and building a fish-pass - and working with young people in schools on local culture, with 320 participants gaining a recognised qualification in traditional skills. A major success was building a new Heritage Centre at Winlaton Mill, owned and managed by Groundwork North East and Cumbria. The Heritage Centre has a successful café, acts as a community hub, and runs a year-round events programme.



Photo © Barry Tupper

Heritage Centre - Winlaton Mill

The Trust

The Land of Oak & Iron Trust (LOIT) was created to ensure a legacy for the Landscape Partnership. The Trust was established on 20 August 2019 and registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) on 24 February 2020. This report covers the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

The objects of the Trust as set out in its governing document are:

- To promote the conservation, protection and enhancement of the natural, industrial and cultural heritage of the Land of Oak & Iron
- To advance the education of the general public in the natural, industrial and cultural heritage of the Land of Oak & Iron

Overview

During this year, the Trust created a working group of key partners - including Gateshead, Durham and Northumberland councils, Living Woods, Tyne Rivers Trust - to develop ideas for future trust's activities. This enabled us to draft a renewed expression of interest to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which will be submitted in the next couple of months, having received positive feedback from an earlier version.

The Trust also continues to work closely with Groundwork North East and Cumbria, using the formal partnership agreement as a basis to help the Trust achieve its ambitions over the next few years.

The focus in the coming year will be to work with partners to widen engagement and to submit a substantial bid to NLHF, as well as explore smaller bids for specific projects.

Activities

This year the Trust volunteers have pursued the following activities:

1 Publications

This group identifies topics of interest to today's audiences, celebrating the stories, people and history of the Land of Oak & Iron. These may be published works which are out-of-print and difficult to find, or new publications, which are sold via local outlets and advertised online via our website. This provides the Trust with a small but regular income stream. To date LOIT has published seven works: *Men of Iron*, *Tales of Derwentdale*, *Thread of Iron*, *A Legend Evermore*, *Crowley's*, *Releasing the Genie of Coal* and, published this year, *A History of Birds in the Derwent Valley*.

The latest book (*A History of Birds in the Derwent Valley*) is an eclectic compilation from local ornithologist and LOIT trustee Michael Turner, taking a personal look at some of the people, books and events that have inspired him. Featuring stunning illustrations from local photographers and artists, this latest publication 'dips its toe' into the social and ornithological history of this beautiful valley.

Peter Stark, author of *Releasing the Genie of Coal*, has revised and updated this for us, ready to reprint during summer 2024.

2 *Heritage Education and Development*

Formerly known as the Young Persons' Group, this aimed to encourage young people aged between 5 and 24 years to take pride in their heritage, and to encourage them to conserve the culture and landscape of the area for themselves and future generations.

Learning materials for use in schools, based on local history, heroes, arts, dance and crafts, were created and remain available to use. However, due to post-Covid difficulties in finding suitable volunteers, there have been no activities this year.

As engaging young people is a priority for us, efforts will be made next year to find new ways to reinvigorate this activity and attract new volunteers.



Boy Band, Blackhall Mill

3 *Research*

Formerly referred to as the mapping group, these volunteers are working to create digital, interactive and easy-to-understand resources for local people and visitors to explore the history of the area and its industrial past. Information from maps spanning a period of over two hundred years has been combined into a searchable multi-layered map, with ongoing research to highlight features such as transport routes, industrial sites or whatever might be of interest. Narratives to accompany the maps are also being developed. The maps cover an area considerably larger than the Land of Oak & Iron to show the wider connections between communities, with topics include waggonways (1625-1800), historic roads, mills and ancient township boundaries. This year, volunteers have focused on bridges and river features, coal industry sites, land use and places of worship.

While some maps are available on the LOIT website, these are in a basic format. One of the aims of seeking funding will be to engage professionals to help to convert these into an interactive, searchable and visually appealing format, suitable for use on touchscreens at the Heritage Centre and other suitable local venues.

4 Communications

As a legacy of the former Landscape Partnership, Groundwork North East and Cumbria own the Land of Oak & Iron brand and are required to maintain a LOI website until 2030. There are currently, therefore, two linked LOI websites. One, (<https://landofoakandiron.org.uk>) maintained by Groundwork, focuses on the Heritage Centre's cafe and activities, while the second (<https://loit.org.uk>) owned by the Trust, holds the research and heritage information. This has been added to and developed by volunteers from the research group. Over the coming year, funding will be sought to improve and, if possible, integrate both websites to make the wealth of heritage information held by LOIT more user friendly and accessible.

Public Benefit

In carrying out these activities, the Trustees have taken into account the Charity Commission's Guidance on the public benefit requirement (PB1, PB2 & PB3) and have complied with their duty to have due regard to this guidance when exercising their powers and duties.

Financial Summary

The Trust's income amounted to £5,509, of which £5,444 came from the sale of books. Total expenditure of the Trust was £4,463, including expenditure on publications of £3,704.

There was a balance of £6,197 in the Trust's bank account on 31 March including £1,476 deferred grant for a schools' project which has not yet been delivered. Ways to deliver the rest of this project are being sought.

A copy of the annual accounts is attached to this report as Appendix A

Reserves policy

The Trust has no employees or physical assets, so wind-up costs would be nominal. Trustees have agreed to a reserves policy of approximately 12 months' running costs, this year set at £800.

Structure, Governance and Management

Structure and Governance

The charity is known as the Land of Oak & Iron Trust and uses no other name. It is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered in England and Wales (Charity number 118152). The only members are the trustees; there are no employees.

The address of the principal office of the charity is 19 Springhouse Lane, Ebchester DH8 0QF.

The Trust's governing document is its Constitution, which is based on the Charity Commission's 'foundation' model CIO Constitution.

Board of Trustees

During the year the trustees were:

John Hunter	(resigned April 2023)
Bob James	(Chairman - from 2 October)
Geoff Marshall	(Chairman - to 2 October)
Marion Schooler	
Michael Turner	

Policies

The Trust has agreed policies relating to:

Code of Behaviour	Health & Safety
Conflicts of Interest	Risk Management
Expenses	Safeguarding
Equal Opportunities	Safe Recruitment
Financial Controls	Supervision
GDPR General Policy	

All policies were reviewed during the year. Volunteers are informed of these policies on joining and they are available for inspection on the Trust's website.

Structure and Management

Special Interest Groups:

During this year the research and publications groups were active. Other groups will be formed as and when required depending on activity and interests. As a rule, each group includes a trustee and a lead volunteer.

Partnerships

Partnership Group

The Partnership Group has an independent chair and is made up of both elected and executive members from the three Local Authorities (Gateshead, Durham and Northumberland), Groundwork North East, and the Trust. The Trust is represented by two trustees. This group met regularly throughout the year to discuss potential future activities, be kept up to speed with progress, and to consider potential funding sources.

Approved by the Trustees on: 26 January 2025

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Marshall', written over a faint horizontal line.

Full Name: Geoff Marshall

Position: Trustee



Appendix A

Accounts for the Period: 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024

Income

	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22
Book Sales	5,444	1,178	3,012
Donations			
Grants			
Merchandise		5	
Insurance Claim			650
Talks	65	260	55
Bank Interest	0	0	0
	£5,509	£1,443	£3,717
<i>Income / Expenditure</i>	<i>£1,046</i>	<i>£1,832</i>	<i>£1,600</i>

Expenditure

	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22
Computing / Website	51	25	25
Education			
Events			
Insurance	361	361	293
Mapping		103	68
Merchandise			
Office Equipment			703
Postage / Sundries	3	170	150
Publishing	3704	711	817
Room Hire	80	60	
Stationery			61
Expenses	264	0	0
Young Persons' Activities		1,859	
	£4,463	£3,275	£2,117

Balances

	31 March 24	31 March 23	31 March 22
Current Account	6,197	5,145	6,982
Cash in Hand	0	5	0
	£6,197	£5,150	£6,982
Liabilities			
Creditors			
Grant Exp. Pending	1,476	1,476	3,324
Debtors			
Net Worth	£4,721	£3,674	£3,658

Assets

	31 March 24	31 March 23	31 March 22
Fixed Assets			
Merchandise	2,200	1,200	1,600
Reserves			
General Fund	4,721	3,674	3,658
Restricted Reserves	1,476	1,476	3,324
	£6,197	£5,150	£6,982