



# Land of Oak & Iron Trust

Celebrating Heritage, Culture & Landscape

A Charitable Incorporated Organisation  
Charity No. 1188152

## Trustees' Annual Report

### April 2024 - March 2025





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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 2024 to 31 March 2025.

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 continued to work with a group of key partners - including Gateshead, Durham and Northumberland councils, Living Woods, Tyne Rivers Trust - to develop ideas for future Trust activities. This enabled us to submit a renewed expression of interest to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. We received positive feedback to the EOI which enabled us to commence drafting, in partnership with Groundwork North East and Cumbria, a formal bid for funding.

The Trust continues to work closely with Groundwork North East and Cumbria using a 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, to submit a substantial bid to NLHF, and to 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 *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.

A new edition of *Releasing the Genie of Coal*, revised and updated by the author, Peter Stark, was printed 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.



*Pit Pony - Miner's great friend*

## 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 an interactive multi-layered map, with ongoing research to highlight features such as transport routes, coal mines, 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. GNEC and LOIT work closely together to achieve this however, due to the amount of data held, it was agreed that the LOIT website would be retained. The two sites are closely linked. One site ([www.landofoakandiron.org.uk](http://www.landofoakandiron.org.uk)) focuses on the Heritage Centre's café and activities, while the second site ([www.loit.org.uk](http://www.loit.org.uk)) holds the research and heritage information. This second site has been created and developed by volunteers from the research group. Over the coming year funding will be sought 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 2025 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:

Bob James	(Chairman)
Geoff Marshall	
Marion Schooler	
Michael Turner	(Resigned August 2024)

## 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.

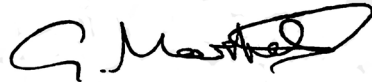
## Partnerships

### 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: 1 December 2025

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Marshall', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Full Name: Geoff Marshall

Position: Trustee





# Land of Oak & Iron Trust

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## Appendix A

### Accounts for the Period: 1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025

#### Income

	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23
Book Sales	1,229	5,444	1,178
Donations			
Grants			
Merchandise			5
Insurance Claim			
Talks		65	260
Bank Interest	0	0	0
	<b>£1,229</b>	<b>£5,509</b>	<b>£1,443</b>
<i>Income / Expenditure</i>	<i>-£35</i>	<i>£1,046</i>	<i>£1,832</i>

#### Expenditure

	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23
Computing / Website	11	51	25
Education			
Events			
Insurance	336	361	361
Mapping			103
Merchandise			
Office Equipment	106		
Postage / Sundries		3	170
Publishing	630	3704	711
Room Hire	175	80	60
Stationery			
Expenses	6	264	0
Young Persons' Activities			1,859
	<b>£1,264</b>	<b>£4,463</b>	<b>£3,275</b>

#### Balances

	31 March 25	31 March 24	31 March 23
Current Account	6,419	6,197	5,145
Cash in Hand	106	0	5
	<b>£6,525</b>	<b>£6,197</b>	<b>£5,150</b>
<b><i>Liabilities</i></b>			
Creditors			
Grant Exp. Pending	1,476	1,476	1,476
Debtors			
Net Worth	<b>£5,049</b>	<b>£4,721</b>	<b>£3,674</b>

#### Assets

	31 March 25	31 March 24	31 March 23
Fixed Assets			
Merchandise	1,500	2,200	1,200
<b><i>Reserves</i></b>			
General Fund	5,049	4,721	3,674
Restricted Reserves	1,476	1,476	1,476
	<b>£6,525</b>	<b>£6,197</b>	<b>£5,150</b>