



Menston Area Nature Trust Annual Report 2023-2024

Reporting Period: 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024

Prepared by Francesca Bridgewater, Chair of Trustees, and Chris Steele, Treasurer

Registered Charity No.: 1195510

Registered Address: Willow Dene, Bradford Road, Menston, Ilkley, West Yorkshire LS29 6ED

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Figure 1 East Wood, Weston

Charity Trustees

Francesca Bridgewater	Chair
Christopher Steele	Treasurer

Emma Dalton	Secretary
Alison Davies	Vice Chair and Membership Secretary
Andrew Kelly	Publicity

Charity Structure & Governance

The Trust is a registered charity set up as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The constitution governing the CIO was adopted on 13th August 2021. Only the Trustees are voting members of the CIO. Trustees can be appointed by a vote of other Trustees at any time, up to a total of 12 Trustees. The charity also has a further 66 associate members (non-voting) as of 31st March 2024.

Our Purpose



Figure 2 MANT stand at Chevin Discovery Day

To promote the conservation, maintenance and study of places and objects of botanical, zoological, geological, ecological or scientific interest in and around Menston and elsewhere by:-

- A. Establishing, forming, owning and maintaining sanctuaries or reserves for the conservation of flora and fauna;
- B. Promoting the education of the public, particularly young people, in the understanding, enjoyment and conservation of natural flora and fauna;
- C. Promoting, organising and carrying out study and research in the principles and practice of nature conservation, and to publish useful results of such research;
- D. Co-operating with other bodies of allied

interest where this may assist in attaining the aim of the trust;

E. Liaising with voluntary and statutory bodies, and private companies or individuals, involved in local land use and development, and to advise on the management of the sites.

F. Ensuring that any land acquired by the Trust be covenanted with the aim to maintain such as nature reserves or sanctuaries in perpetuity.

Chair's Report & Achievements

The year has been dominated by the acquisition of East Wood, Weston, (see below) and fundraising to that end. However, our other activities have not been neglected.

Working parties have continued to cultivate local wildflowers and plant them around the village, and in Miss Porritt's field, where a generous bug hotel has been established. Work removing

Himalayan Balsam has continued and the cows have also been in residence again in the field to help improve the plant diversity. The highlight of the bird walks was a dawn walk in High Royds woods. We led a day of corporate volunteering, removing tree guards from High Royds.

We have continued to encourage engagement with the natural world through hosting a picnic in Miss Porritt's field in celebration of the Coronation, organising a visit to East Keswick Wildlife Trust, and stalls at various local events (Ilkley Car Free Day, Menston In Bloom, Chevin Discovery Day, Ilkley Carnival & Otley Green Fair).

We are an active member of Menston Parks Group, campaigning for more varied and natural habitats in some of the communal areas around the village. MANT has also taken part in wider regional events including workshops on Community led Nature Research and a Nature Recovery Project for the South Pennines run by Natural England.

In May we led the project to buy 11 acres of fields on the edge of the village, and put in a bid jointly with the Parish Council and a private individual. Unfortunately we did not win the bid.

Acquisition of East Wood, Weston

In early 2023 the opportunity arose to buy East Wood, Weston (locally known as Weston Wood), almost 20 acres of mature mixed woodland. Together with several other local community groups including Otley2030, Wildlife Friendly Otley, Wharfedale Naturalists, Climate Action Ilkley and



Addingham Environment Group, we launched a crowdfunding campaign under the banner of Friends of Weston Wood (FoWW) and were able to raise sufficient funds to put in a bid, with the help of a loan from the philanthropist Julia Davies of We Have The Power. Purchase of the woods was finally signed off on 1 December 2023 and MANT became their legal owner. FOWW celebrated with a community event in the woods on 4 Dec, which was filmed by BBC Look North for a local news feature.

Figure 3 East Woods, Weston in Spring

At the end of January 2024 we encouraged people to do the Big Garden Birdwatch in the woods, with our in-house ecologists on hand to help. February saw our first forest school event with 19 children, as well as a hugely successful litter pick with over 30 local people helping to pull out over 30 bags of rubbish from the woods. In March, steering group member and experienced dry stone waller Matt led a group from Get Out More CIC in a day of dry stone walling – starting the long job of repairing the wood boundaries.

We have received a grant to write a Woodland Management Plan, which we will prepare over the next year with the aid of the Ecologist Gordon Haycock.

FoWW is planning to hold further steering group meetings on site when possible, and is actively encouraging community involvement, from school bioblitzes and family fundays to Forest Schools and Forest Bathing events.

Fundraising 2023-24

The year has been dominated by the need to raise funds to buy East Wood. The majority of the money was raised through a crowdfunding campaign, which began in February 2023 (see accounts below for details). The campaign has continued throughout 2023-24 with a second crowdfunding account to allow people to continue to contribute. Other sources of money have come from local government grants, being sponsored for volunteering at Ilkley Carnival, an online auction and donations to our stall. We run a scheme for people to sponsor a 3x3m square in the woods, each of which can be identified by a What3Words address, encouraging people to feel more connected to the place and the nature in it. Where possible we have applied for gift aid on the donations. We were fortunate to have a large donation of £29,000 towards the purchase of the woods.

A further crowdfunding campaign was launched to allow us to put in a bid for the fields in Menston. This bid was unsuccessful and the majority of the funds were repaid to donors, if requested.

MANT uses several platforms to allow donations. These include wonderful.org, kindlink.org, sumup machine via stripe and direct bank transfers. We are also part of Give as you live, an organization that allows people to choose us as a recipient of a donation from shops, whenever they shop on line.

Our Public Benefit 2023-24

In our opinion, the Trustees have complied with our duty to have due regard to the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers and duties.

Menston Area Nature Trust

Accounts 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024

1 April 2022-31 March 2023

Income	£s	£s	£s	£s
Membership and Donations	460.31		1,729.52	
Grants	1,600.00		3,729.90	
Fundraising & sales ⁴	22,780.31		149,237.93	
Gift Aid ⁵	43,922.15		14,477.50	
Interest ⁶	1,971.12		0	
Total		70,733.89		169,174.85
Expenditure				
Printing	-		-59.00	
Room Hire and event expenses	-25.00		-90.00	
Equipment & Work done	-935.21		-139.60	
Insurance and legal expenses	-5,739.43		-4,341.49	
Bank charges	-1,030.44		-84.90	
Total		-7,730.08		-4,714.99
Net Income / (Expenditure)		63,003.81		164,459.86

Assets	31 March 2024	31-Mar-23
Current Accounts and Cash	407.34	165,954.40
Savings Accounts	2,310.64	
Total Cash in bank and at hand	2,717.98	165,954.40

Property (land) ⁷	247,860.00		
Unpresented Cheques	0.00	10.00	
Total Assets		250,577.98	165,964.40
Liabilities ⁸	-21,619.77		
Net assets / (liabilities)		228,958.21	165,964.40

Notes 2023-24

1. Menston Area Nature Trust was recognised as a charity by the Charity Commission on 13 August 2021
2. The financial year for the charity ends on 31 March
3. Prior year closing balances include bank balance of £166,885 and cash £68.85
4. Fundraised for purchase of land, Weston Woods, Otley, on 1 December 2023
5. Gift Aid includes claims for previous year donations.
6. Interest is from two savings accounts. Our Current account pays no interest.
7. Property value is the purchase price of Weston Woods and is inclusive of VAT.
8. Liabilities are outstanding bridging loan (interest free) for purchase of Weston Woods
9. Total fundraising and sales are gross of charges included under bank charges of £930.44

Menston Area Nature Trust

AUDIT REPORT

For the Period 1 APRIL 2023 To 31 MARCH 2024

I have examined the Balance Sheet of Menston Area Nature Trust as of 31st March 2024 and the related statement of income and expenditure and changes in fund balances for the period 1 April 2023 through 31 March 2024. My examination was made in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and, accordingly, included such tests of accounting records and audit procedures I considered necessary in the circumstances.

In my opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly the financial position of Menston Area Nature Trust as of 31 March 2024 and its revenues collected and expenses paid for the period then ended.



John Greenwood

Auditor

Date: 12.11.24