

Protecting Edinburgh's River



Annual Report April 2015 to March 2016

Our mission is; to conserve and enhance the Water of Leith as a haven for biodiversity and an educational and recreational resource for all

THE VOLUNTEER TEAM AND COMMUNITY ACTION ON THE RIVER

Volunteers attended a record **129** workdays! A total of **1582** people gave **5264** hours to help:

- Rid the river of rubbish and invasive weeds.
- Create and manage habitats for wildlife.
- Fix paths, fences, bridges and steps.

The highlights of the year include:

- The Tuesday Hit Squad completed 26 tasks.
- Volunteers attended 20 invasive species removal tasks.
- 15 local businesses joined us for volunteer tasks.
- 24 youth groups worked to help conserve the river.
- 9 young people joined us on work placements.
- 9 communities based along the river took part in clean-ups.
- The Peregrines of Tiphereth (supported adults with learning disabilities) delivered 20 tasks including the construction of a fine willow fence.

Take a look at our project examples below:

Fences as Defences



In May we were joined by 172 volunteers from local businesses for 5 days of tasks. We built a 60m long litter trap fence and planted a native hedgerow in Longstone, cleared masses of overgrown vegetation in Stockbridge and painted railings and completed dozens of other tasks in Currie.

A Poetic Bridge

Friends of the Pentlands and ourselves fundraised for a much needed bridge in Poets Glen - an important path connecting the Water of Leith with the Pentland Hills. With volunteers and Alistair Dickson, we unveiled the new bridge in the spring. It was a challenging build in a tricky location but the result is rather attractive.



Youth work goes 'Outside'



In June we began a year-long focus on Youth involvement in our work, funded by Awards for All. The project involved working in partnership with youth agencies to take young people 'outside' to deliver conservation tasks and to support volunteer placements & award achievement.

BIG Spring Clean-up Weekend

A huge effort is needed to ensure the river is clean, green and beautiful for the summer. During our spring clean-up this year, we had a remarkable 150 people joining us over 4 clean-ups in one weekend, clearing huge piles of rubbish – thank you everyone!



EDUCATION AND AWARENESS AT THE WATER OF LEITH VISITOR CENTRE

The focal point for all our work remains the Visitor Centre. **16,803** people learnt more about the river by popping in to see us this year. **3504** voluntary hours were given at the Centre working on reception, administration, maintenance and fund-raising. The highlights of the year include:

- **168** groups joined our learning programmes, including **72** primary classes, **9** nursery groups and **9** high school classes.
- **2097** pupils attended formal learning sessions and **1295** people from all ages enjoyed guided walk, illustrated talks, 'hands on fun' sessions and parties.
- **20** public events were enjoyed by over **500** participants.
- Over all we reached well over **20,000** people.

Take a look at our project examples below:

Epic Epoch – a Historical Fun Day

Visitors to our Epic event journeyed back in time in Dr. When's Time Machine to experience life from the Ice Age to Doomsday. Explorers encountered Neolithic settlers, Bronze Age and Iron Age Camps and crossed the Roman Centurion before taking part in the Battle of Carham.



Field Studies Flourish



Our Education Officer has developed new High School programmes to deliver field studies for National 4 and 5 Geography and Biology Studies. It is a great opportunity for young people to study a local resource and our new Source to Sea programme proved to be especially popular.

Did you hear the Fanfare?

Fanfare, organised by Edinburgh International Festival, harnessed the forces of 12 Scottish community brass bands to present a day of free performances along the Water of Leith. Bands performed at 12 different locations from Balerno to Leith, with many hundreds of people enjoying 3 synchronised shows.



Audio Trail – as an app and on You Tube



Three years ago we launched our Audio Trail – with 20 'tracks' allowing you to listen to a commentary about the river, its history and wildlife as you explore the walkway. This is now available as an app for smart devices thanks to Roger Hyam. To enhance the audio there is a map and 'locator' function to show where on the river you are.

BIODIVERSITY AND RIVER MANAGEMENT

We continue to involve communities and stakeholders in the management of the river and the protection of its biodiversity. The sustainable use and management of the river involves liaison with dozens of statutory agencies and local organisations. This year we hosted and attended 7 stakeholder meetings and achieved all 27 of our actions in the Water of Leith Management Plan. The planning case-load also increased as 7 sites along the river required comment. On the practical side, the highlights of the year include:

- Volunteers spent **344** hours patrolling the river and reporting its issues.
- **20** tasks and over **300** staff and volunteer hours were spent spraying Giant Hogweed, stem injecting Japanese Knotweed & pulling Himalayan Balsam.
- **6** Biodiversity Boost Sites were maintained by volunteers.
- **1085** wildlife sightings of **77** species were recorded.
- An Invertebrate Survey was supported.

Take a look at our project examples below:

Out with the INNS

Non-Native Species are a real threat to the biodiversity of the river. With the support of the River Forth Fisheries Trust we have trained more staff and volunteers to tackle Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed with herbicides. We also pulled out hundreds of Himalayan Balsam plants and over all 300 hours were spent tackling this issue in the year.



The Balgreen Community Garden

We have 6 Biodiversity Boost sites along the river and in March we received great news that our latest project to improve a derelict site along the river would receive £10K of funding from Tesco's Bags of Help scheme. Following local consultation the community are keen to see the site improved for people and wildlife.



Otter Sightings Overload

This year saw a record 20 otter sightings from Currie to Bonnington including 7 in one week!! The encounters were mostly of a solitary otter but occasionally a pair was spotted – including them whistling and playing together under Dean Bridge.



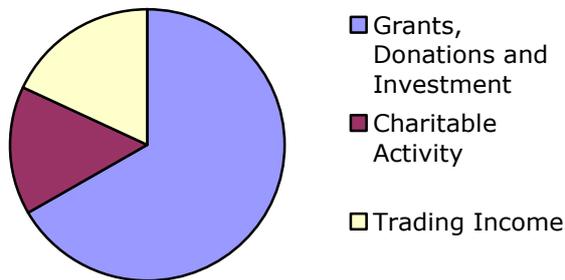
Phase 2 of the Flood Works begins

In March, Murrayfield became the next part of the river to see the diggers roll in, as trees were felled and footpaths closed in advance of the flood prevention works. The project is expected to take around 2 years to complete. We are liaising with the contractor to minimise disruption.

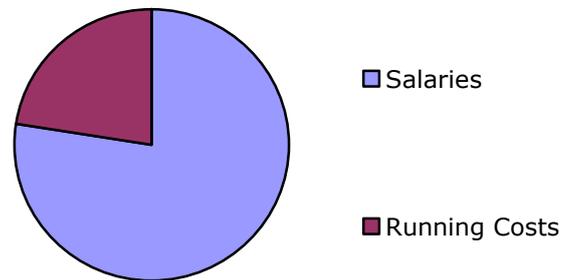


FUNDING AND FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Income - £127,267



Expenditure - £115,397



The charts represent a summary of our unrestricted accounts for the year ending 31st March 2016 – full independently examined accounts including restricted funds are available on our website. The accounts show a surplus of £11,870 - £4810 of which is a donation from John Lewis which will be carried forward into 2016/17 to fund the continuance of the Project Officer Post. The additional £7060 has been accrued due to good trading performance at our Visitor Centre, corporate task income and fundraising events.

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS, MEMBERS, STAFF & TRUSTEES

Funders:

City of Edinburgh Council – Services for Communities
City of Edinburgh Council – Children and Families
Scottish Natural Heritage
Awards for All – National Lottery
John Lewis Partnership, SCVO, CEC – Neighbourhood Partnerships, Gordon Fraser Charitable Trust, Action Earth, Tekoa Trust, Sainsburys Community Grant Scheme, Tesco.

Trustees:

George Hunter OBE (Chair to Oct 2015)
Ian Anderson (Chair from Oct 2015)
Bill Alexander
Brian Henderson
Ron Hill
Karen Young
David Hudson
Bryce Morrison
Derek Ferrier (until Oct 2015)
Bill Shannon (until Oct 2015)

Staff:

Trust Manager - Helen Brown
Volunteers Officer - Charlotte Neary
Trust Administrator - Sandra Boyle
Education Officer - Ruth Prince
Centre Assistant - Kit Russell
Project Officer – Ben McCallum (from Jun 15)

The Water of Leith Conservation Trust is a registered charity (SC000015) established in 1988. This report describes the achievements over the year and our performance against targets set in the Water of Leith Conservation Trust Business Plan 2014-2017. The objectives of the Water of Leith Conservation Trust are to conserve the Water of Leith and its environs, promote the natural and built heritage of the river, advance education and benefit the community by:

- raising awareness of the river.
- providing teaching and learning services for all age groups.
- operating the Water of Leith Visitor Centre as a visitor attraction and community resource.
- encouraging the protection and enhancement of biodiversity along the river and its environs.
- enabling volunteers and the public to take practical action to conserve and enhance the natural and built environment.
- encouraging responsible access to, and recreational use of, the river and its walkway.
- promoting the sustainable use and management of the river.
- working in partnership with others.