



# ANNUAL REPORT from March 2022 to April 2023

2022-3 was an exceptional year for the Trust. The headlines are:

Total Volunteer Hours: **10,905**

Number of Conservation Tasks: **274**

Learning sessions delivered to schools and the public: **179**

Number of Volunteer Patrols conducted along 13 miles of river: **325**

**So, on average, EACH WEEK the Trust's staff and volunteers deliver 5 conservation tasks, 3.5 learning sessions, 7 river patrols; we supports 210 volunteer hours; and opens a community café and visitor centre daily.**



*the*  
**WATER of LEITH**  
Conservation Trust

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.*

This report describes our achievements over the year and our performance against targets set in the Water of Leith Conservation Trust Business Plan 2020-23. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Trust's principal funder, City of Edinburgh Council, for their continued support. We also appreciate the hard work and dedication of our staff, Trustees and volunteer team, not forgetting the resolute backing of our members. For more information about any of our work please contact:

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[admin@waterofleith.org.uk](mailto:admin@waterofleith.org.uk) [www.waterofleith.org.uk](http://www.waterofleith.org.uk) @WOLCT**

## The Volunteer Team & Community Action on the River

An impressive 175 tasks undertaken by Trust volunteers, amounting to 4836 hours during the year. A further 99 clean-ups/practical activities were also undertaken by community groups, and those taking part contributing 2651 hours to these activities. This meant we achieved a record 274 tasks along the river overall, with 2566 volunteer days. This means that, on average, there were 9.3 volunteers per task and we completed an average of 5 tasks per week. Over 7000 volunteer were hours given to improve the river, its habitats and walkway. These included:

- 89 river clean-ups including 12 boat clean-ups in Leith
- 76 tasks to survey, treat and manage Invasive Non Native Species (INNS)
- 67 tasks maintaining the Water of Leith walkway and adjoining path network
- 18 tasks scything, raking, planting and surveying our wildflower meadows
- 24 tasks maintaining our Community Gardens

The key achievements included:

- Our work on the river was featured on BBC Winterwatch and shown nationally.
- We extended our work up the Murrayburn, a polluted and unloved tributary, discovering the source of the rivers' giant hogweed infestation.
- We waded from Balerno to Leith five times, which is over 60 miles, targeting INNS and collecting litter.
- We spent a muscle-aching 1,000 hours working on the walkway - raking leaves, cutting back vegetation and clearing drainage channels to improve it for all users.

The trusty workhorse of our Conservation team, our van, has been retired to pastures new in favour of a new(ish) and larger electric van, thanks to support and funding from Baillie Gifford, PayPal Impact Fund and 'give at checkout' donations. Having greener transport with more internal space meaning even more tools can be brought to tasks and we are helping to clean-up Edinburgh's air quality.

A scroll through Twitter <https://twitter.com/WOLCT> shows what our volunteers have been up to. Sustaining this level of delivery for the river and its community is so important for the river's wildlife, its users and for our volunteer team, as it is helping to combat the loneliness and isolation of individuals who join us weekly.



## Visitor Centre, Learning and Communications

The Centre was open for 354 days and we recorded 20,500 visitors, over a quarter of whom chose to experience our interactive exhibition. Our new cafe servery has proved to be a big hit with visitors and during the winter we upgraded the retail space to be able to offer more storage and shelving for our stock. We recorded an income of £52,430 through the Centre facilities. Over the year we ran 25 events from the Centre and held a beautiful exhibition of photographs entitled '*From the Walkway*' – by Tom Kelly. Our new website is performing well; we saw over 65,000 users and blog subscribers rose to nearly 1800. Twitter continues to be our most followed platform, with over 8000 followers. Facebook is sitting at around 3500 and Instagram 1000, but rising.

The year saw schools and learning programmes return to normal, but we retained the 'outdoor learning' focus across the board within both formal and informal learning sessions. Over the year we welcomed 87 school classes and led 8 special sessions with Ukrainian children who were living on boats in Leith and had limited access to outdoor spaces. 1914 young people attended formal learning sessions with a record 22 High School classes booking our field study programmes in Geography and Biology. We welcomed 52 community/public groups to informal learning sessions and delivered 29 public events and – including a special Family Funday we called 'Tales from the Riverbank'. Finally, we developed and hosted three special '*Wild Wednesday*' sessions for children who have additional support needs. Overall, delivering 179 learning sessions.

## Greenspaces, Recreation and Biodiversity

It has been a transformative year on the river, as our pioneering work continues to make the river more resilient to urban pressures and climate change:

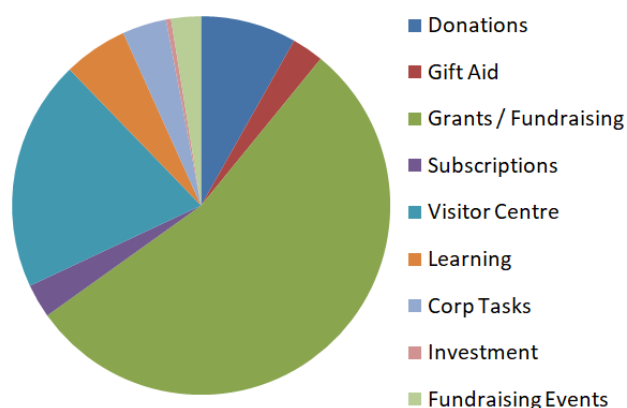
- We planted over 2000 wildflower plants to boost biodiversity over 13 miles of river.
- With Forth River Trust we conducted an electro fishing survey to assess the river's fish population so measures to improve habitats can be targeted.
- We created and fixed 'eel ropes' to the river's weirs to make these heritage features passable for these critically endangered fish.
- The knowledgeable Survey team grew this year and has now surveyed all 6 meadows and begun to understand which mosses and bryophytes live near the river.
- We conducted the final year of field work for our Giant Hogweed Project, where the research looks at reduced chemical use in the treatment of this toxic plant and the effects on higher plant species.

The walkway continued to be in high public demand, so our work to maintain the path and its edges remained a high priority, addressed by a total of 67 tasks. Walkway usage issues and management problems are identified through regular patrols (325 volunteer patrols in the year) and appropriate remedial action taken. Good sales of our updated walkway map assisted considerably with promotion of the river and the new website statistics highlighted just how many people seek information about the walkway. We worked with CEC Natural Heritage Service to minimise the disruptions caused by path closures and we completed a number of access improvement, fencing, vegetation control and bank stabilisation tasks along the walkway and river.

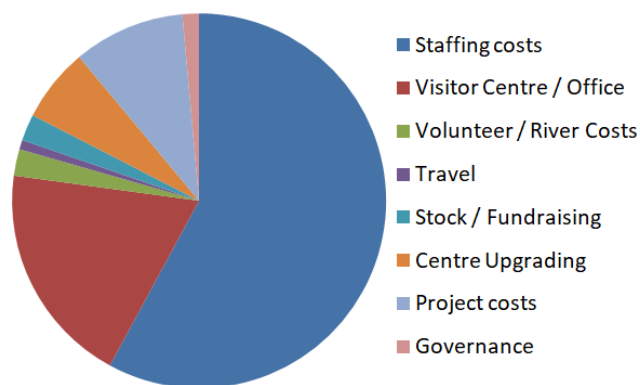
The Water of Leith Action Group met twice to review and report on actions in the Water of Leith Management Plan 2020-30. The Trust liaised with Scottish Water over Combined Sewer Overflow works along the river and supported fish rescue sessions. Led by the Trust, plans and funding to improve Coalie Park in Leith began to take shape, with planning permission granted and designs ready to go to tender, we are hopeful the transformation will begin later in 2023. <https://www.waterofleith.org.uk/coalie-park-project/>

## Governance and Financial Summary

The charts represent a summary of how our accounts were apportioned for the year ending 31st March 2023. During the year The Water of Leith Conservation Trust had total income of £267,471 (2022: £187,993) and expenditure of £254,011 (2022: £214,659). This led to a surplus (prior to unrealised gains or losses on investments of £13,460 (2022: deficit £26,666). The net surplus after unrealised losses on investments is £2,679 (2022: deficit £26,968). This leaves the total funds of the Trust at £337,251.



Income 2022-3



Expenditure 2022-3

The Trust would like to extend its thanks to all its members, donors and funders, especially: City of Edinburgh Council – Parks and Greenspaces and Communities and Families, Baillie Gifford and PayPal Impact Fund. Also many Charitable Trust's and corporate giving donors including: The Cruden Foundation, Barfil Trust, Craignish Trust, Kirkpatrick Trust, Leith Community Fund, Paths for All, Waitrose & customers of the Kitchen.

Looking forward into 2023-24, the staff and Trustees have begun work on a new Strategy to steer the Trust's work. This exciting plan will focus on five key areas: Protect, Learn, Improve, Connect and Entrust. It will list the actions we plan to take over the next five years and the outcomes we hope to achieve.

**Details of our governance, Trustees, the full independently examined accounts, our Business Plan and draft Strategy are all available on our website: [www.waterofleith.org.uk/the-trust/](http://www.waterofleith.org.uk/the-trust/)**