

**ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

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TRUSTEES

The Trustees in office during the year were:

John Mairs (Chair)
Richard Acton (appointed 28 June 2023)
Peter Cornish
Christopher Kirton
Keith Lightfoot (Warden)
Janet Pizzey (resigned 29 February 2024)
Deborah Simmons (appointed 28 June 2023)
Stuart Smith

SITE ADDRESS

Unstead Wetland Nature Reserve, Trunley Heath Road, Guildford, Surrey, GU5 0BS

CONTACT ADDRESS

c/o 9 Home Farm Road, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 1TX

PROFESSIONAL ADVISERS

Lloyds Bank plc, 25 Gresham Street, London, EC2V 7HN

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1196835

**TRUSTEES' REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

The Trustees present their Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Constitution

Unstead Nature Community Group ('the Charity') is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, established and registered on 29 November 2021. It is registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales with registered number 1196835.

Objects and activities

The object of the Charity is to promote, for the benefit of the public, the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment of Unstead Wetland Nature Reserve. Through volunteer action, the Group restores, develops and maintains diverse habitats of the Reserve for the benefit of wildlife. It provides visitor facilities and information about the Reserve and its wildlife to create an educational and recreational resource.

The charity has no staff and all its activities are undertaken by volunteers. Workparties for volunteers are held on site every Thursday with administrative duties being undertaken by the Trustees.

Trustees

The trustees who held office during the Year are set out on the previous page. The Charity's constitution allows for between 3 and 12 trustees. One third of the trustees are required to retire each year, albeit normally being eligible for reappointment. No trustee may hold office for more than three terms. Trustees are elected by members at the AGM by simple majority of those present.

Janet Pizzey resigned as a Trustee towards the end of the year. The Trustees are grateful for all her work, right from (and even before) the start of the Group. As a token of appreciation, Janet was awarded life membership.

Accounting principles

As a small Charity, the Trustees have chosen to present the annual accounts on a receipts and payments basis. There is no requirement for the accounts to be independently examined or audited and the Trustees do not feel that this is necessary, given the small scale of operations.

Reserves and Investments

Donations to the Charity which have been given for a specific purpose or project are held as 'restricted funds' and cannot be used for other purposes. To the extent that these funds are not fully spent at the year-end, they are carried forward to be used for those purposes in the future. Other income – primarily membership subscriptions – is available for general expenditure for the Reserve without restriction. The Trustees aim to hold at least 6 months' expenditure in reserve to meet future unforeseen expenditure. The sums involved are modest and are held with Lloyds Bank. The Charity has no investments.

TRUSTEES' REPORT (*continued*)**Financial Review**

During the year the Charity received £2,814 of income (2023- £17,347) of which £nil (2023- £10,038) was restricted funds. Expenditure during the year totalled £7,014 (2023 - £5,993), resulting in funds at the end of the year of £7,154 (2023 - £11,354). Of this, £2,994 (2023 - £7,781) was restricted funds and £nil (2023 - £723) was designated funds, leaving £4,160 (2023 - £2,850) available as general reserves.

Risk review

The major risks to which the Charity is exposed, as identified by the Trustees, have been reviewed and systems have been established to mitigate those risks.

Review of the Year's Activities

A major project at the start of the year was the construction of a viewing platform overlooking the newly-created lagoons in the South Meadow. The materials had been funded by Thames Water, but the construction was undertaken by our band of enthusiastic – and skilful – volunteers. Enhancements were made to the access paths, and the viewing platform was opened to members in January this year. Work has continued to improve the 'cross-path' that connects across from beyond the viewing platform to the hide footpath – via the newly installed 'Stan's Gate'. This will be closed to visitors during the bird-nesting season but it is hoped that access can be opened to members in the autumn.

Through the year we have continued to develop the Nature Reserve to create a wider diversity of natural habitats attractive to wildlife of all kinds. Several hundred more sapling trees have been planted, particularly in the Works Field to establish light woodland and a hazel copse, and along the side of the hide footpath to replace the non-native laurel. This planting has included a small 'orchard' of sizeable fruiting trees, donated by Thames Water. Individual donations of specimen native oak trees have also been planted at the edge of the South Meadow and in the Works Field.

In the South Meadow we have worked with the charity Buglife to enhance the variety of wild flowers. This has involved cutting hay (undertaken with assistance from a local farmer Tom Bowra), scything, raking and seeding with wildflower seeds supplied by Buglife. In the North Meadow, views from the hide have been improved by repositioning the fence, and in the far corner, a summer bat roost has been constructed above an existing small brick tower.

As well as the more high-profile projects referred to above, the Reserve requires management - keeping access paths clear, looking after newly planted trees in their early years, hedge-laying, mending broken fences and gates and a myriad other little jobs. These projects and maintenance tasks are all undertaken by volunteers on Thursday workparties. The Trustees are grateful for the willingness and enthusiasm of those volunteers and are pleased that the number of volunteers coming along has been increasing, now with a weekly average of 12. The Trustees also greatly appreciate the time given by other volunteers undertaking surveys at the Reserve – of birds, butterflies, reptiles, moths, bats, mammals, flora, fungi ... and water quality.

Membership has also been increasing as more people hear about the site and have been enjoying the birds and other wildlife to be seen at the Reserve. There were just over 150 members (including joint members) at the year end. Throughout the Year Members have been kept informed of activities through an excellent, well-illustrated monthly newsletter put together by the Warden.

TRUSTEES' REPORT (*continued*)

Furure Plans

Work will continue on the preparing the cross-path for member access later in the year. Funding applications have recently been made for a few small projects, but undertaking those projects will depend on the success of those applications.

This annual report was approved by the Trustees at a meeting held on 28 June 2024 and signed on their behalf by:

John Mairs

John Mairs

Chair of Trustees

Christopher H Kirton

Christopher Kirton

Trustee

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds Year to 31 Mar 2024 £	Restricted Funds Year to 31 Mar 2024 £	Total Year to 31 Mar 2024 £	Total 29 Nov 2021 to 31 Mar 2023
<u>Income</u>					
Subscriptions		1,913	-	1,913	3,318
Grants		-	-	-	8,000
Donation – Transfer from Association	2	-	-	-	2,239
Other Donations		563	-	563	3,006
Gift Aid		338	-	338	784
Total Receipts		2,814	-	2,814	17,347
<u>Charitable Expenditure</u>					
Materials		1,224	4,787	6,011	814
Tools		74	-	74	173
Bird food		285	-	285	162
Shed purchase and construction		-	-	-	4,126
Publicity and signage		249	-	249	281
<u>Governance Expenditure</u>					
Insurance		395	-	395	268
Land Registry searches re lease		-	-	-	169
Total Payments		2,227	4,787	7,014	5,993
Excess of Receipts over Payments/ (Payments over Receipts)		587	(4,787)	(4,200)	11,354
Fund balances brought forward		3,573	7,781	11,354	-
Fund balances carried forward		4,160	2,994	7,154	11,354

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2024
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	Notes	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
<u>Assets</u>			
Bank balance		7,154 =====	11,354 =====
<u>Reserves</u>			
Restricted Funds	3	2,994	7,781
Unrestricted Funds	4	4,160 -----	3,573 -----
		7,154 =====	11,354 =====

The financial statements on pages 5-9 were approved by the Trustees at a meeting held on 28 June 2024 and signed on their behalf by:

John Mairs

John Mairs

Chair of Trustees

Christopher H Kirton

Christopher Kirton

Trustee

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES**Basis of Preparation**

The accounts have been prepared on a receipts and payments basis in accordance with the Charities Act 2011. The financial statements are prepared in sterling which is the functional currency and have been rounded to the nearest pound.

Income and expenditure

Income and expenditure is accounted for in the period in which it was received or paid. Expenditure is inclusive of VAT

Tangible Fixed Assets

Expenditure is accounted for on a cash basis and thus no value is included in the accounts for any fixed assets other than the initial capital expenditure, shown in the Receipts and Payments Account.

Donated Goods and Services

The charity is grateful to its benefactors – both individuals and organisations - who have supplied tools and equipment, many trees (with stakes and guards), timber and other materials. These gifts in kind are not included in the accounts as there is no cash-based transaction to record.

The charity is also grateful for the services of its trustees, workparty volunteers and others who have given their expert time freely. However, no value is included in the accounts for the hours of unpaid work that they undertake.

Gift Aid

The Charity is eligible to claim Gift Aid on donations. Where donations are treated as restricted funds, any Gift Aid associated with such donations is treated as part of the relevant restricted fund.

Restricted Funds

These are gifts which have been given to the Charity to be used in accordance with the wishes of the donor. They may only be applied for the purposes for which the funds were donated.

Unrestricted Funds

The use of these funds has not been restricted to a particular purpose by donors. They are subdivided into Designated Funds and General Reserves.

Designated Funds

Designated funds are those funds which have been allocated by the Trustees for particular purposes. Further information on the nature and basis of the designated funds used by the Charity is given in Note 4.

General Reserves

General Reserves are the working fund of the Charity and are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the Charity's objectives. Among the uses of the General Reserves are the costs of maintenance and improvement of the Unstead Wetland Nature Reserve and the general administration of the Charity.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (continued)

2. DONATION FROM ASSOCIATION

The Unstead Nature Community Group was originally established as an Association which invited subscription membership. On 29 November 2021 Unstead Nature Community Group was formally registered with the Charity Commission of England and Wales as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Following this, on 2 December 2021, the Committee of the Association formally agreed to transfer its operations and accumulated funds to the CIO. In reality this represented the final stage of the formation of the Unstead Wetland Nature Reserve's support and management organisation. However, legally this transfer represented a donation to the CIO of £2,239 in the prior year.

3. RESTRICTED FUNDS

Year ended 31 March 2024	Bench Fund	Public Access Fund	Trees Fund	Shed Fund	Total
	£	£	£	£	£
Brought forward	-	7,656	125	-	7,781
Donations received	-	-	-	-	-
Gift Aid added	-	-	-	-	-
Expenditure*	-	(4,662)	(125)	-	(4,787)
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Carried forward at 31 March 2024	-	2,994	-	-	2,994
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====

Period 29 November 2021 to 31 March 2023	Bench Fund	Public Access Fund	Trees Fund	Shed Fund	Total
	£	£	£	£	£
Grant from Thames Water	-	8,000	-	-	8,000
Donations received	38	-	100	1,500	1,638
Gift Aid added	-	-	25	375	400
Expenditure*	(38)	(344)	-	(1,875)	(2,257)
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Carried forward at 31 March 2023	-	7,656	125	-	7,781
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====

*Where actual expenditure exceeds the restricted fund available, the balance is covered by the Charity's general fund and is shown in the Receipts and Payments Account under 'Unrestricted Funds'.

The Bench Fund resulted from an original donation of £900 before the Charity was formed. The purchase of two benches also took place before the Charity was formed, leaving £38 transferred in from the Association, which was spent during the previous period on installation costs.

The Public Access Fund results from a grant from Thames Water to enhance the public access to the Reserve. A significant proportion of this has been spent on materials for the construction of the new viewing platform.

The Shed Fund represents donations from two anonymous donors towards the purchase of a new shed for the Reserve in which to store tools and materials. The shed was purchased in early 2023.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (continued)

4. UNRESTRICTED FUNDS

	2024	2023
	£	£
Designated Fund –Stan Capewell Fund	-	723
General Reserves	4,160	2,850
	-----	-----
	4,160	3,573
	=====	=====

During the previous period donations were received in memory of Stan Capewell. The Trustees decided to designate these donations towards the cost of purchase and installation of a gate to access a new path in the Reserve. The gate was purchased and installed during the year.

5. FIXED ASSETS

The accounts are prepared on a receipts and payments basis and thus no value is included in the accounts for any fixed assets that the Charity owns. At the Year end the Charity held numerous tools and equipment – mainly second-hand - that had been donated or purchased. Its most significant fixed assets are the hide constructed in about 2000 by Thames Water, the shed purchased in 2023 and the viewing platform constructed in 2023.

The nature reserve land is owned by Thames Water and the Charity has developed and maintained the site with their support. The Trustees are in the process of agreeing a formal lease for the site with Thames Water.

6. DONATIONS IN KIND

No value is included in the accounts for donations in kind. Many individuals have kindly volunteered their time in support of the Charity's work, both in developing and maintaining the Nature Reserve and in the administration of the Charity. The Trustees are also grateful for legal advice provided free of charge in relation to the negotiation of a lease with Thames Water. A record of hours worked by volunteers on organised workparties is maintained, although many more hours are freely given by Trustees and others.

	2024	2023
Workparty volunteer hours	2,806	2,359
	=====	=====

The Charity has also received numerous donations of tools, equipment, materials and trees as well as advice and assistance. The Trustees are grateful to all these benefactors. Organisations that have given to the Charity during the year include:

- Buglife
- Surrey County Council
- Surrey Wildlife Trust
- Thames Water
- The Conservation Volunteers
- The Woodland Trust