

WOOLSTON EYES CONSERVATION GROUP

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024



Reference and administrative details

Name of charity: Woolston Eyes Conservation Group

Charity registration number: 700362

Mailing address: WECG, 91 Myddleton Lane, Winwick, Warrington WA2 8LR

Website: www.woolstoneyes.com

Independent examiner: Tom Coyne, WatkinsonBlack , 1st Floor 264 Manchester Road, Warrington, WA1 3RB

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.

After over 44 years as Chair of the WECG Brian Ankers has retired from the committee. Brian was instrumental in the founding of the WECG and together with Brian Martin and David Bowman developed the Reserve into one of the premier wildlife sites in the north west of England. Our new Chair is David Bowman. Brian Martin has also stepped down as Recorder but remains on the committee as a Trustee. Dan Owen is the group's new Recorder

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

D Bowman	Chairperson and Trustee
B Martin	Trustee
D Owen	Recorder
D Spencer	Treasurer and Secretary
J Blundell	Website and Permit Manager
D Hackett	Committee Member
J Haddock	Committee Member
S Haddock	Committee Member
A Mansfield	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

Work on developing the wet woodland on No.4 has been completed this year. Over the past 25 years there had been no management of this woodland largely due to the lack of access and difficult terrain therein. The group were fortunate in receiving a capital grant from Natural England to develop the woodland. The work has involved raising the height of the access track and installing two new sluices in order to flood and control the water level in the woodland. Areas of the woodland were also coppiced and large areas have been sprayed to remove Giant Hogweed.

The aim is to create a mixed age (but scrub dominated), diverse scrubby wet woodland with rides, a significant deadwood component, a graded edge into surrounding fen habitat and open areas with rank grasses, nettles and bramble thickets.

Last year we reported we had received a grant of nearly £100,000, from the national Species Recovery Programme. 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. In 2024 the money was used to employ a contractor to coppice 54 hectares of woodland and scrub across the Reserve, turning back the succession to mature woodland. The work also involved the control of invasive species such as Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed.

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 2023. We are very grateful to wildlife artist Colin Woolfe who illustrates our front cover; this year's painting was of a Pochard family. In 2023, the Reserve held 4.2% of the United Kingdom breeding population with only two other wetlands in the country supporting more breeding pairs than Woolston.

The report for 2024 sightings is currently in preparation and will be published in 2025.

Fauna and flora reports from previous years can be found via our website www.woolstoneyes.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.

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.

FINANCIAL RESULTS

In 2024 £18,477 was raised from the sale of permits and reports compared to £20,362 in 2023 reflecting a decrease in the number of permit holders.

We had a significant increase in our Countryside Stewardship annual revenue grants in 2024 which now total £68,186 due to increase in the RPA payment rates, up from £36,535 in 2023. We also received £54,500 from Natural England for the Willow Tit Species Recovery Project and a Countryside Stewardship capital grant of £36,720 for the creation of the wet woodland on No.4 bed.

The major expense during the year has been the cost of the RSPB wardening service which amounts to approximately £55,000. The only other significant, non-routine expenditure has been our contribution to the purchase of an ATV by the RSPB (£5,000).

The accounts show that we remain in a sound financial position. At the end of 2024 we had £146,762 cash in the bank. We owe an estimated £170,000 to the RSPB for their services between 2016 to 2024 band. A payment from the RPA of £51,120 was outstanding. Similarly £19,500 was outstanding from the Natural England for the Willow Tit project. Accounting for these liabilities and future income we had surplus funds of approximately £47,000 at the end of

2024. This is an increase from 2023 when our surplus was £29,189, reflecting the significant rise in RPA grants.

The group's policy is to hold a surplus of at least £20,000 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.

David Spencer, Treasurer



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Woolston Eyes Conservation Group

No 700362

Receipts and payments accounts

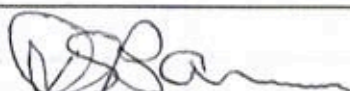
CC16a

For the period from	01/01/2024	To	31/12/2024
------------------------	------------	----	------------

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					
Gift Aid	3,656	-	-	3,656	3,813
Permits, etc.	18,477	-	-	18,477	20,362
Donations	1,915	-	-	1,915	1,284
Misc	670	-	-	670	7
RPA No.3 bed and No.4 loop annual revenue payment	-	11,830	-	11,830	11,830
RPA No.4 Wetland annual revenue payment	-	21,886	-	21,886	-
RPA No.4 Wet Woodland annual revenue payment	-	7,983	-	7,983	-
No.4 Bed Wet Woodland Development Countryside Stewardship Capital Grant	-	36,720	-	36,720	-
NE Species Recovery Capital Grant	-	54,500	-	54,500	3,595
Bank Interest	2,513	-	-	2,513	3,184
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	27,231	132,919	-	160,150	44,075
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	27,231	132,919	-	160,150	44,075
A3 Payments					
Admin & Insurance	6,943	-	-	6,943	5,610
Reserve Management	8,573	-	-	8,573	31,574
Bird Food	1,553	-	-	1,553	1,148
Miscellaneous Expenses	16	-	-	16	2,109
No.4 Wet Woodland Capital Works	-	36,720	-	36,720	-
Species Recovery Capital works	-	74,000	-	74,000	-
RSPB wardening fees	-	50,000	-	50,000	-
Bank Charges	155	-	-	155	213
Sub total	17,240	160,720	-	177,960	40,654
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	17,240	160,720	-	177,960	40,654
Net of receipts/(payments)	9,991	- 27,801	-	- 17,810	3,421
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	50,267	114,305	-	164,572	165,831
Cash funds this year end	60,258	86,504	-	146,762	169,252

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 Accounts	2,231	53	-
	Saving Accounts	58,027	86,451	-
	Total cash funds	60,258	86,504	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))			
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets	Outstanding RPA payments for 2024	-	51,120	-
	Outstanding Species Recovery Payment	-	19,500	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets		Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Hides/Platform/Storage Units		36,395	-
	Storage Units		-	-
	Enviroloo		-	-
	Tractor		-	-
	Miscellaneous Equipment		-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Amount due to the RSPB for wardening services	Restricted and Unrestricted	170,011	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
		D Bowman	09/01/2025	



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

Charity Name

Woolston Eyes Conservation Group

**On accounts for the year
ended**

31 December 2024

**Charity no
(if any)**

700362

Set out on pages

(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 **31/12/2024**.

**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:

Date:

31/03/2025

Name:

Thomas Coyne

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

MAAT, CFAB (ICAEW)

Address:

WatkinsonBlack, 1st Floor, 264 Manchester Road
Warrington, Cheshire, WA1 3RB

WatkinsonBlack

1st Floor, 264 Manchester Road
Warrington
Cheshire, WA1 3RB
Tel: 01925 413210

Email: info@warringtonaccountants.co.uk

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.