

**WOOLSTON EYES CONSERVATION GROUP**

**ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS**

**YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**



#### Reference and administrative details

Name of charity: Woolston Eyes Conservation Group

Charity registration number: 700362

Mailing address: WECG, 9 Lynton Gardens, Appleton, Warrington WA4 5ED

Website: [www.woolstoneyes.com](http://www.woolstoneyes.com)

Independent examiner: Steve Williams, 90 Edward Gardens, Woolston, Warrington, WA1 4QT

#### Trustees, Officers and Group Members

The Woolston Eyes Conservation Group is a charity registered with the UK Charity Commission (no. 700362). It was formed with an agreed constitution in 1978.

WECG is managed by a committee which comprises up to 12 members who elect trustees and officers at an Annual General Meeting

B Ankers	Chairman and Trustee
D Bowman	Vice-chairman and Trustee
B Martin	Recorder and Trustee
D Spencer	Treasurer and Secretary
J Blundell	Committee Member
D Hackett	Committee Member
J Haddock	Committee Member
S Haddock	Committee Member
A Mansfield	Committee Member
D Owen	Committee Member
H Wynn	Committee Member

#### Objectives and Activities

The purpose of the Woolston Eyes Conservation Group (WECG) is to maintain and enhance the environment of the Woolston Eyes deposit grounds which are owned and managed by Peel Holdings/Manchester Ship Canal Company (the owners). The deposit grounds are classified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

WECG's main activities are:

## 1. Habitat Management:

Woolston Eyes SSSI is a nationally important site for its breeding bird assemblage of lowland open waters and their margins, including nationally important numbers of Black-necked Grebe, Gadwall and Pochard. Approximately 25% of the UK population of Black-necked Grebes breed at Woolston. In addition to its ornithological interest, Woolston Eyes is also Cheshire's premier butterfly site with large numbers of wider countryside species occurring along with notable assemblages of common amphibians.

## 2. Data Collection

The members and permit holders collect data on the fauna and flora of the site by:

- Monthly Wetland Bird Surveys from September to April
- Breeding Bird Surveys between March and July.
- Bird ringing on Deposit Beds 1 and 3 carried out throughout the year by members of the Merseyside Ringing Group.
- Regular surveys of butterflies and dragonflies.
- Occasional surveys of other flora and fauna types, such as moths, beetles, wildflowers and fungi

The data collected is used by the WECG to guide habitat management activity and by Natural England when re-designation of the SSSI status occurs. It also informs the relationship with the owners to ensure that the quality of the habitat is maintained.

## 3. Visitor Access

The WECG facilitate access to the Reserve by managing a permit system on behalf of the owners. We also provide facilities so that visitors can observe and enjoy the wildlife.

Permit holders pay an annual fee for access to the Reserve of £20 per annum for an individual permit and £30 per annum for a family permit.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

### Habitat management

We've been fortunate at Woolston Eyes to see our application for nearly £100,000, from the national Species Recovery Programme, being successful. The fund, which is administered by Natural England, has been created to try and halt the decline in some of the nation's most important species. For us, it's our critically important Willow Tits. The money will be used to employ a contractor to coppice 54 hectares of woodland and scrub across the Reserve, turning back the succession to mature woodland. Willow Tits need young, low scrub with diverse ground cover and a supply of rotting stumps, in which they excavate their nests, in order to thrive. Research is another aspect of the programme, with successful bidders being required to contribute to our knowledge of species recovery nationally. So, we'll be trialling different approaches to coppicing and monitoring their outcomes, in terms of breeding Willow Tit pairs.

In addition to this new development a large amount of the more routine habitat management work has taken place throughout the year which has focused on reed restoration, tree coppicing and maintenance of our grasslands. This work is carried out by RSPB wardens funded by WECG.

### Annual Report

We published a report on the fauna and flora recorded on the Reserve in 2022. We are very grateful to wildlife artist Colin Woolfe who illustrates our front cover; this year's painting was of a Penduline Tit which was recorded for the first time on the Reserve in November. The only other Cheshire record is of one on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1986 on the Wirral at Meols.

The report for 2023 sightings is currently in preparation and will be published in 2024.

Fauna and flora reports from previous years can be found via our website [www.woolstoneeyes.com](http://www.woolstoneeyes.com). In addition, all the data collected on birds, butterflies and dragonflies are entered into RECORD, a biodiversity information system serving Cheshire, Halton, Warrington and Wirral.

Brian Martin, our Reserve recorder and co-founder, has published a book entitled 'Woolston Eyes - From Wasteland to Wetland'. Brian's book outlines the history of the Woolston Eyes Conservation Group from its earliest days in the 1980s and its trials and triumphs as it created, with the help of the landowners and other partners, one of the foremost wetlands in the country. Local photographers have contributed many great pictures and there are also papers on some of the most important aspects of the Reserves natural history.

### Visitor Access

There was a continuing strong demand for permit sales and approximately 700 permits were sold this year. We are grateful to our permit holders, whose positive support we greatly value and whose permit fees help to fund the habitat management work and provision of visitor facilities, which are at the centre of our committee's activities.

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### FINANCIAL RESULTS

In 2023 £22,361 was raised from the sale of permits including Gift Aid compared to £20,676 in 2022. reflecting the continuing support from our permit holders.

Countryside Stewardship grants, totalling £35,447 were received/pending for habitat management work on No.3 and No.4 beds. A grant of £3,595 was also received from Natural England as a contribution towards the costs of security fencing and gates on No.4 bed.

The major expense during the year have been costs of the RSPB wardening services which amount to approximately £40,000. Other significant expenditures have been the No.4 gates and fencing (total cost £7,500 including the contribution from Natural England), ~£2,760 on a campaign of Giant Hogweed spraying on No.4 bed and £11,000 on willow removing from the No.4 wetland.

The accounts show that we remain in a sound financial position. At the end of 2023 we have £164,573 cash in the bank. We owe an estimated £159,000 to the RSPB for their services between 2016 to 2023 and allowing for this and accruing the £23,616 outstanding RPA payment, we have surplus funds

of approximately £29,189 at the end of 2023. This is a decrease from 2022 when our surplus was £46,831, reflecting the significant one-off expenditures which have occurred in 2023.

The groups policy is to hold a surplus of at least £20k which would be intended to deal with any significant unplanned expenditure on our equipment or hides. As the committee comprises all volunteers our financial commitments are relatively small and the committee considers a £20k surplus sufficient to cover any financial risk.

**B Ankers Chairman**



CHARITY COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Woolston Eyes Conservation Group

No 700362

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## Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from	Period start date 01/01/2023	To	Period end date 31/12/2023
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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 £
<b>A1 Receipts</b>					
Gift Aid	3,813	-	-	3,813	3,418
Permits, etc.	20,362	-	-	20,362	18,865
Donations	1,284	-	-	1,284	1,261
Misc	7	-	-	7	189
Rural Payment Agency	-	11,830	-	11,830	35,447
No.4 Bed Wetland Development Phase 2 Countrywide Stewardship Grant	-	-	-	-	128,114
NE grant	-	3,595	-	3,595	9,000
Bank Interest	3,184	-	-	3,184	-
<b>Sub total (Gross income for AR)</b>	<b>28,650</b>	<b>15,425</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>44,075</b>	<b>196,294</b>
<b>A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).</b>					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>28,650</b>	<b>15,425</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>44,075</b>	<b>196,294</b>
<b>A3 Payments</b>					
Admin & Insurance	5,610	-	-	5,610	5,861
Reserve Management	27,979	3,595	-	31,574	15,246
Bird Food	1,148	-	-	1,148	1,574
Miscellaneous Expenses	2,109	-	-	2,109	852
No.4 Bed Phase 2	-	-	-	-	108,000
No.4 Bed Platform	-	-	-	-	25,745
RSPB wardening fees	-	-	-	-	47,000
No4 Wet Woodland Development	4,680	-	-	4,680	-
Bank Charges	213	-	-	213	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>41,739</b>	<b>3,595</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>45,334</b>	<b>204,278</b>
<b>A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)</b>					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>41,739</b>	<b>3,595</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>45,334</b>	<b>204,278</b>
<b>Net of receipts/(payments)</b>	<b>- 13,089</b>	<b>11,830</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>- 1,259</b>	<b>- 7,984</b>
<b>A5 Transfers between funds</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>A6 Cash funds last year end</b>	<b>63,356</b>	<b>102,475</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>165,831</b>	<b>33,129</b>
<b>Cash funds this year end</b>	<b>50,267</b>	<b>114,305</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>164,572</b>	<b>25,145</b>

## 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	Current	11,502	-	-
	Countryside Stewardship	-	11,878	-
	Savings	38,765	102,427	-
	<b>Total cash funds</b>	<b>50,267</b>	<b>114,305</b>	<b>-</b>
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK

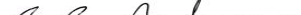
		Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds
	Details	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets	Outstanding RPA payments for 2023	-	23,616	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
<b>B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use</b>	Hides/Platform/Storage Units		36,395	-
	Storage Units		-	-
	Enviroloo		-	-
	Tractor		-	-
	Miscellaneous Equipment		-	-
			-	-

B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
	Amount due to the RSPB for wardening services	Restricted andUnrestricted	159,000	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	

Signed by one or two trustees on  
behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
	B Ankers	13/01/2024

## **Independent examiner's report to the Trustees of Woolston Eyes Conservation Group**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Woolston Eyes Conservation Group for the year ended 31 December 2023

### **Responsibilities and basis of the 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 all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

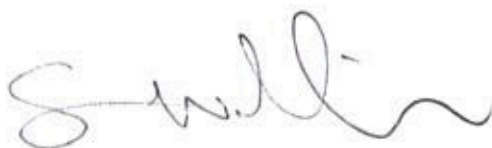
### **Independent examiner's statement**

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

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records

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.

Signed



Name: Stephen Williams

Address: 90 Edward Gardens, Woolston, Warrington, Cheshire

Date: 7/2/24