

Trustees' Annual Report for the period

from 01 January 2023 to 31 December 2023

Reference and administrative details

Charity name	Peak and Northern Footpaths Society
Other names charity is known by	PNFS
Registered charity number	212219
Charity principal address	Taylor House 23 Turncroft Lane Stockport SK1 4AB

Names of the charity trustees who manage the society

Trustee name	Office (if any)
Kathy McLean	Chair
David Gosling	Vice Chair
Paul Easthope	Treasurer
David Brown	Secretary
David Morton	
Mel Bale	
Tim Lewis	
Suzanne Longworth	
Stuart Proud	(resigned 29 th September)
Chad Wilkinson	

Names and addresses of advisors

Bank	Cooperative Bank, PO Box 250, Delf House, Southway, Skelmersdale WN8 6WT
Direct debits	CAF Bank, 25 Kings Hill, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4TA
Financial advisor	Redmayne-Bentley

Structure, governance and management

Description of the charity's trusts

Type of governing document	Constitution adopted 04 April 2018
How the charity is constituted	Unincorporated association
Trustee selection method	Trustees are elected or reappointed at the AGM in April

Additional governance issues

The Society is a statutory consultee on all proposed changes to public rights of way in our area, which comprises the ceremonial counties of Lancashire (south of the River Kent), Cheshire, West Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire.

Objectives and activities

Summary of the objects of the charity as set out in its governing document

- a) Creating, preserving and improving open spaces, public access rights and rights of way (other than for mechanically propelled vehicles); particularly in Cheshire, Derbyshire, Lancashire and Staffordshire, the former Metropolitan Counties of Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South and West Yorkshire and in Blackburn & Darwen, Blackpool, Derby, Halton, Stoke-on-Trent and Warrington
- b) Preventing the abuse of such rights
- c) Monitoring, supporting and opposing proposals and orders for the creation, closure, diversion and regrading of public rights of way
- d) Erecting and maintaining direction posts, signs, footbridges and commemorative and other structures which improve access

Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit in relation to these objects

- Scrutinising proposals to modify the public right of way network in our area
- Arranging a programme of inspection for that network
- Taking legal action to deal with faults on that network
- Funding improvements to that network
- Erecting signposts
- Funding footbridges

Additional details of objectives and activities

We are grateful for the many hours volunteers have spent working, both inside and outside. Without these volunteers the Society would be unable to function.

Achievements and performance

Summary of the main achievements of the charity during the year

Our membership has dropped slightly from 1418, to 1407 and we have 97 affiliated walking groups and parish councils.

As statutory consultees we have examined 178 public paths orders and dealt with 267 consultations, 2 public space protection order, 13 objections and 63 other matters. This is a substantial increase on to last year.

Our inspector numbers stand at 179, a slight reduction an last year as several inactive inspectors have stood down. Nevertheless, we have increased the number of parishes covered from 700 to 762, that being over 50% of the total number of parishes in our region The inspectors inspect the footpaths in their parishes under the guidance of 8 Area Officers

The Path Checker App, launched last year, which allows walkers, who do not wish to commit to being inspectors, to report faults through their mobile phones continues to be a valuable asset

Inspectors and path checkers reported 487 faults in total an increase of 50% on last year.

But we do not hesitate to be robust about dangerous or persistent faults and our 6 Courts and Inquiries Officers (C&IOs) have been authorised on several occasions to serve notice (under s56 or s130A of the Highways Act) on highway authorities. We always precede serving the notice by sending a letter before action. This often prompts them to repair the fault without our needing recourse to serving the order.

The Society has been involved in a number of cases to claim paths on behalf of the walking public where the route is not recorded on the definitive map (DMMOs). This involves extensive work in collecting both verbal and historic evidence

13 new signposts have been erected throughout our area making a total of 578 The programme of inspecting and maintaining each signpost every three years remains on track, helped by the addition of a number of people to the signpost team. . Many signposts are funded by member's donations often in memory of deceased relatives. A few vandalised signposts have been repaired or replaced. Total expenditure £6213

Seven footbridge were funded by the Society at a cost of £2460 We hand these over to the appropriate highway authority as we are unable to guarantee to maintain them in perpetuity. Highway authorities seem to be increasingly reluctant to take ownership of bridges.

We are continuing to fund improvements to the public rights of way network despite the reluctance of many Highway Authorities to take on addition commitments. And have spent £19,373on these improvements We are now approaching other organisations such as Wildlife Trusts, Walking Groups and Park Authorities

We have moved our office based computer system and email to a cloud based model

Financial review

A brief statement of the Society's policy on reserves

Our balance sheet at year-end 2023 was £436,332 held in a combination of cash, investments and fixed assets (our office building, computer equipment, furniture and fittings).

Within this figure, we have restricted funds of £57,860 and fixed assets of £60,654. We maintain a contingency fund of £10,000 for repairs to the ageing office building and have ring-fenced legacy funds of £113,212

This leaves a reserve of £194,606 We look to maintain our reserves at between £192,000 and £255,000. These figures are reviewed annually and increased in line with RPI.

Details of any funds materially in deficit

None

Further financial review details

Our main sources of income are subscriptions (gift-aided where possible); dividends from investments; donations; and legacies. Since donations and legacies are sporadic and not guaranteed, we strive, successfully, to meet our day-to-day running costs from subscriptions and dividends and use other income to fund our programmes.

At the AGM we will ask the membership to approve an increase in the subscription rate by about 30%, in line with inflation

Since we are an unincorporated charity, we have vested title to our office building with the Official Custodian for Charities. The building is valued in the accounts at its purchase price rather than its current market value.

Other optional information

Future plans

We are attempting to widen the demographic of the Society, which is currently dominated by retired people. We are attempting to reach out to universities, Duke of Edinburgh award groups and other younger people.

We continue to recruit Path Checkers who are encouraged to use modern smart-phones to report faults when they see them, but who are not, unlike Inspectors, actively encouraged to seek out faults

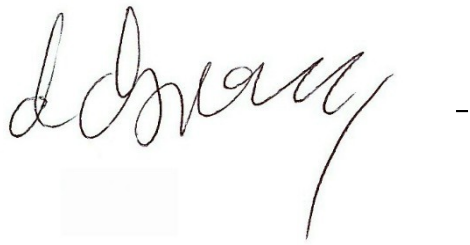
We will continue instigating DMMOs and anticipate taking some of the current applications to public inquiry.

Declaration

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

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees.

Name David C Brown
Position Acting Honorary Secretary
Date 08 March 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Brown', is written over a light gray rectangular stamp. A small horizontal line is visible to the right of the signature.