

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

Trustees' Annual Report for the period

From 1/4/2024 To 31/03/2025

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. Following the merger of Friends of the Upper Wye with the unincorporated association Friends of the Lower Wye on 1st February 2024, the charity has operated under the working name Friends of the River Wye (FORW).

This report gives the reader insight into FORW's activities in its third year 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 FORW for the public benefit, according to the charity's objects 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 31 March 2025, the trustees have run a programme of 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 120 river monitors, the workload on the Volunteer Program Manager, whom the Charity recruited in May 2023, has only increased. Owing to changing needs and expansion of the volunteer network, it has been necessary to recruit a Citizen Scientist Volunteer Co-ordinator, in order that the valuable network of volunteers who actually produce the datapoints that populate the growing dataset is kept as buoyant, motivated and enthusiastic as ever.

In September 2024 the trustees recruited a Citizen Science Volunteer Coordinator, Annys Webb, who has been contracted to deliver two and a half days a week of support for the programme. Since Annys' arrival, the network has expanded to include more volunteers (now around 130) and importantly improved geographical coverage especially in the upper catchment upstream 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 of paid contractors has consumed the majority of our financial resources, the trustees are satisfied that considerable value for the river and FORW has been created by Pat and Annys.

The network has continued to grow with Annys on board and particularly into parts of the catchment where previously our volunteer coverage was sparse. This has given more time to Pat to allow the transmission of information about what our network finds into the regulatory sphere – enabling the detection and remedy of problems such as point-source pollution in the catchment. Furthermore, engaging the various local authority and catchment-based approach organisations that have some responsibility to the health of the catchment is

a relatively large amount of work, especially in a catchment where the arbitrary England – Wales border runs through the middle, which leads to a multitude of inconsistencies of regulation around agriculture, planning, and so on.

Data analysis and portrayal

FORW's data analysis dashboard, available open source to anyone who cares to look (follow this [link](#)), 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 has 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 through use of our data.

One of the big successes of the year has been the integration of data from all catchment-based Citizen Science groups (formally known as the Wye Alliance, comprising the Wye Salmon Association (WSA), CPRE, Friends of the Upper Wye and Friends of the Lower Wye, the latter two now merged as Friends of the River Wye) into the one dataset which can be then visualised across all the catchment using WyeViz. This required a very considerable amount of effort to make all the different data collection databases sufficiently similar such that the data from all of them is both compatible with and integrated with the original WyeViz platform that was set up just to process the FORW data. This has involved rewriting the EpiCollect data collection forms, but the result is a fully integrated water quality dashboard with all Citizen Science groups' input now represented. This marks a true advance in the portrayal of the data that some 300 volunteer citizen scientists are now collecting across the catchment.

The current version of the WyeViz dashboard can be found here: <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/mcarpenter/viz/WyeVizWyeAllianceCitizenSciencedashboard/START>

Furthermore, our trustee Michael Carpenter who developed the WyeViz dashboard has now also helped other groups reproduce it for their databases, the most notable being UskViz – our neighbouring catchment.

Outreach and educational events

We hit the ground running in March 2024 joining with the Soil Association's campaign 'Stop killing our rivers' - our trustee Nicola was featured in the film alongside our Programme Coordinator and our Chair was on ITV News. We also started working across the catchment with interested parties to develop a 'Manifesto for the Wye' in anticipation of a forthcoming general election.

In April the much anticipated 'Plan for the Wye' was finally announced by DEFRA – incredibly it only dealt with the English section of the Wye catchment and seemed mostly to promote further industrialisation of the agricultural landscape with a £35 million fund to build incinerators to attempt to divert waste chicken manure away from land spreading. Our communications lead trustee Nicola appeared on BBC Politics Wales to critique the plan.

We were also invited to spend a morning with children at a local primary school in Staunton-on-Wye, which trustees Eamon, Nicola and Tom were able to attend. It was heartening to see such an enthusiasm from the assembled children and their teachers to learn about and figure out how to tackle the problems faced in the catchment.

In the meantime, a local stream suffering from chronic pollution (it turned out the problem was directly traceable to malfunctioning farm infrastructure) which had been highlighted through the data our network gathered, gained some column inches in the local paper. After having reported the high levels of pollution seen and measured on the Holywell Dingle brook to the Environment Agency several times, they were finally moved to enforcement efforts, after further embarrassing them on the FORW Twitter account.

FORW was also invited to mount another exhibition showcasing our work at the Hay Festival 2024. This was the third time that we have been able to publicly disseminate our findings at the festival and it forms a significant part of our efforts to educate the public about river water quality and the general health of the

nation's most iconic river. The theme this time was to champion river-friendly farming practices and to thank our Citizen Scientist volunteers by making a wall of portraits.

Outreach continued in July with volunteer Cath organising both an open-mic night fundraiser for FORW in the upper catchment, and also an exhibition in the Lost Arc in Rhayader showing the good work we do. We were also delighted to be supported by Ross Rotary Club who held a fundraising Choir concert on our behalf.

The river and designated bathing water advocacy continued in August with a meeting between local politicians and Oliver Bullough, our Designated Bathing Water lead and trustee Nicola.

In September the Rotarian support continued with Chair of one local chapter, Drewe Lacy, kindly walking the length of the river Wye, to publicise its plight and also to raise money for FORW. We are most grateful for these individuals' contribution to our activities and wish them well in their other campaigns.

Come November 2024 and FORW found itself again in the vanguard – this time at the March for Clean Water in Westminster, where our trustee Nicola spoke in Parliament Square to the assembled mass of thousands of concerned citizens. The Wye had a large visual presence at the march, which was organised by River Action UK, a long-time collaborator.

Pat, our Program Manager, also attended the Restoring Welsh Rivers summit on our behalf – organised by the Archbishop of Wales. The meeting resulted in a letter being sent by the Archbishop to the First minister, delivering her request for five priority areas and recommendations on dealing with riparian pollution. The five priorities identified were:

1. Reducing Intensive Agriculture Runoff
2. Strengthening Enforcement of Environmental Regulations
3. Implementing Nature-Based Solutions (Wetlands and Riparian buffer zones)
4. Adopting a Catchment Management Approach
5. Establishing a National Environmental Data-Sharing Platform

Whilst it's always encouraging to form broad coalitions to tackle the problems in Welsh rivers, some 60% of which fail to meet good ecological status according to Natural Resources Wales, the unique position of the Wye being in both England and Wales continues to create a unique set of challenges.

Our advocacy continued in December with a meeting between The Wye Catchment Partnership, in which FORW plays a major role, the Nutrient Management Board and UK and Welsh ministers. In it we attempted to obtain funding to drive forwards the Catchment Management Plan, now 12 years overdue.

Into the new year, 2025, and the year began with an updated assessment of the health of the Welsh Wye by Natural Resources Wales. Sadly, the new updates show what we have long suspected: that for various key criteria the Wye is failing – phosphate pollution, high biological oxygen demand and high trophic diatom indices.

Contribution made by volunteers

All of the citizen scientists who diligently and patiently sample their particular testing point in the catchment are volunteers, and no doubt have busy lives outside of FORW. 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

FORW 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.

May 2024 was a very busy month. Our ongoing effort to secure Designated Bathing Water status for the Warren at Hay-on-Wye was initially turned down after consultations by the Welsh minister, Huw Irranca-Davies. Some quick thinking from our Designated Bathing Water collaborator saw a legal challenge sent to the minister, who had not properly followed the regulatory rubric whilst arriving at his decision. This then led to a policy reversal in June (with thanks also to our friends at River Action UK and the Good Law Project). Natural Resources Wales have since that decision (starting in July) been taking water samples fortnightly and subjecting them to analysis – it is not without some irony that the first sample they ever took under the new regime was found to have dangerous levels of enteric bacterial contamination which poses a risk to public health - especially given the resistance to the designation from some quarters, including some townsfolk from Hay-on-Wye itself. Natural Resources Wales advised the public not to swim as a result of the findings of the testing.

In June the Manifesto for the Wye was endorsed by almost all candidates standing for election in the catchment. We look forward to holding them to account, now that we know the election results.

We were also able to follow up from our February 2024 public meeting with regulators (and other representatives of the river movement) and hosted a meeting with Sir Alan Lovell, Chair of the Environment Agency. This was hosted at Queenswood by Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and was attended by representatives from the Wye Alliance (CPRE, WSA, FORW, and Save the Wye). The Environment Agency sent Sir Alan Lovell, local Place Manager Martin Quine, and West Midlands Area Director Marc Liddeth.

There was much discussion about how the Environment Agency chooses to enforce, or rather offer advice and guidance to farms where pollution problems have been identified, about the potential role of volunteers in helping the Environment Agency achieve faster, better outcomes for pollution incidents, and how the Environment Agency has improved powers of enforcement in the water supply and wastewater treatment industry. Overall, the meeting was inconclusive.

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.

As the autumn approached, we held a meeting with all catchment MPs at Hay Parish Hall – it was great to have so many different parties represented at the meeting and we were pleased to be able to draw out at least some consensus of the need to treat the river as a catchment-based, rather than nation-based system.

At the same time a new anaerobic digester unit, that the poultry industry hopes will help them reduce the flow of nutrient into the river, has been proposed at Whitwick Manor – in a part of the catchment that is already suffering a high nutrient load. Owing to the unusual process behind its permitting by the Environment Agency, and the fact it relies heavily on untried and untested technology, our suspicions were raised. After a Freedom of Information request we discovered that a Herefordshire Environment Agency Environment Officer had emailed the permit team saying, *"I have major concerns that if we granted this permit the discharge would have a major impact on the Wye as in my professional opinion the technology being proposed is not suitable to treat the material coming in to the plant"*. Nevertheless, the application was fast tracked at the request of (now former) local MP Bill Wiggin. Herefordshire planning officers have now, in December 2025, turned down this application, though it remains open to the applicant to appeal the decision.

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.

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.

Designated Bathing Water application

In Summer 2022 a volunteer from FORW surveyed public use of the Warren at Hay, and after a public meeting where unanimous support was 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, and this decision was challenged on procedural grounds. The Welsh government then saw fit to grant our requested designation, and the first water quality tests took place in July 2024. Sadly, as a result of these initial tests, Natural Resources Wales recommended to the public that they should not swim in the river, as the pollution detected from water testing showed elevated levels of harmful enteric bacteria, which poses a risk to public health. Whilst we are not surprised by these results, it nevertheless saddens us to think that the river is indeed so polluted that it is no longer safe to swim. We continue to work with regulators and other parties with an interest in the river water quality to try to find and eliminate sources of pollution.

New Trustees

Sadly, in June 2024, a new trustee of FORW, Mike Dunsbee, announced his intention to resign his position as a result of ill health. We wish him well for a swift recovery. It was proposed that another key person in the former Friends of the Lower Wye, Richard Howell, would be willing and able to take his place. We formally co-opted Richard on 6th June 2024 and remain grateful to Mike for all he has done both for Friends of the Lower Wye and subsequently the newly merged FORW.

In February 2025 we learnt that several trustees who had been with FORW since the beginning in 2020 were looking to resign from their positions. We formally thanked and said goodbye to Will Bullough and Eamon Bourke, both of whom have been instrumental in guiding the Charity to its current position. We are grateful for their contribution. We also started to recruit new trustees and were able to attract applications from three candidates. Following a formal interview process with three existing trustees, the new applicants were invited to join the monthly meeting in April 2025, with a view to co-option if all parties agreed.

Financial Review

Financial review:

Position at the end of the period.

FORW 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 FORW's receipts to year end 31/3/25 were £52,268.

Operating expenses for the year were £28,095 leaving a surplus of £24,173. This surplus comes from generous donations from the public, donations of assets of other charities which were winding up, and also generous donations from the Rotary Club (£4,830) and the Wye valley Society (£6,288). Grants have also been obtained thanks to the diligence of one trustee, Christine Hugh-Jones, who has been tireless in fundraising activities. Our largest single donor in the year was the Swire Charitable Foundation, which gave £18,690, a very significant gift. We are also grateful to the Martin Wills Foundation, River Action UK, and the Millichope Foundation.

Following the merger with the unincorporated association Friends of the Lower Wye in February 2024, FOLW assets of £1,748 were vested in FORW. These funds are restricted in their use only in the Lower Wye catchment and at year ending March 2025 £1,179 of that restricted fund remained.

Balance sheet funds for FORW at 31 March 2025 were £47,846.

Reserves policy:

The trustees aim to maintain unrestricted reserves equivalent to at least three months' expenditure. They estimate that for the year ending 31 March 2026 that would be £7,000. At the balance sheet date the CIO had unrestricted reserves of £46,667.

Going concern: The trustees are satisfied that, at the date of this report and on the basis of the balance sheet at 31st March 2025 and subsequent performance, the charity has sufficient funds to continue as a going concern.

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

Structure, Governance and Management

FORW 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 FORW 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 FORW management structure, the trustees also collaborate with other similar groups who are aligned in their purposes with the purpose of FORW. Those groups are:

Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)

Save the Wye

Radnorshire Wildlife Trust

Herefordshire Wildlife Trust

Mott MacDonald plc

River Action

Wye Alliance

Reference and Administrative details

Charity name	Friends of the Upper Wye
Other name the charity uses	Friends of the River Wye
Registered charity number	1198234
Charity's principal address	3 Baskerville Court, Clyro, HEREFORDSHIRE HR3 5SS

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		01/04/2024 – 5/3/2025	FORW trustees
2	Nicola Cutcher			FORW trustees
3	William Bullough		01/04/2024 – 5/3/2025	FORW trustees
4	Christine Hugh-Jones			FORW trustees
5	Karima Mould	Secretary		FORW trustees
6	Thomas Tibbits	Chair		FORW trustees
7	Michael Carpenter			FORW trustees
8	Nick Day			FORW trustees
9	Mike Dunsbee		01/04/2024 – 6/6/2024	FORW trustees
10	Richard Howell		6/6/2024 – 31/3/2025	FORW trustees
11	Joe Emmett		3/4/2025 – 31/3/2025	FORW trustees
12	Andy Davies		3/4/2025 – 31/3/2025	FORW trustees
13	Jo Steele		3/4/2025 – 31/3/2025	FORW trustees
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

FORW 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

9/1/2026



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Friends of the Upper Wye

1198234

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

4/1/2024


To

3/31/2025

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	16,678	50	-	16,728	-
Gift Aid repayment	3,282	-	-	3,282	-
Grants	26,190	6,000	-	32,190	-
Bank interest	68	-	-	68	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	46,218	6,050	-	52,268	-
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	46,218	6,050	-	52,268	-
A3 Payments					
Volunteer coordinator	18,684	5,000	-	23,684	-
Monitoring equipment	355	-	-	355	-
Event costs	897	1,335	-	2,232	-
Media	528	-	-	528	-
Software	740	-	-	740	-
Insurance	246	-	-	246	-
Charges on online donations	225	-	-	225	-
Bank charges	85	-	-	85	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	21,760	6,335	-	28,095	-
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	21,760	6,335	-	28,095	-
Net of receipts/(payments)	24,458	285	-	24,173	-
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	22,209	1,464	-	23,673	-
Cash funds this year end	46,667	1,179	-	47,846	-

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		46,667	1,179	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	46,667	1,179	-
	(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	1/9/2026	



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

Charity Name
Friends of the Upper Wye

**On accounts for the year
ended**

31st March 2025

**Charity no
(if any)** 1198234

Set out on pages

1 to 2

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended **31/03/2025**

**Responsibilities and
basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust, 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 Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

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

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

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

Signed:

Stephen Pospisil

Date:

16th January 2026

Name:

Stephen Pospisil

**Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):**

Chartered Accountant

Address:

20 St James Street, Monmouth, NP25 3DL