

Friends of the Upper Wye | Ffrindiau'r Afon Gwy Uchaf

Trustees' Annual Report for the period

From 01/04/2023 To 31/03/2024

Registered Number: 1198234



Objectives and Activities

Friends of the Upper Wye (FOUW) was set up in July 2020 originally as an unincorporated association to start a programme of education and research in the form of river water quality monitoring, as a response to the changes in the way that algal blooms are affecting the River Wye, which straddles the English/Welsh border and meanders through both countries before reaching the Severn Estuary at Chepstow.

On 14/3/2022 the Committee of Friends of the Upper Wye resolved to begin dissolution of the old association and form a new Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) of the same name.

This report gives the reader insight into FOUW's activities since incorporation, and how we have both raised and spent the funds maintaining our network of volunteer citizen scientists, and furthering the general objectives of FOUW for the public benefit, which are:

- 1) to conserve, protect and improve the river Wye and tributaries for the benefit of the wildlife and the public, and
- 2) To educate the public to aid understanding of the importance of river quality for biodiversity, economic and social activity.

During the year to March 2024, the Trustees have run a programme of both river water quality monitoring, through a network of trained and well-resourced volunteer monitors, and run public outreach events at which our work and the results of our efforts have been disseminated more widely. We also maintain a website with general information for the public and interested potential volunteers. In order to deliver this public benefit, the Trustees have had due regard for the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on such public benefit.

Building the river water quality monitoring network

Having established a network of some 100 river monitors, the workload to administer the volunteers and deal with the arising data increased to a point where it was no longer manageable pro bono.

In May 2023 the Trustees recruited a Citizen Science Programme Manager, Pat Stirling, who has been contracted to deliver three days a week of support for the programme. Since Pat's arrival, the network has expanded to include more volunteers (now around 120) and importantly improved geographical coverage especially in the upper catchment up stream of Builth Wells in mid-Wales, as well as further extending the use of the more accurate Hanna testers for phosphate pollution measurements.

Whilst the recruitment has consumed the majority of our financial resources, the Trustees are satisfied that considerable value for the river and FOUW has been created by Pat.

Data analysis and portrayal

FOUW's data analysis dashboard, available open source to anyone who cares to look (link <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/mcarpenter/viz/WyeVizWyeAllianceCitizenSciencedas>

[hboard/START](#)) is going from strength to strength with new functionalities added, such as the weekly league table of the ten worst performing test sites. This allows rapid appraisal of current measurement data and the pinpointing of pollution sources. The Environment Agency continues to use the data we generate in their quarterly river health reports, and have become accustomed to our reporting of the most egregious incidents, which have eventually resulted in site visits and enforcement actions being taken. However, the relationship we have with Natural Resources Wales continues to be antagonistic, with seemingly little appetite for collaboration to prevent pollution events with our data.

Outreach and educational events

An early focus from April 2023 was to plan and run a public exhibition in the internationally famous Hay Festival of Literature. At the end of May the exhibition opened, showing the extent of our data gathering work, portraits of citizen scientists volunteering their time for the river, celebrating and promoting our activities to the wider public. The exhibition pulled no punches and portrayed the damage that intensive poultry rearing can have on river catchments such as the Illinois river in the USA, polluted by Cargill's poultry operations from 2006 onwards. There was one incident of vandalism where a member of the poultry farming community took umbrage with the grim display of reality in the intensive poultry sector, and damaged a few pictures in the display.

Trustees have also been involved with school visits, giving children the opportunity to explore the implications of farming on the river's future and their enjoyment of it.

Contribution made by volunteers:

All of the citizen scientists who diligently and patiently sample their particular testing point in the catchment are also volunteers, and no doubt have busy lives outside of FOUW. The Trustees extend their warm thanks and appreciation for the hard work, dedication and perseverance that so many volunteers show to help us advance our purposes. Without them, the backbone of the work we do, the catchment wide and temporally dispersed dataset we are creating and continue to create together would not be possible.

In this instance the sum of the volunteers' efforts really is greater than the parts!

Achievements and Performance

FOUW continues to play an important role in the development of solutions for the catchment. With representation on the Nutrient Management Board and formally on the Wye Catchment Partnership's Steering Group, we are able to contribute at the highest levels to ensuring the needs of the river are represented.

Our communications and outreach Trustees, Nicola Cutcher and Eamon Bourke, have worked tirelessly to amplify our work on social media and other public news outlets.

We supported River Action's Judicial Review application against the Environment Agency for failure to enforce environmental regulations important to safeguard river health in February, though were sad to learn that on this occasion the effort had been unsuccessful.

Above all in the last twelve months, we have continued to gather and analyse the data from our network of citizen scientists. Their work has been instrumental in giving us a compelling story to tell, and similarly the work to bring the data's story to life has been key to getting our message heard and accepted. Of course there is always more to do, but it's a good sign when other charities and organisations are interested in acquiring our know-how and tools to enable their rapid roll-out of similar pollution monitoring activities elsewhere. Imitation is as ever the most sincere form of flattery!

The Trustees have also continued to successfully raise funds throughout the year to ensure we can both continue to provide equipment and consumable replacements to our network of volunteers, and also to ensure we can continue to employ a Programme Manager or Coordinator who helps the Trustees run the data collection side of the programme. However, fundraising has not kept pace with expenditure this year, reflecting both the difficult economic and funding climate but also the limited time that volunteer Trustees have to give to the organisation.

Merger with Friends of the Lower Wye.

On 1st February 2024 FOUW formally merged with Friends of the Lower Wye, a sister organisation that set themselves up to monitor the lower catchment much like FOUW had been doing upstream of the confluence with the Lugg at Mordiford. This merger seemed like the sensible evolution of the organisational landscape – both organisations were and are pursuing extremely similar goals and the Trustees are delighted to have joined forces and resources to cover the entire river from source to mouth. Our new working name is Friends of the River Wye (available online at www.friendsoftheriverwye.org.uk).

As part of the merger the Data dashboard has been upgraded and now all citizen scientist data being generated by volunteers in the catchment (whether they are FOUW, Friends of the Lower Wye, Wye Salmon Association, CPRE or Friends of the Dore) is uploaded and displayed on one single unified dashboard. This gives the most extraordinary impression via 'heat maps' of where the worst pollutions spots are found.

The Trustees have thereby created a community of river water quality monitoring volunteers who are getting to know each other and working together, creating stronger community ties and helping spread the benefits of a healthier river to the wider society. The volunteers frequently report being approached by the public to explain what they are doing and how what they are doing is being used and making an impact.

The Trustees are delighted that the specific issue of river water quality and particularly that of the river Wye has become such a widely discussed topic in 2023-2024.

Designated Bathing Water application

In Summer 2022 a volunteer from FOUW surveyed the Warren at Hay, and after a public meeting where unanimous support as offered by the assembled community, an application to grant Designated Bathing Water status was lodged with the Welsh Government. In March 2024 we learnt that our application had been unsuccessful, but we won't be giving up on the designation immediately, as there are specific legal challenges we think may allow the decision to be reopened for further scrutiny.

Financial Review

Financial review:

Position at the end of the period.

FOUW Trustees have been able to raise sufficient funds from a number of sources that has enabled the continuing and growth of the volunteer network. Through donations from the public and some generous grants, we have been able to continue our work, running and financing the water quality monitoring network, contributing to policy and plan development, running outreach and education events.

As a result of donations and grants made throughout the year FOUW receipts to year end 31/3/2024 were £23.9k.

Operating expenses for the year were £35.2k leaving a deficit for the year of £11.3k. This deficit arises as funds were raised in the year to March 2023 to allow the employment of the programme coordinator, the costs of which have fallen into the current financial year.

In February 2024, on merger with the unincorporated association Friends of the Lower Wye, FOLW assets of £1748 were vested in FOUW. The accounts, income, payments and year end balances, represent the activities of FOUW for the period up to February 2024 and the merged organisation thereafter. At the year-end a balance of £1464 remains of the funds derived from FOLW. These are treated as restricted funds as they are only to be spent for the benefit of the Lower Wye. Total balance sheet funds for FOUW at 31 March 2024 are £23,673.

Reserves policy:

FOUW Trustees would like to maintain, where finances permit, an amount in reserves that is equivalent to at least three months' operating expenses.

Amount of reserves held currently:

£0

Reasons for holding zero reserves: Insufficient time of existence to allow the building up of reserve capital funds.

Uncertainties or concerns about FOUW continuing as a going concern: At this point in time the Trustees are happy that there is a comfortable 12 months of funded activities ahead of the charity. However, more funds have been raised since the year end which give confidence that the can continue to fund the coordinator role and of course maintain the network's test site volunteers and equipment.

For full information about the financial status of FOUW please refer to the accounts submitted alongside this annual report.

Structure, Governance and Management

FOUW is incorporated as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with a governing constitution that can be found on our website

<https://www.fouw.org.uk/s/FOUW-CIO-Constitution.pdf>

As per the constitution of FOUW Trustees may be appointed as follows:

Appointment of charity trustees:

(1) Apart from the first charity trustees, every trustee must be appointed for a term of three years by a resolution passed at a properly convened meeting of the charity trustees.

(2) In selecting individuals for appointment as charity trustees, the charity trustees must have regard to the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of the CIO.

In addition to the internal FOUW management structure, the Trustees also collaborate with other similar groups who are aligned in their purposes with the purpose of FOUW. Those groups are:

Friends of the Lower Wye
Campaign to protect rural England (CPRE)
Save the Wye
Radnorshire Wildlife Trust
Herefordshire Wildlife Trust
Mott Macdonald plc
River Action
Wye Alliance

Additionally, during the year, FOUW formally co-founded the Wye Alliance in order to coordinate our activities and findings with other river protection groups and stakeholders, the agreement being signed on 22/9/2022.

Reference and Administrative details

Charity name	Friends of the Upper Wye
Other name the charity uses	N/a
Registered charity number	1198234
Charity's principal address	Bronheulwen, Glasbury, Wales, HR3 5LS

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

	Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
1	Eamon Bourke			
2	Nicola Cutcher			
3	William Bullough			
4	Christine Hugh-Jones			
5	Karima Mould	Secretary		
6	Thomas Tibbits	Chair		
7	Michael Carpenter			
8	Nick Day		1/2/2024	FOUW Trustees
9	Mike Dunsbee		1/2/2024	FOUW Trustees
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				

Corporate trustees – names of the directors at the date the report was approved

Director name		
N/a		

Name of trustees holding title to property belonging to the charity

Trustee name	Dates acted if not for whole year	
N/a		

Funds held as custodian trustees on behalf of others

FOUW holds no funds as custodian trustees on behalf of others

Exemptions from disclosure

Reason for non-disclosure of key personnel details

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Other optional information


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Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)

	
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Full name(s)

Thomas N D Tibbits	
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Position (eg Secretary,
Chair, etc)

Chair of Trustees	
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Date

23/1/2025



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Friends of the Upper Wye

1198234

Receipts and payments accounts


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For the period from	Period start date 1-Apr-23	To	Period end date 31-Mar-24
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Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Donations	5,075	-	-	5,075	-
Grants	17,000	-	-	17,000	-
Bank interest	62	-	-	62	-
Funds transferred from Friends of the Lower Wye	-	1,748	-	1,748	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	22,137	1,748	-	23,885	-
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	22,137	1,748	-	23,885	-
A3 Payments					
Employment of Volunteer Coordinator	22,919	-	-	22,919	-
Administrative charges paid to Radnorshire Wildlife Trust	1,500	-	-	1,500	-
Water quality monitoring equipment	7,930	-	-	7,930	-
Event costs	1,386	284	-	1,670	-
Software	674	-	-	674	-
Insurance	305	-	-	305	-
Finance charges	209	-	-	209	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	34,923	284	-	35,207	-
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	34,923	284	-	35,207	-
Net of receipts/(payments)	- 12,786	1,464	-	- 11,322	-
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	34,995	-	-	34,995	-
Cash funds this year end	22,209	1,464	-	23,673	-

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds		22,209	1,464	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	22,209	1,464	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
		Thomas N D Tibbits	1/23/2025	