

Annual Report

April 2016 to March 2017

The Water of Leith Conservation Trust is a registered charity SC000015 established in 1988 whose mission is: *To conserve and enhance the Water of Leith as a haven for wildlife and an educational and recreational resource for all.*

Overall in 2016/17 we delivered 397 volunteer tasks, learning days and events attended by 6655 people – more than one every day!! Here for the community 7 days a week, we welcomed over 17,000 people to our Visitor Centre and volunteers gave 9454 hours of service to keep the Water of Leith ‘Clean, Green and Beautiful’

This report describes the achievements over the year and our performance against targets set in the Water of Leith Conservation Trust Business Plan 2014-17. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Trust’s principal funders for their continued support - City of Edinburgh Council and Scottish Natural Heritage. We also appreciate the hard work and dedication of our staff, trustees and volunteer team, not forgetting the resolute backing of our members.

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 an educational 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.

**For more information about any of our work please contact:
Water of Leith Visitor Centre, 24 Lanark Road Edinburgh EH14 1TQ
0131 455 7367, admin@waterofleith.org.uk
www.waterofleith.org.uk @WOLCT**



Conservation in Action

The Trust has its own team of volunteers (around 200 people are registered with us) and in 2016/17 they delivered a record 91 tasks - amounting to 812 volunteer days:

- **30 hit squad tasks** - (small fortnightly team working on habitat improvement and access issues)
- **23 Invasive Non-Native Species tasks** - spraying Giant Hogweed, hand pulling Himalayan Balsam and stem injecting Japanese Knotweed
- **27 river clean-ups** with large teams of volunteers on weekends and Thursdays
- **13 conservation tasks** to improve access and manage habitats

In addition we delivered **86** tasks with local **Youth, Community and Corporate Groups** where we plan, facilitate and lead the task, amounting to **1026** volunteer days. These groups deliver all kinds of tasks including; ridding the river of rubbish and invasive weeds, creating and managing habitats for wildlife and enabling access by fixing paths, fences and steps.



Our biggest project of the year was the transformation of a derelict corner of the walkway into the Balgreen Community Garden, with funding from Tesco's Bags of Help Scheme. 20 workdays helped to create the garden and we are grateful to the following groups for their support: The Westfield Community, Health all Around and Balgreen Primary School, RSPB, Drystone Walling Association of South East Scotland, young people from the Peregrines of Tiphereth and Youth Build, volunteers from DWF, Lloyds Bank, Wood Mackenzie and the Dirty Weekenders.

A total of 177 practical tasks an average of 3 per week all year round and 5833 volunteer conservation hours.



Youth work and Outdoor Learning

Working with young people represents around 70% of our activities, the highlights of which include:

- **2564 pupils from 114 school** classes engaged with our formal learning programmes including 20 classes and 386 pupils from SIMD areas and 10 Edinburgh High Schools working on our field studies programmes
- **78 groups with 1553 people** engaged with our informal programme including 7 groups (129 people) from SIMD areas and/or disadvantaged
- We carried out new projects with challenging groups from Citadel Youth Centre, Wester Hailes Youth Agency and Score Scotland
- We worked in **partnership with 2 local primary schools** to deliver long term projects on use and understanding of their local greenspace; St Joseph's Primary School and Balgreen Primary School
- We hosted **18 Youth Placements**, from 2 days to 4 weeks.
- We delivered **28 natural heritage and biodiversity related public events** to over 700 people – 65% of which were just for young people.

A total 220 learning days – on average 4 per week



Working with the Community

In 2016/17 we focused on developing partnerships, workdays and group visits suited to engaging people from hard to reach or disadvantaged communities. During the year we delivered the following:

- Projects with youth with special needs included; **2 visits** from the Options for Life group, a phenomenal **20 tasks** with Peregrines of Tiphereth and developing an outdoor learning programme with Rowanfield Special School to engage 6 classes of children with social and behavioural issues
- **5 tasks** with groups of adults at the risk of homelessness and/or long term unemployed – with Crisis and Re-union
- **7 tasks** with the Action for Children's Youth Build Project including a great project learning drystone walling skills from Master Wallers
- **3 tasks / visits** with The Young Roots group – a Housing Association led estate management skills course for young people who are unemployed.
- We also obtained funding for and developed the **Balgreen Community Garden** supported by the local school, Health All Around and the community of Westfield.



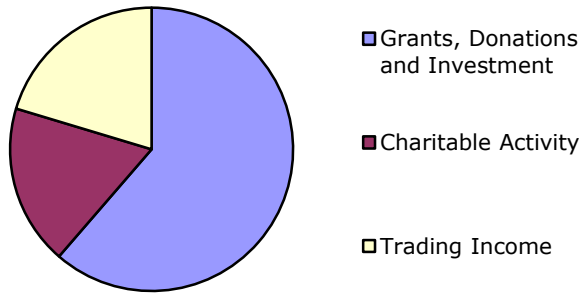
Biodiversity and management of access and greenspaces

Participation in the improvement of the Water of Leith and its environs by volunteers is detailed above, but in addition to practical tasks we also patrol and survey the river and contribute to actions in the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan and the Water of Leith Management Plan; highlights of the year include:

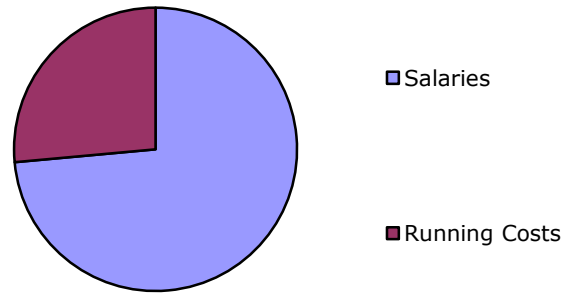
- Volunteers reporting and logging over **1500 wildlife records**
- **268 volunteer river patrols** were carried out and issues reported
- **1 Invasive Non Native Species Survey and 2 Meadow Surveys** conducted by volunteers
- 3 wildlife / community garden sites and 2 wildflower meadows managed for biodiversity.
- **12 miles of river walkway** maintained with 4 additional access improvement projects carried out.
- 9 otter and 70 kingfisher sightings recorded
- Reviewed and commented on 7 planning applications adjacent to the river
- Liaised with the appointed contractor and community as Phase 2 of the flood prevention scheme got underway at Murrayfield

Funding and Financial Summary

Income - £113,698



Expenditure - £120,768



The charts represent a summary of our unrestricted accounts for the year ending 31st March 2017 – full independently examined accounts including restricted funds are available on our website. The accounts show a deficit of £7070 however this follows a surplus in the previous year of £11,870. The Trust retains a reasonable reserve of £112,366. During the year we also purchased a van which has proven to be a very valuable resource – almost entirely funded by private donation. This capital asset appears in the restricted fund of the main account and will be depreciated accordingly. Overall performance in the year was good with modest increases in income at the Visitor Centre, fundraising at the Duck Race and subscriptions

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
SCVO – Community Jobs Fund
Tesco – Bags of Help

And generous private donations which enabled us to purchase a van to support our work on the river and to purchase a defibrillator for the Centre.

We welcomed the support of 283 members in 2016/17 who in addition to showing their support for our work attended a busy programme of winter talks and summer walks

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 (to Oct 16)
Visitor Centre Assistant (Community Jobs Fund) – Lea Claude

Future developments

In early 2017 The Trust reviewed the success of its 2014-17 Business Plans and prepared a new plan to take the organisation towards 2020. Annual action plans clearly define the activity and targets for the coming year, and during the life of the plan we endeavour to develop our work in the following areas: Visitor Centre Development, Community and Wildlife Projects and to meet our Management Objectives in the Water of Leith Management Plan. Small charities meet fresh challenges each year, and attention will also focus on the provision of sustainable income streams. Should you wish to discover more about the work of the Water of Leith Conservation Trust or receive a copy of the Business Plan, please call in to the Visitor Centre, visit our website or contact us: Water of Leith Conservation Trust, 24 Lanark Road, Edinburgh, EH14 1TQ. Tel: 0131 455 7367 admin@waterofleith.org.uk