

# FRIENDS OF HELL WATH

England & Wales · Charity number 1195980

## Details

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**Status** Registered

**Legal form** CIO

**Registered** 2021-09-30

**Register** [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

## Contact

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**Website** [www.facebook.com/fohwadmin](http://www.facebook.com/fohwadmin)

## Activities

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**Objects:** TO PROMOTE THE CONSERVATION, PROTECTION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE PHYSICAL AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE AREA KNOWN AS HELL WATH, IN RIPON, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC INCLUDING IN PARTICULAR BY: A) PROTECTING THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE AREA B) MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING ACCESS TO THE AREA AND FACILITIES WITHIN THE AREA C) PROMOTING BIODIVERSITY IN THE AREA D) INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION OF THE AREA AND ITS CONSERVATION, PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENTS, AND REFLECTING THE OPINIONS AND CONCERNS OF THE WIDER COMMUNITY IN RELATION TO THE AREA E) WORKING WITH OTHER GROUPS THAT HAVE AN INTEREST IN, CONTROL OVER OR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE AREA IN FURTHERANCE OF THESE OBJECTS, INCLUDING RELEVANT PUBLIC AUTHORITIES AND OTHER LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS.

**Activities:** The charity works with members, volunteers and partners to protect and enhance the natural Space that is Hell Wath. Activities include hedgerow maintenance and planting, invasive species removal, habitat maintenance and development (such as ponds, scrub and grasslands), monitoring of butterflies, trees, bats and wildflowers, wildflower cultivation and planting as well as maintenance tasks .

## Classification

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- **How:** Provides Advocacy/advice/information, Acts As An Umbrella Or Resource Body, Other Charitable Activities
- **What:** Arts/culture/heritage/science, Environment/conservation/heritage, Recreation
- **Who:** Children/young People, Elderly/old People, People With Disabilities, Other Charities Or Voluntary Bodies, The General Public/mankind

## Geography

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- North Yorkshire

## Finances

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Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£3,017	£2,218	-	-
2024-03-31	£1,836	£1,632	-	-
2023-03-31	£2,496	£464	-	-
2022-03-31	£0	£0	-	-

## Trustees

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Name	Role	Appointed
<b>Catherine Anne Scott</b>	Chair	2023-01-19
Carol Leo		2023-01-19
Jane Horton		2025-01-23
John Pearse		2024-01-18
Mathew Adamson		2024-01-18

**FRIENDS OF HELL WATH**

England & Wales - Charity number 1195980

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# Accounts

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# Annual Report

The Friends of Hell Wath (FOHW) continued with their work throughout 2025, with volunteers and partner organisations engaged in many activities throughout the year.

We remain committed to the conservation and development of habitats across Hell Wath to enable native species of flora and fauna to thrive, whilst balancing access to and enjoyment of the area by visitors. It is encouraging in this Annual Report to note that progress is being made on many fronts as we continue our work to safeguard Hell Wath for the future.

FOHW would like to acknowledge the ongoing support of:

North Yorkshire Council and their Countryside Rangers who regularly provide guidance, manpower, equipment and other resources to complete projects on site.

The Skell Valley Project and Skell Valley volunteers who have provided guidance, manpower, equipment and financing for a number of large-scale projects, which wouldn't otherwise have been possible.

Ripon City Council who provide an annual grant to enable us to hold community events and for the purchase of necessary materials and equipment.

Plantlife UK who have provided expertise and financing to help us better understand Hell Wath's grasslands and what we need to do to improve them in future.

Open Country Volunteers who are a wonderful group of disabled volunteers who have helped with tree planting, grass cutting and path laying.

Our trustees, members and volunteers who freely give their expertise and time to help run the charity, organise events and take part in activities that all help to maintain Hell Wath and safeguard it for the future.

## **KEY POINTS OF NOTE FOR 2025**

### **The Skell Valley Project (SVP)**

Hell Wath has been a fortunate participant in the Heritage Lottery funded SVP for the past four years. A dedicated SVP Ranger has worked with FOHW and North Yorkshire Council to identify projects to enhance the Hell Wath environment. Approved projects have been completed using SVP funding for materials and equipment, engaging contractors and volunteers to undertake works on site.

Examples of such projects completed this year include:

- Extending the crushed stone path from Hell Wath cottage to improve accessibility
- Erecting two rabbit-proof fenced enclosures to protect sensitive grassland areas



# Annual Report

- Grass cutting, thistle and ragwort clearance to improve grassland areas
- Himalayan Balsam clearance
- Habitat restoration in the old Quarry by small tree and shrub removal
- Dead hedging around the old Quarry to protect the restored habitat
- Installing new signage with information about Hell Wath
- Installing new signage for a family friendly route around Hell Wath

The Skell Valley Project concluded in May 2025, but Hell Wath will continue to benefit from the works completed during the project and from the ongoing support of the Ranger, who has now been taken on by the National Trust.

## **Plantlife UK**

Hell Wath was accepted as one of six Yorkshire projects by Plantlife UK. This gave us access to a network of people working to improve their site habitats and expertise on grassland habitats. Working with Plantlife UK we identified several key areas of grassland that could be targeted to improve biodiversity and potentially create pockets of woodmeadow on Hell Wath. These areas will continue to be managed by keeping them clear of Himalayan Balsam, thistle and ragwort and by regular scything. This should promote the growth of native species of grasses and wildflowers that will in turn support native species of insects and invertebrates.

Rabbit grazing was identified as severely detrimental to the development of biodiverse meadows. Rabbits graze the young shoots of plants before they have chance to grow, flower and develop seed. A project to erect two rabbit-proof fenced enclosures was completed in March 2025 with the help of Plantlife UK and Ripon City Council funding and the hard work of volunteers from SVP and FOHW. Even with the severe drought conditions experienced during 2025 the increased height and diversity of grasses and wildflowers inside the enclosures was clear to see. Plant surveys have been undertaken to document the differences and these will continue next year. The enclosures were scythed after seeds had set and we look forward to seeing how the enclosures flourish in 2026.

The Plantlife UK project was completed in the summer of 2025, but we will continue to have access to their expertise and the network of project sites and we will continue to work on improving the scope and biodiversity of Hell Wath's grassland areas.

## **Himalayan Balsam Control**

One of the biggest issues we have on Hell Wath is control of the highly invasive species Himalayan Balsam. Many 'HB Bashes' have taken place in previous years, but it has felt that we were fighting a losing battle.



# Annual Report

This year one of our Trustees proposed that we take a much more organised approach and we feel confident this has been successful and had a significant impact. The basic approach was to start at each end of the site and work through the woodlands, scrub and grassland methodically clearing every HB plant. Then the inland woodland perimeter of the Local Nature Reserve was cleared.

The same areas were worked on multiple times during the season thus significantly reducing the amount of seed being produced and distributed for next year. Large areas of HB were also scythed, as this had proven to be successful in reducing the number of HB plants growing in subsequent years.

The plan is to continue this approach year after year, working our way from the perimeter towards the centre each year, significantly reducing the amount of HB seed production each year. As the River Skell runs along the boundary of Hell Wath, new seed will continue to be brought in from upstream so there will always be a need for 'HB Bashes' on Hell Wath, but we hope these will be confined to smaller areas and involve less effort in time.

Another approach to Himalayan Balsam control is the introduction of a natural rust. This weakens the HB plants and allows the native plant species to thrive rather than be crowded out. Hell Wath is one of several test sites within the Nidderdale National Landscape. Rust was applied in 2023 and we know the rust has taken and spread out from the original application areas. The effectiveness of the rust application in reducing HB will continue to be monitored.

## **Quarry Habitat Restoration**

Another major project this year has been the restoration of the old Quarry area of Hell Wath. The objective is to restore the habitat to a scarce open winter pond/summer pondside habitat and the recovery of 'lost' plants such as adder's tongue fern.

Work began in Autumn 2024 and continued throughout 2025 as the area remained unusually dry and accessible for working.

Volunteers from FOHW and SVP have worked hard to clear the quarry floor from hawthorn, willow and alder. These had grown unchecked and formed a dense canopy, preventing light reaching the quarry floor, inhibiting the growth of native plants. The cut down shrubs have been used to form a dead hedge around the perimeter to protect the site.

We will wait to see if dormant seeds and plants will now grow in response to the light now reaching the quarry floor, but we will supplement this growth with suitable planting if necessary to restore the habitat.



# Annual Report

Further habitat improvement could result from re-coppicing a number of multi-stemmed alders that have been neglected and allowed to grow into tall boles, shading parts of the quarry floor. Permission to carry out this work has not yet been forthcoming from North Yorkshire Council.

## **Tree Planting & Woodland Management**

Funded by North Yorkshire Council from commuted sums, a programme of tree planting was undertaken during the 2024/25 winter as part of a long-term plan to increase the diversity of native tree species on Hell Wath and to begin replacing ash and elm trees dying from disease.

22 species of native trees and shrubs were selected and over 500 specimens were planted by volunteers across Hell Wath. The chosen planting sites included alongside meadow edges with the intention of forming a shrubby margin between grassland and woodland. In time this will provide food and shelter for the bird population.

The newly planted trees are being monitored and maintained by volunteer 'Tree Guardians'. Although we did lose some as a result of the long dry summer, most did survive and we look forward to watching them thrive and grow in the coming years.

We have been concerned about the current state and ongoing management of trees, woodland and hedgerows on Hell Wath for some time. In 2024 FOHW commissioned a tree survey by an independent expert which identified key areas of concern. Following that report we tried, without success, to engage North Yorkshire Council and the Council Tree Officer to agree specific actions that could be taken to address some of the areas of concern. In 2025 The Skell Valley Project funded a review of the woodlands on Hell Wath and the drafting of a comprehensive Woodland Management Plan in line with the UK Forestry Standard management planning criteria. This plan was put forward to North Yorkshire Council, but we have been informed that they are unable to accept it because they cannot commit to resourcing such a plan and do not want their acceptance of a plan for Hell Wath to set a precedent for other sites.

To try to move this forward, FOHW put forward a proposal to carry out specific tree work over the 2025/26 winter period in the old Quarry area and around the pond, funded and completed by FOHW and the National Trust. This proposal has also been rejected by North Yorkshire Council because

*"we are in the processes of finalising the NYC Tree Policy, which will underpin the future management of our tree asset stock and from this policy we will produce our Tree and Woodland Strategy (arguably a much larger body of work) which will include the management of all our current and future woodlands assets.*



# Annual Report

*Although we can often think that time is short, and things need to be done in the now, trees and woodlands live in timeframes that far outspan our own and we have been given an opportunity, and the time, to produce a strategy that will benefit all our woodlands and guide us on their management.*

*In the short term, we will avoid carrying out small pockets of work until approval from all bodies is granted and a comprehensive approach is agreed."*

We will continue to lobby North Yorkshire Council to undertake specific tree work if we can resource the work and believe it is in the best interests of Hell Wath habitats.

## **Other Work / Projects / Points of Note**

We are very fortunate to have an active and interested membership and cohort of volunteers who organise and take part in many projects throughout the year. Here is a quick summary of some:

### **Litter Picking**

Organised litter picks are arranged from time to time, but we are also grateful to a number of volunteers who litter pick on a regular basis whilst out walking on their own.

### **Butterfly Monitoring**

Organised weekly butterfly monitoring takes place on a weekly basis from March to September. The findings are uploaded to a national database so that trends in numbers and species can be tracked.

### **Bat Monitoring**

A number of bat boxes are located around Hell Wath. One of our Trustees is a licensed bat surveyor and he leads bat walks to use an endoscope camera to look into each bat box to see if it is occupied and take pictures to identify the species.

### **Fungi Surveys**

Organised Fungi Forays have taken place on Hell Wath to discover and identify species of fungi found in various habitats across the site. Individual volunteers are also active in seeking out and identifying fungi. One indefatigable member has recorded 85 species of fungi throughout the year, including 7 species of waxcap.

### **Plant Surveys**

We have a number of Trustees and volunteers with specialist knowledge in the field of plant identification. Organised surveys have taken place to identify plant species in various habitats across Hell Wath, with some specific surveys arranged for areas of interest, such as the areas enclosed with rabbit-proof fencing and the old Quarry floor.



# Annual Report

309 species of vascular plants have been recorded on site to date. Previously unrecorded plants that have emerged this year in the protected enclosures include: quaking grass, spring sedge, field scabious and a hybrid St John's Wort. Small toadflax was newly recorded on the cleared quarry floor and north of the pond, one plant of small teasel appeared in the area cleared of Himalayan Balsam and brambles.

## Tawny Owls

We are delighted to report that a pair of Tawny Owls nested and raised chicks in one of our owl boxes this year. The owl boxes were only put up in the 2024/5 winter so we are pleased that they were successful so soon.

## Forest Schools Event

This took place on the last weekend of the summer school holidays and provided a range of fun craft, storytelling and nature-based activities for school age children. The weather wasn't too kind but everyone who attended had a great time.

## Archaeological Dig

Hell Wath has a rich and varied history. The Ripon History and Archaeology Tribe undertook a series of surveys and small digs on site over the summer with participation from a number of FOHW volunteers. There were interesting finds from the medieval to the military era – including a cache of live ammunition !

## Improved Accessibility

Funded by North Yorkshire Council from commuted sums, dropped kerbs and a new tarmac path were installed from the Hell Wath Lane car park to the Ripon Panthers Clubhouse. This significantly improved accessibility for disabled visitors.

## Member Activity Groups

We continue to hold regular MAG meetings which give members of the Charity a chance to propose, discuss and plan actions and activities. The meeting this year have been well attended and many topics of interest have been discussed.

## Trustee Meetings

The Trustees have met regularly throughout the year to ensure the Charity is run effectively and in accordance with it's Constitution and the regulation of the Charity Commission.

Thank You

The Trustees of the Friends of Hell Wath

# Friends of Hell Wath

Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Charity No 1195980

## **Income and Expenditure Statement Financial Year 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025**

	£	£
<b>Income:</b>		
Local Lotto Funding	182.00	
Plantlife Grant	1000.00	
Ripon City 2024/25 Grant	1000.00	
SVP Grant for hay baler	120.00	
SVP Grant for Minibus	540.00	
2025 Membership Fees	155.00	
Donations	20.00	
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>3017.00</b>
<b>Expenditure:</b>		
Ripon Mens Shed - Hay Baler (re-imbursed by SVP)	-120.00	
Additional keys for Clubhouse	-36.00	
Hard Hats for Quarry works	-20.97	
Hire of Allhallowgate Hall for AGM (to be re-imbursed by SVP)	-44.38	
Hire of Minibus for Members Trip (re-imbursed by SVP)	-540.00	
New Riverside bench	-480.00	
Rabbit-proof fencing	-977.04	
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>-2218.39</b>
<b>NET INCOME</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>798.61</b>
<b>Opening Bank Account Balance</b>		2235.60
Net income for the period		798.61
<b>Closing Bank Balance</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>3034.21</b>

Prepared by:

Carol Leo, Treasurer, 21st April 2025

**FRIENDS OF HELL WATH**

England & Wales - Charity number 1195980

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# Accounts

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# 2025 Annual report

This report has

been written by active members with different elements written by different members. This will hopefully include more people next year.

## **Butterfly Survey** (Jem Dunford)

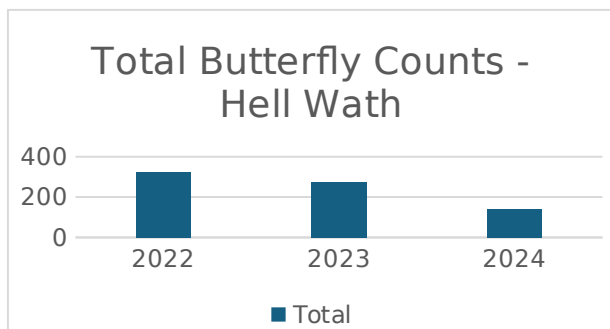
We have a team of 11 volunteers who undertake annual butterfly monitoring as part of the National UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme.

The volunteers are in groups of two and three on a weekly rota between April and October planning each weeks walk to try and catch the optimum conditions (High sunshine and temperature with low wind). They walk an agreed route, divided into 8 sections. Only butterflies seen within a set distance from the route during the timed walk are included.

This is a very social activity with members taking part in training in identification but relying on shared 'discussions' to agree what white flappy thing has been seen. The walk is leisurely and tends to be on fair weather days. Who could ask for more.

New volunteers are always welcome, no experience is needed. You would be teamed up with volunteers when have done it before (who were all novices when they started in 2022).

## ***2022-2024 overall count totals.***



## 2023-2024 Hell Wath species variation.

Small Skipper			Brimstone			Large White			Small White			Green Veined White			Orange Tip		
1	0	-1	5	1	-4	24	2	+	34	21	-	2	4	+2	16	8	-8
							9	5			13						
Small Copper			Holly Blue			Common Blue			Red Admiral			Small Tortoiseshell			Comma		
4	0	-4	12	0	-12	1	0	-1	55	5	-50	3	1	-2	15	2	-
																	13
Wall Brown			Gatekeeper			Small Heath			Speckled Wood			Meadow Brown			Ringlet		
1	1	=	2	1	-1	1	1	=	35	25	-10	60	40	-20	2	1	-1

As you can see Hell Wath exhibited a mirror of the national decline reported last year in the national press, led by the damp and cooler spring and early summer.

The overall decline on Hell Wath over the three years underlines the need to further the work in habitat improvement to allow for rich grasslands, woodlands and managed scrub boundaries.

### **Plant Survey** (Matthew Adamson)

A project was started in 2024 to record all the plants growing on Hell Wath. To do this the site was divided into 108 50m squares and all the plants growing in each square were recorded. The results will tell us which parts of the site have the highest plant diversity, and which plants are the most widespread across the site.

A small team of volunteers went out regularly to record the squares systematically over the year and the results were entered into a mapping database called MapMate from which distribution maps could be generated showing exactly where each plant was growing.

All vascular plants and bryophytes were recorded and we also included in the survey lichens and fungi. The survey will continue for another year and at the end of 2025 we hope to have available distribution maps for all the plants of Hell Wath which will form a baseline for future planning and a historical record of the site as it was a quarter of the way into the twenty-first century.

Taxa Categories	Vascular Plants	Bryophytes	Fungi	Lichen
	290	62	68	10

Total	430	
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Of these, 123 taxa have been recorded from only one square while at the other extreme Lords-and-Ladies (*Arum maculatum*) is the most widespread plant, recorded in 87 squares.

Our coverage of the vascular plants is fairly comprehensive but more systematic recording of the lichen and bryophytes is needed for 2025. Most of the fungi were recorded in two field visits by the Mid Yorkshire Fungus Group led by Andy Woodall.

### **Tree & Shrub Planting** (Matthew Adamson)

Our ongoing plant survey indicates that the tree and shrub diversity on Hell Wath is very low. The canopy woodland trees are mostly Sycamore, Elm and Ash of which the last two are suffering high mortality from Dutch Elm Disease and Ash Dieback.

The scrub and woodland edge habitats are dominated by Hawthorn and Blackthorn with very few other species present.

A tree and shrub planting programme was planned for 2024/2025 to increase species diversity on site and with the help of commuted sums from NYCC the following species have been sourced:

Species	N	Species	N
Sessile Oak	5	Dogwood	50
Small-leaved lime	5	Guelder Rose	50
Hornbeam	5	Wayfaring Tree	50
Field maple	5	Dog Rose	50
Walnut	5	Sweet Briar	50
Sweet chestnut	5	Field Rose	50
Cherry	5	Wild Privet	50
Rowan	5	Holly	25
Crab apple	25	Yew	10

The trees are being planted in the woodland to replace the ashes and elms, and the shrubs and climbers are being planted along the woodland edge and in the wood meadows and glades.

### **Wildflower seeds and Planting** (Jane Horton)

As part of our work with Plantlife, volunteers have planted both perennial plug plants and sown annual flower seed in areas of Hell Wath highlighted as being

of particular promise as wood meadow/wildflower areas to increase biodiversity.

Wood meadows are critically endangered in the UK and Hell Wath is an ideal site to establish more as it already has some promising areas of open meadow surrounded by a mix of scrub and woodland.

There are 4 areas noted by Plantlife as areas A,B,C and D (see attached map). These areas were scythed or mown prior to planting/seeding and will require scything or mowing again in Feb to enable a short sward therefore less competition from meadow grasses around the new growth. The seed was sourced from plantlife and from areas local to Ripon to ensure compatibility between flora and environment.

The table below shows the species identified in each target area. The areas in brackets are the grid squares on FOHW own plant survey map.




Area A (K4/5)	Area B (L5, L6, M5, M6)	Area C (N5)	Area D (G3/4)	Field 8b (Choir School Field)
Kidney Vetch Melancholy Thistle Hawkbit Trefoil Mallow Rattle	Scabious Teasel Mallow Hawkbit Burnet Rattle	Ragged robin Water avens	Scabious Hawkbit Burnet Hedge Bedstraw Honesty Evening Primrose Agrimony Teasel Mallow Meadow Cranesbill Oxeye Daisy Rattle	Rattle Cranesbill Oxeye Daisy Teasel Knapweed Wild Marjoram Purple Toadflax Agrimony Vipers Bugloss St Johns Wort Devils Bit Scabious Small Scabious

### **Himalayan Balsam** (Jem Dunford)

After the application of Himalayan Balsam Rust over the last years (funded by DEFRA and provided by CABI) monitoring was undertaken to see if it has taken. We are pleased to say that there is clear evidence of the spread of the rust with damage to leaves and stems up to 65m from the application sites.

Large areas (not where rust has been applied) were pulled and scythed this year with support from members, volunteers and local scout, guide, cub and brownie groups. Scything of open areas was undertaken as well although previous scrub clearance left stumps that made it difficult at

times to scythe low enough. This has slowed the spread and growth but needs further focussed work.

<b>Healthy Himalayan Balsam Leaf.</b>	<b>Rust Affected Leaf Found on Hell Wath (Late Summer)</b>	<b>Rust Affected Stem Found on Hell Wath (Early Summer)</b>
		

## **Bats**

A lot of work has been undertaken this year to both record the bats on the site as well as improve the habitats for the bats.

John Pearse has taken a lead on this and was able to secure almost 30 bat boxes for free from the Bat Conservation Trust. These needed securing on trees and we were fortunate to secure two new members with training and qualifications in working at height in trees and with ropes.

Over several visits these bat boxes were installed with different types of boxes installed together around each tree.

The regional bat group then offered both the equipment and the training for members to undertake night walks with sensors that recorded the frequency of bat calls. 6 species of bats have been recorded so far.

Endoscope cameras have been used to record bats roosting in the boxes and it is clear that most of the boxes have been occupied this year.

A special mention needs to go to a junior member, Ollie Pearse. For his D of E Bronze volunteering he undertook regular static recording of bat activity. This involved coming on site, leaving recording devices in agreed locations and then recording the data produced overnight.

## **Other Key Things Of Note**

1. Plantlife accepted Hell Wath as a partnership site. There will be details about this at the meeting.
2. The Skell Valley Project continues to support FOHW as it moves into the last year of the project. Further scrub management has been undertaken, footpath surface Improvements have been completed and support has been given to habitat improvement work in the Quarry. The Skell Valley project again funded the every successful Forest Schools Event at the end of the Summer Holidays. FOHW Trustees have committed to fund this itself again this year.

In 2025 the SVP will install interpretation panels with text agreed with FOHW, NYC and local community groups. There will also be a way-marked family walk created to encourage families to walk and explore the site. Wooden roundels will be added to the benches and other sympathetic markers will be used to show the route.

The footpath from Studley Roger has been improved to make it an accessible route with levelling to the surface undertaken and gates at each end installed that can be opened from each side (and pushed both ways) by any user including wheelchair users.

FOHW and Ripon Disability Forum are now working with NYC to make further improvements to Whitcliffe Lane so that the route from Hell Wath to the city centre can be fully accessible on one side of the road. Cllr Williams has met with Jem Dunford and walked this route and will take the information forward as a potential budget task for 2025-2026.

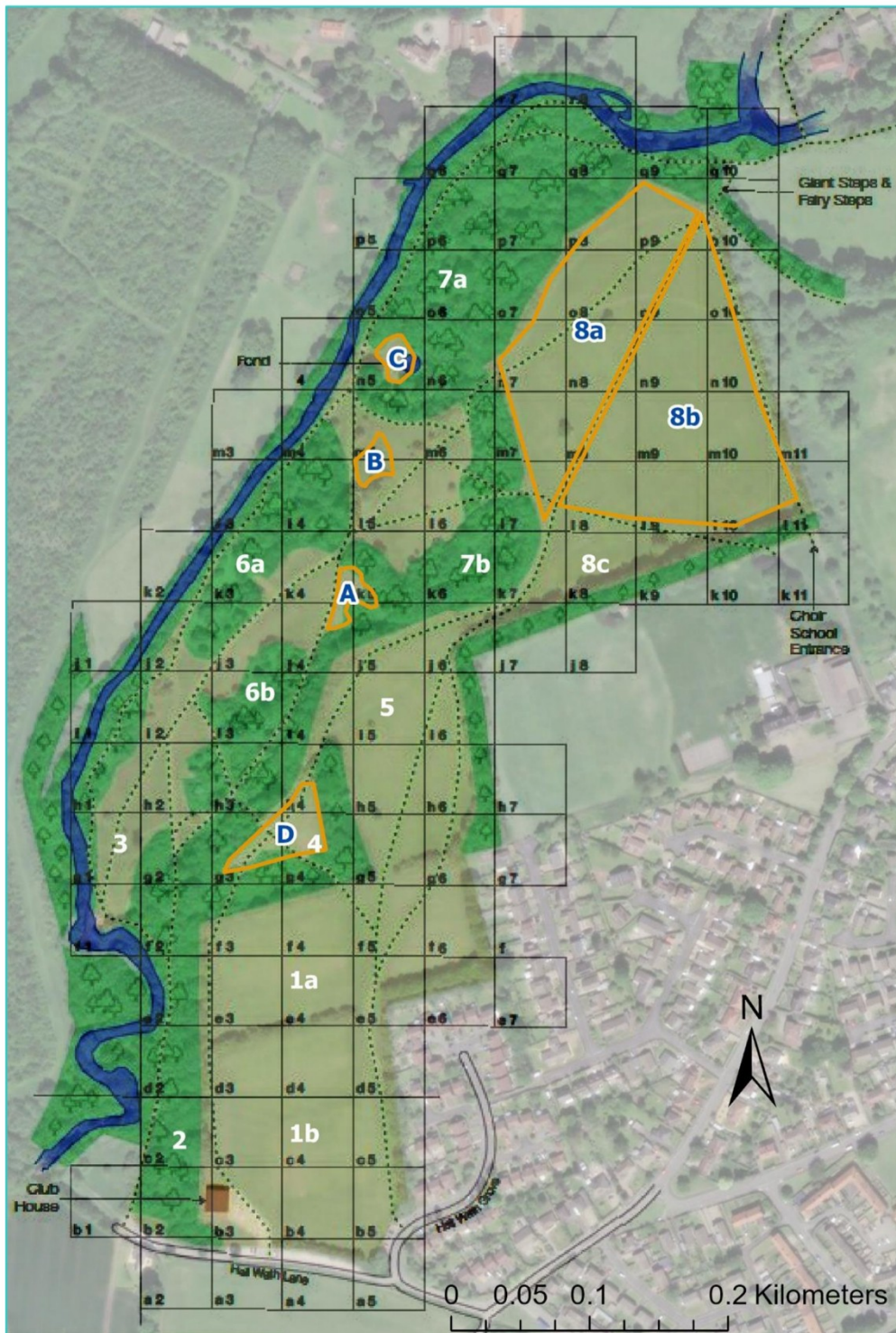
When the SVP project comes to an end at the end of 2025 part of the legacy of it will be permanent and continued ranger support to FOHW and other sites included in the project.

3. Two new log benches have been added to the site. The first was a donation from a local family in memory of family member. Sourcing this bench was difficult but eventually one was donated by the National Trust from Fountains Abbey. It came from a tree brought down in storms. The family made a cash donation to FOHW in lieu of the purchase.

The second bench was created from a tree brought down in the storms in the spring. This tree has been left in situ with the section crossing a path cut and moved to make a bench. A local supporter and Hell Wath user volunteered their time and effort to cut level tops on the benches for us.

4. Owl Boxes and Hay Balers were commissioned this year from the Ripon Men's Shed. Three Tawny Owl boxes were made and have

been installed and a hand baler made to help manage the grass cuttings created from scything. They did this at a much cheaper price than commercially sourced alternatives.



**Map 3:** Map provided by FOHW including site parcel numbers 1a-8c (white) and site recording squares (black grid-squares). Orange parcels A-D, 8a & 8b were surveyed by Plantlife specifically for this report. \*Georeferenced map created in ArcGIS under license.



# Friends of Hell Wath

Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Charity No 1195980

## **Income and Expenditure Statement** **Financial Year 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024**

	£	£
<b>Income:</b>		
Local Lotto Funding	191.00	
Membership Fees	145.00	
Donations	457.10	
Ripon City Grant	1000.00	
Hall Hire for AGM reimbursed by Skell Valley Project	43.00	
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>1836.10</b>
<b>Expenditure:</b>		
Purchase of Wildflower Seeds & Materials	-252.50	
PL Insurance	-129.10	
Nails for bat boxes	-38.30	
Owl Boxes & materials	-165.50	
Stationery	-9.86	
Hire of hall for AGM	-43.00	
Acetate Maps of Hell Wath	-215.88	
Indoor stand for banner	-28.00	
Tree survey	-750.00	
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<u>-1632.14</u>	
<b>NET INCOME</b>	<b>£ 203.96</b>	
<b>Opening Bank Account Balance</b>		2031.64
Net income for the period		<u>203.96</u>
<b>Closing Bank Balance</b>	<b>£</b>	<b><u>2235.60</u></b>

Prepared by:  
Carol Leo, Treasurer  
5th April 2024

**FRIENDS OF HELL WATH**

England & Wales - Charity number 1195980

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# Accounts

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# Chairperson's Report - January 2024

## Friends of Hell Wath Trustees Annual Report January 2024

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### **Membership**

When the charity started operating the first membership ran until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023. The first membership was made of 34 members, including the 5 trustees.

The second membership cycle started on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023 and will run until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024 and the membership fee was maintained at £5. As of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023, FOHW has 32 members including 6 completely new members.

Of the members that did not renew their membership only three had been active during the first 18 months of operation.

The membership now includes members with specific ecological knowledge and background which is a real enhancement of the capacity of the charity.

The membership fees and membership donations in the first cycle were spent on wildflower seeds and associated materials, supported by £5 contributions for the specific 'grow at home' wildflower project.

This year the membership fees have been invested in 3 Tawny Owl nesting boxes which were commissioned through Ripon Man Shed.

### **Community Engagement**

The FOHW website was launched this year. This cost of this was met by the Skell Valley Project and a significant reduction in charge by BRONCO, a local website company. The Trustees would like to thank both organisations and are exceedingly happy with the end result. An update on visitor data will be offered at the AGM.

Facebook continues to be an important part of our community engagement with 850 followers to date. However, it would be fair to say that social media fatigue means that this has declined in its impact and is also probably not the best way to engage with a younger audience.

### **Grants**

Ripon City Council has awarded FOHW 4-year partnership funding of £1000 a year. This is a great bonus and helps allow for longer term planning. This is on top of previous grants that have allowed for the purchase of tools and storage (installation of the purchased storage has been delayed by planned works behind the Panther's clubhouse).

### **Partnerships.**

The Skell Valley Project (SVP) is a significant partner. The project provides 3 days a month Countryside Ranger support and approximately £30,000 of funded work



# Chairperson's Report - January 2024

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on site. This year the focus has been on developing the scrub management further as well as the major repairs to the Statutory footpath. We also continue to benefit from guided activities and training offered by the Skell Valley Project as well as funding for community activities like the Forest Schools Day and meetings such as our AGM. We have also mentioned that the SVP provided the funding for our website.

In the upcoming 18 months the SVP will undertake repairs to the Fairy Steps, begin planning and installation of on-site Interpretation Panels and help further with the scrub management plans.

We have also been fortunate to have started to benefit from the support of Open Country. After some initial work commissioned by NYC and SVP, scything and clearing grass, they have undertaken further work laying new path surfaces, tree planting and further grass clearance. Open Country normally charges £250 for a full day's work with their volunteers and support staff. This is immensely good value as it usually involves over ten people for a full day and all the equipment is brought with them. In addition, extra days have been provided without any charge when other activities have fallen through.

DEFRA/CABI: The DEFRA funded and CABI produced Himalayan Balsam rust has been applied for the second and final year. This will be monitored going forward for evidence of taking hold and spreading. The funding for this was way beyond the capacity of FOHW or NYC and the technical facilities and skills of CABI are unique in this area. This project would have been impossible without the support of both organisations.

The Harrogate Army Foundation College remains an important partner. This year's works have included more physically demanding work including some path repairs and turning over areas for wildflower propagation. Making use of the AFC is proving harder as we have completed many of the more intensive physical jobs and are moving into a greater level of surveying and monitoring and so we will look for pairing up with other organisations to provide enough work in the future.

In 2022/2023 FOHW started the process of seeking Partner Site status with a Charity called the Woodmeadow Trust. Before this could be confirmed this charity became financially vulnerable. Fortunately, their assets and existing partnerships were taken on by a national charity called Plantlife. We are pleased to say that after engagement with Plantlife, Hell Wath is being accepted as partner site and FOHW will benefit from support from Plantlife going forward. Details will follow in the new year.

## **Hedgerow/Tree Planting**

Last year we stated that no new areas of hedgerow planting would be started, with a focus on completing existing areas of planting. The key focus was therefore the boundary between the Choir School estate and Hell Wath. This was especially important as the later planting in 2022 and then a prolonged dry spell had resulted in between 30% and 50% loss of whips planted. However, these



# Chairperson's Report - January 2024

have all been replaced and gaps have been filled and the lower end of this boundary was officially added to the Platinum Jubilee Canopy project (800 whips in total).

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We also filled the gap between the playing fields and secured this with fencing to allow the whips to mature in safety.

In the summer we were advised that NYC were offering us the chance to plant almost half a hectare of new trees on the site. After six months of planning planting was undertaken in the nature reserve part of the site and near the Giant Steps. This was achieved using more mature saplings provided by NYC and a further 450 whips provided by TCV. One area of planting will create a further small mammal corridor between the top and bottom halves of the site and the rest has thickened the areas of tree bordering the larger meadow nearest to the city centre. We were also able to thicken the planting between the playing fields for a richer future habitat.

## **Site Surveying**

Members are now undertaking an increasingly large amount of site ecological surveying, In 2022 members started weekly summer butterfly counts. With additional training on ID skills this has continued in 2023 and will be part of an annual schedule of work. The number and variety of butterflies is a key indicator of the health of the site.

Another such indicator is the presence of wax cap fungi and two separate fungi surveys have been undertaken with some sign of increased numbers and varieties in the area of the greatest scrub clearance.

With support of the Ripon Bat Group members have undertaken regular summer bat surveys using bat call meters provided by the Ripon Bat Group. There are six varieties of bats currently recorded on site. Through the Ripon Bat Group we have also been able to source almost 30 bat boxes that have been put up around the site. These will be monitored from the ground to look for evidence of roosting bats. Some are already inhabited. Please note that it is illegal for anyone other than licensed people to climb up and inspect these boxes, or interfere with them in any way.

Through the RCC Partnership funding the trustees have been able to commission a site tree survey that will be undertaken in the new year.

Through our membership a further development of our surveying will start in 2024. This will allow for easier organised and independent surveying/recording to be undertaken and details will follow in the new year.

## **Himalayan Balsam**

Himalayan Balsam clearing remains a major activity. The introduction of Scything has helped with this allow for more open areas of Balsam to be cleared in shorter periods of time.



# Chairperson's Report - January 2024

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Himalayan Balsam pulling in organised groups and by walking individuals continues to be important. Balsam should not be removed from the site to avoid infecting other areas. As a result, you will continue to see piles of pulled, snapped and stomped balsam during the summer and autumn months.

We are pleased to confirm that latest inspections show early signs that the Himalayan Balsam Rust application site has started to take. This is a long-term strategy but will, if successful be a key part of our strategy going forward.

## **Management Plan**

The first Management Plan was written in 2019 and was updated in 2022. The Management Plan is due for a full review in 2024. Throughout 2023 it has been clear that this Plan will have to evolve significantly from the original plan. It is expected that a central general plan will be supported with specific strategic plans for key ecological aspects of the site including:

1. Wildflowers & Grasslands
2. Trees
3. Waterways (Pond & River)
4. Invasive native and non-native species
5. Bats
6. Birds

These key areas will have specific strategic ambitions as well as more frequently reviewed action plans.

We are reviewing an option to have the new Management Plan written by external consultants, funded by the SVP. Members will be invited to take part in this review as well as support the community consultation that is required.

Key to the impact of this plan will be the clarity of ownership of the plan and the related responsibilities for implementing this. This will all be detailed in the final plan.

Cllr Stuart Martin  
Chairperson  
Trustees  
Friends of Hell Wath

# Friends of Hell Wath

Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Charity No 1195980

## **Income and Expenditure Statement Financial Year 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023**

	£	£
<b>Income:</b>		
Transfer from FOHW Community Voluntary Group	1095.23	
Charity Membership Fees	170.00	
Donations	587.00	
Receipts for Wildflower Seed Packs	120.00	
Local Lotto Funding	524.00	
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>2496.23</b>
<b>Expenditure:</b>		
Insurance	127.68	
Legal Fees	100.00	
Donation to Ripon Photographic Society (website photos)	75.00	
Purchase of Wildflower Seeds & Materials	161.91	
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<hr/>	<b>464.59</b>
<b>NET INCOME</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>2031.64</b>
<b>Opening Bank Account Balance</b>		0.00
Net income for the period		2031.64
<b>Closing Bank Balance</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>2031.64</b>

Presented by:

Carol Leo, Treasurer

Presented to the Annual General Meeting (18th Jan 2024)

**FRIENDS OF HELL WATH**

England & Wales - Charity number 1195980

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# Accounts

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# Chairperson's Report – January 2023

Page | 1 This Report is an amalgamation of the last annual report (July 2022) for the FOHW Community Voluntary Group (FOHW CVG) and what is now the first report for the FOHW Charity (FOHW) as the two have existed together during the transition period.

The FOHW CVG was formally wound up, by unanimous agreement, at the last AGM in July 2022.

The FOHW Charity is now established and has accepted it's first paid up members. It now has 31 members with a further 68 people on our volunteer supporter distribution list. The Members Activity Group (MAG) is now undertaking key work that the CVG undertook with the Trustees ensuring that all legal and good practise systems and policies are in place.

The first Trustees were:

Stuart Martin – Chair/Safeguarding  
Carol Leo – Vice Chair/Treasurer/Health & Safety  
Jem Dunford – Secretary/Child Protection  
Katie Scott – Social Media/Public Relations  
Malcolm Scott – Finance Officer

The Charity Number is: 11959980

The trustees will all step down at the first AGM as required by the constitution and a trustees elections are being held as part of the AGM.

## **Community Engagement**

Whilst much of the work of the committee and designated trustees has gone into establishing the charity much work has continued on Hell Wath although it is fair to say this has been done in difficult circumstances at times as some community opposition to planned works has been experienced.

What became clear through this is that whilst significant and wide-ranging engagement activities had taken place since the group formed in 2017, some residents had either not been aware of these, not engaged with these or not realised the significance of these.

A community meeting, that was not initiated by us, did prove to be an unexpected positive development and seems to have eased then reservations of many and also encouraged some of those still with reservations to join the charity. It also encouraged strong, yet unknown, supporters to also join and the charity now have a vibrant and growing group of active members who will have a formal voice in work going forward.

We have also benefited from significant support from other organisations and groups from Ripon and the surrounding area.



# Chairperson's Report – January 2023

## Grants

Page | 2 Ripon City Council again awarded FOHW CVG a grant of £1000. This has been used to purchase tools and equipment as well as the storage needed for these tools. With growing numbers of members and volunteers having tools they can use is essential. We are still awaiting formal permission from HBC and Tarmac for our placing the storage unit in the fenced area behind the Panthers' Clubhouse but the storage container has been purchased and it, and all the tools, are being stored by one of the trustees.

The tools and storage shed as assets of the CVG, were transferred to the ownership of the charity following agreement at the final CVG AGM.

## Partners

The Army Foundation College (AFC) in Harrogate are proving to be a very useful partner. Last summer 140 young soldiers gave 13 hours each completing work on Hell Wath including:

- Installing 4 log benches as part of the Ripon Disability Forum 'Take A Seat Campaign'. These were funded by a donation from the Locality Fund (Cllr Stuart Martin), Ripon Rowels and Ripon City Panthers and were supplied by Sawley Wood Mill.
- Removing damaged and broken fencing with barbed wire. This had caused injuries to dogs on the site and were a hazard to young children.
- Clearing large areas of Himalayan Balsam.
- Cut back brambles that were starting to encroach on the football playing fields.

We had expected another platoon coming down in June to undertake further work, unfortunately this work has had to be postponed.

The AFC representative is invited to attend, as an observer, all trustee meetings.

The Skell Valley Project (SVP) is a significant partner. The project provides 3 days a month Countryside Ranger support and approximately £30 000 of funded work on site. SVP works have so far included:

- The recent vital clearance of encroaching scrub was a major and visible piece of work. This is part of planned works to protect and enhance the grassland habitats (including their own volunteers). (Including their own volunteers).
- Clearance of the pond and fencing around it to deter dogs entering it and leaving flea and tic treatments in the water
- Guided walks on themes as part of an on-going monthly programme.
- Funding for the amazing Forest Schools family event last August ( as part of the Ripon Together Summer of Play). 80 children and 170 family adults took part in this and it will be repeated this year.
- Secured the participation of the Royal Engineers in planned restoration and protective works for then Fairy Steps, restoring them to their WW1 condition with protection from flood erosion.

The AFC representative is invited to attend, as an observer, all trustee meetings.



# Chairperson's Report – January 2023

Representatives of Harrogate Borough Council and Ripon City Panthers are also invited, as observers, to all Trustee meetings.

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## **River Bank Repairs**

In 2019 £40k of funding was secured from NYCC to undertake repairs to the river bank path near the Rustic Bridge. As COVID took hold this work was postponed. We worked hard throughout the pandemic to ensure this funding was retained and ring fenced to these works and, on the appointment of a new Countryside & Education Officer for Hell Wath this work was completed in 2021. The substantive work weathered the floods well although some of the stone bridging the gap between the stone baskets and the bank will need replacing and securing in a different way.

## **Hedgerow Planting**

The Woodland Trust and TCV both donated hedgerow whips to us, including some delivered during the pandemic and 'heeled out' until volunteer activities could resume. We planted most of these this spring. Some were planted to gap fill internal hedgerow areas. Sadly some were damaged and removed but most are secure. Our longest run of planting (approximately 800 whips) is designed to, in the long term, create a natural boundary to the Choir School estate. Much of the boundary fence has been removed during the development and we are asking HBC to either reinstate this fence or seek to get the developer to do this.

The fantastic outcome of this specific planting is that it has been accepted as part of the 'Queen's Canopy'. This Jubilee initiative is a national one and there is a permanent online record of all the planting that has been accepted as part of the canopy.

The very dry summer of 2022 had a significant affect on our planted whips, of various ages. Members undertook a survey of the whips in the autumn of 2022 and assessed that over 400 whips would be needed to replace dead whips and fill remaining gaps in existing planting.

450 whips had already been donated by the Woodland Trust and these will be planted in the spring to replace dead whips and fill remaining gaps in areas where planting has already started.

No new areas will be planted this year as we focus on maintain the whips already planted as far as is possible.

## **Site Walk**

Our own volunteers have undertake extensive removal of Himalayan Balsam, litter picked, removed dig waste as well as the significant hedgerow planting. With our new membership we were able to take a new approach to our annual site walk with members leading specific walks. One looked at wild flowers and one at hedgerows. The group leaders have both written detailed reports from this and we now hope to develop specific plans for these aspects of the site. A third group walked the boundary and identified issues and opportunities in this area. The loss of a boundary around the choir school site was evident with both residents and Hell Wath users raising concerns about this.



# Chairperson's Report – January 2023

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Sadly all three groups identified the significant presence of disease in ash and elm trees on site. It is likely that many of these trees will be lost in the next few years. We have raised with HBC the need for a tree plan that will allow for replanting with alternative or complimentary species.

The current position is that if any tree (dead or alive) is at risk of falling in an area that poses a risk to people or property we must report it via the HBC portal and removal will then be considered by HBC and. If needed, removal work undertaken by HBC.

We have requested that any trees that are cut down are used to create log piles on site if this is permissible within disease control regulations.

## **Himalayan Balsam**

One of the new members of the charity shared the benefits of their regular Balsam Bashing in one area over five years and more intensive and targeted pulling has been the focus this year.

We have adapted our methods this year reflecting this and have promoted the benefits of people, families and groups taking on an area of the site and pulling balsam whenever they can.

We have also encouraged the 'Take 20' model inviting anyone coming on Hell Wath to pull plants. We have promoted this online and put posters up around the site telling people about this.

A very recent development is that, after over two years of trying, we have been able to secure DEFRA funding for the inclusion of Hell Wath in national trials for the use of Himalayan Balsam Rust on Hell Wath with volunteer monitors in place who have been trained by CABI and will also apply the next doses of Rust next year. We have secured their support of HBC and the SVP in this initiative and now understand that sites within the Nidderdale AONB are now joining the trial. This is as a direct result of our raising the option with SVP discussions. They, like us, had not heard of this option until a member of the Ripon community contacted us about this. They should be congratulated for their initiative and support.

The impact of the rust on our balsam population will be monitored as part of the national trials.

## **Grassland Management**

It has become clear that reliance on annual grass cut if the site is not a possibility. There was an unexpected grass cut this year but this is unlikely to be repeated.

In seeking ways of addressing this to allow the improvement of the grassland habitats it has become clear that single annual cuts mainly serve agricultural purposes and not the needs of ecology.

Ideally areas of grass are cut at different times of year with some being left uncut for overwintering insects and small mammals. It also requires the removal of cut grass to ensure that the soil does not become too nutritious which favours rich grass growth and inhibits flower growth.

We are therefore looking to develop a grassland management strategy which will involve manual cutting of as many areas that can be managed and the rest being left uncut. The cutting will happen at different times of the spring, summer and autumn to favour flowers growing at different times of year.



# Chairperson's Report – January 2023

Page | 5 We are also initiating a wildflower cultivation project which has been launched and more detail will be given at the AGM.

## **Scrub Improvement**

A strategy has been developed to manage scrub incursion and the quality of the scrub habitat that remains. This strategy learns from the challenges and mistakes in the first piece of work with a focus on manual work by supervised volunteers rather than the use of heavy machinery (other than a chipper). The remains will be used for path improvement, dead hedging or habitat piles.

## **Other**

Some of our members have been given training in Butterfly Monitoring and weekly monitoring walks were undertaken and the results fed into the national database as well as maintained by FOHW.

Butterflies are a key indicator of the strength of biodiversity on the site and the outcomes will be used to develop further strategies. This has been facilitated and resourced by the Skell Valley Project.,

Some members have also undertaken Moth monitoring training through the North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Group. We will look at ways that this can be used on the site.

Since its inception in 2017 the FOHW CVG and now FOHW has grown to be a strong advocate for Hell Wath. It's prime role is to gather the expertise of professionals and knowledgeable amateurs and then work to secure the skills and resources to undertake the needed work to put this guidance into action. As a charity it will now be able to bid for, and secure, further funding as well as advocate for the site as it becomes a very small part of a very large estate managed by the new unitary authority.

We look forward to the continued support of the members, volunteers and wider community partners in meeting the aspirations of the management plan.

Cllr Stuart Martin  
Chairperson  
Trustees  
Friends of Hell Wath