

Charity Number: 1196777

Mersey Rivers Trust

Report and financial statements
For the year ended 31 March 2024

Mersey Rivers Trust
Reference and administrative information
for the year ended 31 March 2024

Charity number 1196777

Registered office and operational address Riverview A17 Embankment Business Park Heaton
Mersey Stockport SK3 3GN

Trustees Trustees who served during the year and up to the date of this report were as follows:

Dr Keith Hendry	Chair	
Professor Peter Batey	Trustee	Retired 6 th November 2023
Mr Christopher Findley	Trustee	
Mr Terence Clive Gaskell	Trustee	Retired 6 th November 2023
Mr Nicolas Carter	Trustee	
Mrs Sarah Jenner	Trustee	
Mr David Thompson	Trustee	
Dr Stephen Boulton	Trustee	
Mr Alex Clegg	Trustee	
Ms Francesca Sullivan	Trustee	

Trustees who held title to property belonging to the charity during the reporting period or at the date of approval were: None

Key management Name Mr Paul Henbrey Operations and Delivery Director

personnel Name John Sanders Strategic Planning and Development Director

Bankers Name Triodos
Address Deanery Road, Bristol, BS1 5A

Solicitors Name Slater Heelis
Address 86 Deansgate, Manchester, M3 2ER DX 14310 Manchester 1

Independent Jennifer Daniel FCCA DChA Slade & Cooper Limited
Examiner Beehive Mill, Jersey Street, Manchester, M4 6JG

Mersey Rivers Trust
Trustees' annual report
for the year ended 31 March 2024

The trustees present their report and the unaudited financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2024.

Reference and administrative information set out on page 1 forms part of this report. The financial statements comply with current statutory requirements, the charity's constitution and the Statement of Recommended Practice - Accounting and Reporting by Charities: SORP applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102.

Objectives and activities

The charity was created in 1998 to work in the River Mersey catchment in Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Cheshire, Lancashire and Derbyshire and has the following objectives:

- To promote, encourage and where applicable deliver projects for the preservation, restoration, and development of urban and rural waterways and their environs, including adjacent estuarine and coastal areas as defined in the area of benefit, for the benefit of the public environment and its wildlife.
- To advance education by raising public awareness of the issues relating to securing, improving, and maintaining such urban and rural waterways and their environs.
- To promote and where applicable deliver projects for the use of and access to such urban and rural waterways and watersides in the interests of social welfare for recreation and other leisure-time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the public.

The trustees have reviewed the objectives of the Trust and agreed they are still valid.

Since September 2014, the charity has been a Rivers Trust, part of a national network of Rivers Trusts. The charity pays an annual fee and gains the support of the regional and national directors in carrying out Trust activities including employment of staff. Staff are entitled to a Rivers Trust pension scheme.

In June 2017 the Healthy Waterways Trust (operating under the name of the Healthy Rivers Trust) merged with the Mersey Basin Rivers Trust with a consequential change of name to the Mersey Rivers Trust. The charity continued to operate as a member of the Rivers Trust and benefits from a wider volunteer base and the utilisation of the skills and experience of its staff and Trustees. The Trust converted to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation on 20 June 2022.

As in recent years the charity has focused on research into water quality and identification and implementation of improvement and engagement projects. It has also been a valuable forum for discussion between local authorities and water professionals. The charity has engaged with local communities as well as professional networks.

The Trustees have identified a number of key long term strategies to help deliver the aims and objectives of the Trust. The Fisheries Strategy aimed at returning native fish species to our rivers has been developed and been implemented. A second strategy, Access and Recreation aimed at improving access to rivers and waterbodies for the purpose recreational activities such as swimming, water sports, walking, cycling and fishing is under development. Action plans identifying short and long term action to deliver these strategies have also been developed.

The charity is committed to working with local groups and volunteers to report and tackle the major pollution issues affecting our rivers such as sewage overflows, industrial pollution, and fly tipping. In addition, we work with Local Authorities, Politicians, Water Companies and other private companies to highlight issues, develop and implement improvements and identify funding.

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The involvement of local volunteers continues to be a key focus area. The charity has engaged with 200 volunteers (in excess of 1000 volunteer hours) in the reporting period to help deliver Citizen Science monitoring, invasive species control, riverside litter picks and river restoration projects. The Trust actively supports groups who work to clean up and enhance local rivers such as the Tame Working Group, Beacon (River Bollin action group) and several "Friends" groups (volunteers who have particular interest in a river or area).

The trustees review the aims, objectives and activities of the charity each year. This report looks at what the charity has achieved and the outcomes of its work in the reporting period. The trustees report the success of each key activity and the benefits the charity has brought to those groups of people that it is set up to help. The review also helps the trustees ensure the charity's aims, objectives and activities remained focused on its stated purposes.

The trustees have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims and objectives and in planning its future activities. In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives that have been set

Achievements and performance

The charity's main activities and who it tries to help are described below. All its charitable activities focus on the rivers, waterbodies and their environs in the Mersey Catchment and are undertaken to further the charity's charitable purposes for the public benefit and in line with FRS102. The Trust has continued to develop and grow to meet the extensive water quality, river habitat and flood risk issues in the Mersey Catchment and has a significant portfolio of approved and funded projects. Permanent staff numbers have remained constant however temporary staff have been employed to deliver peak workloads. The Trust was again awarded the hosting of three "Catchment Based Approach" (CaBA) catchment partnerships funded by DEFRA via the Environment Agency (£15k per partnership). The team contributed to developing Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) for Liverpool City Region, Greater Manchester and Cheshire.

In Cheshire, the Bentley Environmental Foundation-sponsored project focused on river restoration along part of Valley Brook, completing habitat surveys, designing project interventions, and securing landowner agreements. Community engagement included an Easter arts and crafts event for children, litter picks with the Crewe Clean Team, a corporate volunteering day with Bentley employees, and a career fair at Manchester Metropolitan University, where two trainee roles were filled. Additional outreach involved a Riverfly monitoring training session for 30 conservation students and initial engagement with local farms about sustainable farming through postcards and in-person visits.

The Trust managed significant work on Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) through the Cheshire Local Action Group (LAG) Fund (Defra funding). INNS surveys were conducted, and management data were transferred to GIS for future planning. Volunteer recruitment was highly successful, with 27 new volunteers contributing over 1,000 hours across 44 work parties, controlling 25km of riverbank. Four volunteers received training in INNS control, and the necessary equipment was purchased for volunteer groups. Volunteers were also supported with permits to use herbicides near water bodies.

This year saw interventions across nine farms in the Upper Weaver catchment, including installing 217 metres of guttering, 281 square metres of concreting in farmyards to help prevent pollution, and 1.7 kilometres of watercourse fencing to reduce livestock entering rivers and damaging river banks. Funding of £35,000 was awarded to support these interventions. Five water management plans were developed for farms, and a "Pie and Pint" event was held for engagement with farmers at Darley Brook.

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The charity continued its work with stakeholders through BEACON (Bollin Environmental Action and Conservation), organising catchment planning meetings, volunteer work parties, and social events to maintain strong relationships with members.

Collaboration with Stockport Council deepened this year, resulting in a successful application to the Environment Agency's (EA) Quick Wins fund. This funded natural flood management projects, including leaky dams and a flood attenuation basin at Bruntwood Park and Cheadle Golf Course. The Upper Mersey Catchment Partnership established three sub-groups focusing on priority watercourses. The Tame Working Group received particular attention, including a visit from a local MP and securing funding from the EA Fisheries Improvement Fund for river habitat improvement works. In Reddish Vale on the River Tame, additional funding from the Greater Manchester Environment Fund enabled the recruitment of three new volunteers from Brinnington, an area of social deprivation. Funding was also obtained for the Tame Working Group to provide power tools and scything training to enhance volunteering efforts further. The Micker/Norbury group worked on river restoration priorities for this tributary of the Upper Mersey, engaging 'Friends of' groups and training volunteers as River Guardians.

A new Senior Project Manager was appointed, who took over management of the Lower Mersey and Alt Crossens team, including the role of hosting the CaBA Catchment Partnerships. The team delivered a pilot Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) project for the new Liverpool City Region Headbolt Lane railway station, offsetting biodiversity loss from the station construction. The project enhanced wetlands, hedgerows, ponds, and woodlands, securing 24 BNG units. This project also helped the charity gain experience using the BNG metric and delivering various biodiversity interventions.

The Alt Catchment saw a successful bid for a £2.1 million Natural Flood Management (NFM) programme, designed to implement measures such as leaky dams, wetlands, and sand dune management across the River Alt catchment during 2024 to 2026. This builds on previous NFM work delivered during the report year, including 19 leaky dams at Howard's Pits and Little Wood and enhancing the River Alt wetland at Croxteth Park. The team also developed a river restoration project at Alt Meadows, liaising with the Liverpool City Council on integrating this work with commercial development plans.

In addition, the team completed a pesticide sampling project for the Environment Agency across the Alt/Crossens catchment, with results informing targeted interventions in high-contamination areas. The team completed the feasibility study for the Alt Weir removal, setting the stage for an application for funding for the project's removal phase. They also began a lowland peat monitoring project funded by Defra to provide local farms with data to improve water management and conservation practices on peat soils. The charity continued to support ecological surveys and worked on the Championing Coastal Coordination (3Cs) project, culminating in a stakeholder workshop for the development of a Mersey Estuary & Coastline "Blueprint" document.

Beneficiaries of our services

The Trust aims to improve the aquatic environment of the River Mersey catchment in the Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Merseyside, Lancashire and Derbyshire areas for the benefit of local communities, anglers and other river users, environmental action groups and other organisations with similar objectives. Improvements to the environment will benefit the public through cleaner and healthier rivers with improved access, education and awareness through public events and volunteer activities.

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Financial review

The Trust continues to be run on a sound and improving financial basis and has been successful in gaining funding for major projects across the catchment. Good financial management has maintained a positive cash flow hence reducing risk and ensuring creditors are paid within payment terms.

The total income received in the reporting period was £974,798 (£683,053:2023) and expenditure of £843,371 (£655,243 :2023). The net income/expenditure of £131,427 resulted from income received for in year projects which were delayed and will be completed in the following financial year and project efficiencies on unrestricted contract work.

The increase in income and expenditure compared with the last reporting period is largely due to the longer accounting period (12 months) than 2023 (9 months) resulting from the switch from an unincorporated charity to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation on 20 June 2022.

The key expenditure areas associated with charitable activities such as partnership hosting and project delivery are staff costs (salaries, National Insurance and Pension contributions) of £451,054. Staff costs on a like-for-like basis (pro rata to account for the longer accounting period) increased by 5% because of pay increases to reflect the higher cost of living, additional staff joining the pension scheme and temporary staff employed to deliver peak workload.

The Trust is almost wholly funded by grants and awards to complete environmental projects and initiatives. The principal source of funding is the Environment Agency through its Water and Environment Improvement Fund, Natural Flood Management Fund and Catchment Based Approach. However, the Trust identified this as a medium/low risk due to a potential reduction in future Government spending and has actively tried to find alternative funding sources to reduce the reliance on Environment Agency funding. The funding is used to deliver projects using Mersey Rivers Trust staff (staff costs recovery) and the use of contractors and consultants (project management). A small number of directly contracted works were carried out on behalf of our partners.

The Trust's unrestricted funds have increased to £416,445 (£331,484: 2023 for a 9-month reporting period) reflecting efficiency savings and small surpluses made on unrestricted contracts. The Trust has also identified additional projects which it will fund from unrestricted funds to be delivered in 2024/25.

Restricted funds increased to £99,415 (£52,758: 2023) mainly because of the carry-over of funding for multi-year projects.

Reserves policy

Reserves are that part of the Trust's funds which are freely available for its general purpose after it has met its commitments and covered its other planned expenditure. These unrestricted funds are needed to bridge the gap between the spending and receiving of income and to cover administrative, fundraising and support costs without which the Trust could not function. The trustees consider that due to the expansion and future growth plans for the Trust the ideal level of reserves as of 31st March 2024 would be in the region of £297,000 being 6 months (or 50%) of future annual base operating costs (2024/25) for salaries, insurance, accounting, governance and general administration costs.

The unrestricted "General Fund" of £416,254 includes MRT planned funding (£172,320) to deliver MRT identified projects. The balance of the General Fund of £243,943 will be regarded as 'MRT Reserves'. Reserves have increased by £44,531 from 2022/23 primarily as a result of efficiencies made on project delivery and a reduction in the amount spent on MRT identified projects included in the General Fund.

The reserves stand at 43% of base annual operating costs, lower than the stated reserve policy figure of 50%. The decrease in the percentage of reserves is mainly due to increased staff costs (additional

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staff to meet the expected increase in project delivery and strategic development). This will be offset in future years where possible by future project efficiencies and donations.

Plans for the future

We will continue to deliver our short-term plans which are aligned to our long-term objectives (2050 given the scale of the challenges faced in the Mersey Basin).

The 2050 outcomes will guide the shorter-term strategy for the growth and development of the Trust over the next three years. Allied to the longer-term outcomes, we have developed the following key priorities for the period 2024 to 2027:

- Continue to build robust survey evidence and deliver appropriate measures for river habitat and water quality enhancement in our priority catchments covering:
 - River Irk catchment
 - River Bollin catchment
 - River Tame catchment
 - River Alt catchment
- Additionally, we will continue to grow our activities in the Weaver/Gowy and the wider Alt/Crossens catchments which have had a lesser focus historically:
 - Continue to work with EA and Natural England on the Alt/Crossens engagement activities with local farming communities
 - Farm advice and support of interventions to reduce agricultural impact on receiving watercourses in the Weaver catchment.
 - Build relationships with local Authorities to develop partnership bids to fund measures to address flooding issues utilising Natural Flood Management techniques.
- The basin-wide footprint of the Trust is a key benefit so we can take a holistic approach. We will therefore seek to maintain the balance between activities in the upper Mersey basin (i.e. Greater Manchester) and the lower Mersey basin (i.e. Cheshire and Merseyside).
- Deliver natural flood management solutions targeted in dialogue with flood risk authorities to those communities that will benefit most from these solutions.
- Expand our education and engagement with local communities in our target catchments, increasing our River Guardian volunteers, volunteer inputs and encouraging local ownership ("Friends" groups).
- Continue to deliver the Trust's fisheries strategy including agreed priority actions, such as targeted monitoring, addressing migration barriers, physical habitat improvements and improving our engagement with the angling community.
- Completion of an access and recreation strategy for the river systems in the Mersey catchment.
- Improve access and aesthetic quality of the water environment in our priority catchments to encourage more people to gain benefits from their local waterways. This will particularly involve working with our volunteers and "Friends Groups" (including BEACON) with litter clean-ups and carrying out small-scale works to improve access to waterways and enhance biodiversity and river habitat.
- Enhance and expand our relationships with key delivery partners - principally other Third Sector organisations – to support future funding bids.
- Continue to strengthen our links to academic institutions in the Mersey Basin to identify opportunities for collaboration and encourage research into innovative solutions to the challenges we face in the catchment.
- The Trust will also review its operating structure to ensure a fit for purpose organisation designed to meet the significant water quality issues in the Mersey catchment.
- Development of additional key Strategies to include, Access and Recreation and Water Quality

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Structure, governance and management

Healthy Waterways Trust was constituted by Trust Deed dated 6 October 1998 and deed of variation dated 1st July 1999 and was a registered charity No. 01073152. The Trust was renamed The Mersey Rivers Trust in May 2017.

The Trust applied to the Charity Commission to convert to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The main driver for this action was to reduce the administrative burden of reporting to both the Charity Commission and Companies House (as a Limited Company). The Mersey Rivers Trust Limited Company has been closed and "struck off" the Companies House register. The application to become a CIO was accepted and registered on 25 November 2021. The Trust worked with the Charity Commission to transfer the assets and business of the original Trust to the new CIO which was completed on 20 June 2022.

The Trust constituted itself as a "Foundation CIO" whose only voting members are its charity trustees. The trustees are members of the charity, but this entitles them only to voting rights. The trustees have no beneficial interest in the charity.

Appointment of Trustees

The first and current trustees were appointed (and may be removed) by its board of trustees. There should be one third of the trustees or two trustees, whichever is the greater, of those attending a meeting to be quorate.

The charitable objectives of the Trust are such that the trustees believe that it is essential to ensure that the management of the charity is effective and in line with good practice in the charitable sector. In addition, the areas of activity require experience, knowledge and expertise in river basin management, water resources, environmental management and protection, local government and the voluntary sector. The trustees annually review the membership of the trust to ensure an appropriate balance of management, and more specialist expertise is available. New trustees are appointed following consideration by the existing trustees collectively. Trustees may serve for a maximum period of three years before standing down or seeking re-election. Each new Trustee undertakes an induction process based on Charity Commission guidance (CC3). Regular updates and events e.g. Charity Commission news, regulatory changes or potential issues are notified to the Trustees by the Directors.

All trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from the charity. Any expenses reclaimed from the charity are set out in note 8 to the accounts.

The Trustees delegate the day-to-day operation of the charity including its bank accounts to its two Executive Directors, Mr Paul Henbrey and Mr John Sanders. Governance and strategic direction to meet the objectives of the charity are led by the Trustees.

Related parties and relationships with other organisations

No trustee receives remuneration or other benefit for their work with the charity. Any contractual relationship with a related party must be disclosed: in the current or previous year, no such related party transactions were reported.

The charity does not have any subsidiaries. The Charity is a member of the national Rivers Trust movement, an umbrella organisation for local Rivers Trust in England, Wales and Ireland. The Rivers Trust campaigns on national issues and provides advice, guidance and support to local Trusts.

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Remuneration policy for key management personnel

Remuneration for key staff (Operations and Delivery Director and the Strategic Planning and Development Director) is aligned to the national Rivers Trust guidance "Pay Guide for Rivers Trusts October 2023".

The post of Director is designated as Grade 6 – "Director of a medium/large sized Trust". The appointment of Paul Henbrey was made in November 2016 and John Sanders in July 2019. Remuneration will be reviewed annually by the Trustees.

Risk management

The monitoring and management of risk is a dynamic process, and the charity faces some level of risk in the activities, events and contracts that it engages in. The trustees have a risk management strategy which comprises:

- an annual review of the principal risks and uncertainties that the charity may face;
- the establishment of policies, systems and procedures to mitigate those risks identified in the annual review; and
- the implementation of procedures, designed to minimise or manage any potential impact the charity should those risks materialise.
 - Governance risks - eg inappropriate organisational structure, difficulties recruiting trustees with relevant skills, conflict of interest;
 - Financial risks - eg accuracy and timeliness of financial information, adequacy of reserves and cash flow, diversity of income sources;
 - External risks - eg public perception and adverse publicity, demographic changes, government policy.

Compliance with law and regulation - eg breach of trust law and regulatory requirements of particular activities such as fund-raising.

The charity's review of its risk management will continue to help ensure:

- the charity's aims are achieved more effectively.
- significant risks are known and monitored enabling trustees to make a more effective contribution.
- there is improved forward planning.

Fundraising

The Trust does not carry out direct fundraising activities.

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Funds held as custodian trustee on behalf of others

The Trust does not hold funds or other assets on behalf of other individuals or organisations.

Statement of responsibilities of the trustees

Law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the charity's financial activities during the period and of its financial position at the end of the period. In preparing financial statements giving a true and fair view, the trustees should follow best practice and:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- State whether applicable UK Accounting Standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charity's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

The trustees' annual report has been approved by the trustees on 27 November 2024 and signed on their behalf by:

Dr Keith Hendry
Chair

Independent examiner's report
to the members of
Mersey Rivers Trust

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2024 which are set out on pages 11 to 23.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

Since the charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Jennifer Daniel FCCA DChA

Slade & Cooper Limited, Chartered Certified Accountants
Beehive Mill, Jersey Street
Manchester, M4 6JG

Date 17 December 2024

Mersey Rivers Trust
Statement of Financial Activities
(including Income and Expenditure account)
for the year ended 31 March 2024

	Note	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Income from:					
Charitable activities	3	201,944	765,423	967,367	680,326
Investments	4	7,431	-	7,431	2,727
Total income		209,375	765,423	974,798	683,053
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities:	5	149,414	693,957	843,371	655,243
Total expenditure		149,414	693,957	843,371	655,243
Net income/(expenditure) for the year	6	59,961	71,466	131,427	27,810
Transfer between funds		24,809	(24,809)	-	-
Net movement in funds for the year		84,770	46,657	131,427	27,810
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		331,484	52,758	384,242	356,432
Total funds carried forward		416,254	99,415	515,669	384,242

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.
All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

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Balance sheet as at 31 March 2024

	Note	2024		2023	
		£	£	£	£
Current assets					
Debtors	10	168,306		244,070	
Cash at bank and in hand		480,744		614,925	
Total current assets		649,050		858,995	
Liabilities					
Creditors: amounts falling due in less than one year	11	(133,381)		(474,753)	
Net current assets			515,669		384,242
Net assets			515,669		384,242
The funds of the charity:					
Restricted income funds	12		99,415		52,758
Unrestricted income funds	13		416,254		331,484
Total charity funds			515,669		384,242

The notes on pages 14 to 23 form part of these accounts.

Approved by the trustees on 27/ 11/ 2024 and signed on their behalf by:

Dr Keith Hendry (Chair)

Mersey Rivers Trust
Statement of Cash Flows
for the year ending 31 March 2024

	Note	2024 £	2023 £
Cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	#	(141,612)	(205,431)
<i>Cash flows from investing activities:</i>			
Dividends, interest, and rents from investments		7,431	2,727
Cash provided by/(used in) investing activities		7,431	2,727
Increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the year		(134,181)	(202,704)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		614,925	817,629
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year		480,744	614,925

Mersey Rivers Trust

Notes to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024

1 Accounting policies

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgments and key sources of estimation uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

a Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), second edition - October 2019 (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities Act 2011 and UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

The accounts (financial statements) have been prepared to give a 'true and fair view' and have departed from the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 only to the extent required to provide a 'true and fair view'. This departure has involved following Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), second edition - October 2019, rather than the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice effective from 1 April 2005 which has since been withdrawn.

Mersey Rivers Trust meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note.

b Preparation of the accounts on a going concern basis

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

The trustees have made no key judgments which have a significant effect on the accounts.

The trustees do not consider that there are any sources of estimation uncertainty at the reporting date that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amount of assets and liabilities within the next reporting period.

Notes to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 (continued)

c Income

Income is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the item(s) of income have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

Income from government and other grants, whether 'capital' grants or 'revenue' grants, is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the grants have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably and is not deferred.

For legacies, entitlement is taken as the earlier of the date on which either: the charity is aware that probate has been granted, the estate has been finalised and notification has been made by the executor(s) to the charity that a distribution will be made, or when a distribution is received from the estate. Receipt of a legacy, in whole or in part, is only considered probable when the amount can be measured reliably and the charity has been notified of the executor's intention to make a distribution. Where legacies have been notified to the charity, or the charity is aware of the granting of probate, and the criteria for income recognition have not been met, then the legacy is treated as a contingent asset and disclosed if material.

Income received in advance of a provision of a specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

d Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the Bank.

Notes to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 (continued)

e Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are available to spend on activities that further any of the purposes of charity.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds of the charity which the trustees have decided at their discretion to set aside to use for a specific purpose.

Restricted funds are donations and partnership agreements which the funder has specified are to be solely used for particular areas of the charity's work or for specific projects being undertaken by the charity.

f Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- Expenditure on charitable activities includes salary payments, payments to contractors and other administration costs undertaken to further the purposes of
- Other expenditure represents those items not falling into any other heading.

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as a cost against the activity for which the expenditure was incurred.

h Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

i Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and cash in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

j Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

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Notes to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 (continued)

k Financial instruments

The charity only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value with the exception of bank loans which are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

l Pensions

Employees of the charity are entitled to join a defined contribution scheme. The charity's contribution is restricted to the contributions disclosed in note 8. There were no outstanding contributions at the year end.

2 Legal status of the charity

The charity is an unincorporated charity registered in England and Wales.

3 Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total 2024 £
Catchment partnership	-	765,423	765,423
Invasive species removal and river restoration	201,944	-	201,944
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	201,944	765,423	967,367
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

Previous reporting period	<i>Unrestricted £</i>	<i>Restricted £</i>	<i>Total 2023 £</i>
<i>Catchment partnership</i>	-	342,729	342,729
<i>Invasive species removal and river restoration</i>	337,597	-	337,597
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<i>Subtotal for activity 1</i>	337,597	342,729	680,326
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

4 Investment income

	2,024 £	2,023 £
Income from bank deposits	7,431	2,727
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

All of the charity's investment income arises from money held in interest bearing deposit accounts. All investment income is unrestricted.

Mersey Rivers Trust

Notes to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 (continued)

5 Analysis of expenditure on charitable activities

	2024 £	2023 £
Staff costs	451,054	335,399
Contractors expenses	265,354	231,942
Travel and subsistence	31,092	16,618
Stationery and telephone	1,197	2,512
Accountancy fees	5,294	3,778
Meetings	3,620	1,320
Equipment	38,306	26,231
Training	6,277	5,730
Insurance	4,550	6,242
IT costs	4,399	1,167
Administration	14,158	13,582
Miscellaneous	4,281	988
Charitable donations	100	100
Legal and professional fees	11,409	7,474
Governance costs		
Independent examiner's fee	2,280	2,160
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	843,371	655,243
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	2024 £	2023 £
Restricted expenditure	693,957	424,642
Unrestricted expenditure	149,414	230,601
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	843,371	655,243
	<hr/>	<hr/>

6 Net income/(expenditure) for the year

This is stated after charging/(crediting):	2024 £	2023 £
Independent examiner's fee	2,280	2,160
	<hr/>	<hr/>

Mersey Rivers Trust

Notes to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 (continued)

7 Staff costs

Staff costs during the year were as follows:

	2024 £	2023 £
Wages and salaries	390,579	287,825
Social security costs	30,985	27,092
Pension costs	29,490	20,482
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	451,054	335,399
	<hr/>	<hr/>

No employees has employee benefits in excess of £60,000 (2023: Nil).

The average number of staff employed during the period was 15 (2023: 14).

The average full time equivalent number of staff employed during the period was 14.3 (2023: 12).

The key management personnel of the charity comprise the trustees and the Executive Director Operations and Delivery and Executive Director Strategy Development. The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the charity were £84,821 (2023: £76,955).

8 Trustee remuneration and expenses, and related party transactions

No (2023:nil) trustee received conference expenses during the year (2023:£nil).

Aggregate donations from related parties were £xyz (2023: £nil).

There are no donations from related parties which are outside the normal course of business and no restricted donations from related parties.

No trustee or other person related to the charity had any personal interest in any contract or transaction entered into by the charity, including guarantees, during the year (2023:nil).

Mersey Rivers Trust

Notes to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 (continued)

9 Corporation tax

The charity is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within Chapter 3 of Part 11 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects. No tax charges have arisen in the charity.

10 Debtors

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade debtors	167,722	243,486
Other debtors	584	584
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	168,306	244,070
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

11 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2024 £	2023 £
Other creditors and accruals	4,865	7,522
Deferred income	120,320	458,832
Taxation and social security costs	8,196	8,399
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	133,381	474,753
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

Mersey Rivers Trust

Notes to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 (continued)

12 Analysis of movements in restricted funds

Current reporting period	Balance at 1st April 2023 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers £	Balance at 31 March 2024 £
Catchment partnership	52,758	765,423	(693,957)	(24,809)	99,415
Total	52,758	765,423	(693,957)	(24,809)	99,415

Previous reporting period	Balance at 1 April 2022 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers £	Balance at 31 March 2023 £
Catchment partnership	134,671	342,729	(424,642)	-	52,758
Total	134,671	342,729	(424,642)	-	52,758

Name of restricted fund	Description, nature and purposes of the fund
Catchment partnership	The Catchment Partnerships and associated projects are part of the DEFRA led initiative Catchment Based Approach (CaBA). The Mersey Rivers Trust receives funding from DEFRA (via the Environment Agency) and the European funded Natural Course Project to host three Catchment Partnerships (Alt/Crossens, Lower Mersey and Upper Mersey Catchments). Funding is also received to deliver other environmental projects from the Environment Agency (Water Environment Improvement Fund (WEIF) and Natural Flood Management Fund and Water Environment Grants). Transfer to unrestricted funds represents expenditure that have not been correctly allocated to restricted funds and surpluses achieved through project efficiencies. The associated projects have been delivered satisfactorily and signed off by the funders.

Mersey Rivers Trust

Notes to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 (continued)

13 Analysis of movement in unrestricted funds

Current reporting period	Balance at 1st April 2023 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers £	As at 31 March 2024 £
General fund	331,484	209,375	(149,414)	24,809	416,254
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	331,484	209,375	(149,414)	24,809	416,254
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Previous reporting period	Balance at 1 April 2022 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers £	As at 31 March 2023 £
General fund	221,761	340,324	(230,601)	-	331,484
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	221,761	340,324	(230,601)	-	331,484
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

Name of unrestricted fund	Description, nature and purposes of the fund
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General fund	The free reserves
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14 Analysis of net assets between funds

	General fund £	Designated funds £	Restricted funds £	Total £
Net current assets/(liabilities)	416,254	-	99,415	515,669
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	416,254	-	99,415	515,669
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

Mersey Rivers Trust

Notes to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 (continued)

15 Reconciliation of net movement in funds to net cash flow from operating activities

	2024 £	2023 £
Net income/(expenditure) for the year	131,427	27,810
Adjustments for:		
Dividends, interest and rents from investments	(7,431)	(2,727)
Decrease/(increase) in debtors	75,764	(221,308)
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	(341,372)	(9,206)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating	(141,612)	(205,431)
	<hr/>	<hr/>