

Trustees' Report & Annual Accounts 2021-22



Message from the Chair

Having walked with our dogs in the woods throughout Ironbridge Gorge for the last 40 years, I felt very privileged to be elected as Chair of the Severn Gorge Countryside Trust this year. Many thanks must be given to our previous Chair, Nick Downes, for all his support and commitment over the last five years and for continuing as vice-chair. This year we have seen a lessening of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with the welcome return of the volunteers supporting the Trust work with their enthusiasm and diverse skills. Group sizes are still limited and we now have an online booking system for members. One interesting development resulting from the pandemic has been a much greater use of technology for communication. The volunteers now have their own communication network and Trustees are using a blend of both online and in-person meetings to suit every occasion and personal circumstance.

As much of the income for the Trust is provided by the rental from commercial properties, there are signs that tenants are struggling with their rental payments as they try and return to full trading. The Trust are constructively engaging with any tenant in difficulty to find mutually acceptable solutions. A decision was made to invest in capital machinery in order to bring more of our work in-house and give more flexibility over timing and options for our complex work programme. This will also result in long term financial savings. Felling work on trees suffering with ash dieback has been planned under the Trust's annual schedule and we will have to acknowledge how different the landscape will look in the next 5 years. Trustees recognise that woodlands are dynamic and the woods of today are vastly different to a hundred years ago and will be very different again in 50 to 100 years' time.

I joined the Trust as a Gorge Parish Council nomination in 2011. It is my firm belief that the Severn Gorge Countryside staff and Trustees are the custodians of one of the most important assets of the Gorge for residents, visitors and for their impact to mitigate climate change. With this in

mind, the Trustees have now set up a Climate Change Working Group to assess the carbon emitted and carbon sequestered by the Trust. This information will be used for future management decisions and to

guide our research. Many thanks to John Box and Kate Chetwood for all their work in collating the information and to find ways in which the Trust can offset its unavoidable residual CO2 emissions. As part of this commitment to our environmental aims, we now have an Investment Working Group and the Trust resolved to stop investing in fossil fuel companies.

The Trustees said farewell and many thanks to three of our Trustees, Alan McKenzie, Andy Cooke and Simon Harris. We welcome Caroline Bagnall as the Shropshire Council nomination; Sarah Chadwick as the Madeley Town Council nomination and Michael Burton as the Broseley Town Council nomination and we are delighted that Andy Cooke will still be supporting the Trust as part of the Ecology Group. Many will remember our former Trustee, David Edwards. His family generously donated a bench in his memory and the Trust have located this in Bower Yard which was one of his favourite places in the Gorge.

Finally, I must thank Russell Rowley, CEO; Kate Chetwood, Company Secretary and Finance Officer; Nathan Morris, Head of Countryside; Emily Holmes, Assistant Countryside Officer; together with our volunteers and contractors for all their wonderful work promoting, protecting and conserving the living landscape of the Ironbridge Gorge for the benefit of local people, visitors and wildlife.

Thank you

Maureen Bragg

Chair, Severn Gorge Countryside Trust



Severn Gorge Countryside Trust Trustees' Report 31 March 2022

The Trustees are pleased to present their report and the audited financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2022

Reference and administrative details

Charity Name: **Severn Gorge Countryside Trust**

Charity number: **1004508**

Company number: **02647374**

Registered Office & operational address

Severn Gorge Countryside Trust
Darby Road, Coalbrookdale
Telford
Shropshire
TF8 7EP

Telephone 01952 433880
www.severngorge.org.uk

Auditors

Muras Baker Jones Limited
Regent House, Bath Avenue
Wolverhampton, WV1 4EG

Bankers

The Co-operative Bank
Colmore Row
Birmingham
B3 3BA

Investment Advisers

Aberdeen Standard Capital
1 George Street,
Edinburgh
EH2 2LL



Board of Trustees

The Directors of the charitable company (the Charity) are its Trustees for the purpose of charity law and throughout this report are collectively referred to as the Trustees. The Board of Trustees is supported by a Company Secretary who is responsible for governance administration.

The elected Trustees as at 31 March 2022 are as follows:

Name	Nominated by:
Maureen Bragg (Chair)	Community Trustee
Nick Downes (Vice Chair)	Barrow Parish Council
Mick Burton	Broseley Town Council
Gina Rowe	Community Trustee
Sarah Chadwick	Madeley Town Council
Caroline Bagnall	Shropshire Council
John Box	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
Max Speke	Sutton Maddock Parish Council
Chris Turley	Telford & Wrekin Council
Carolyn Healy	Telford & Wrekin Council
Dylan Webster	Telford & Wrekin Council
Alan Taylor	The Gorge Parish Council

Staff

Russell Rowley	CEO
Kate Chetwood	Company Secretary and Finance Officer
Nathan Morris	Head of Countryside
Emily Holmes	Assistant Countryside Officer



Structure, Governance and Management

Severn Gorge Countryside Trust was set up in 1991 with the primary aim of promoting, protecting and conserving the living landscape of the Ironbridge Gorge for the benefit of local people, visitors and wildlife. It is a registered charity governed by a Trustee Board and depends on staff, contractors and volunteers to help manage the land.

In this section you can find out more about how the charity is run, how we work with the local community and how we ensure a sustainable organisation that is fit for the future.

Governing Document

Severn Gorge Countryside Trust is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee under the Companies Act and governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association originally dated

20 September 1991 (amended June 2009 and December 2013 to update governance arrangements).



Who Governs the Trust?

The Trust is governed by its Committee of Management (COM) made up of several Member Organisations and Community Trustees. The Trustees are all volunteers with careers and experience in a wide variety of fields.

In accordance with the Memorandum and Articles of Association, Trustees are elected by the membership for terms of four years. At the end of the four-year term Trustees may stand for re-election. Nominations for new Trustees are considered each year prior to the Annual General Meeting (AGM). All Member Organisations are circulated with invitations to nominate Trustees, advising them of any retiring Trustees and requesting nominations for the AGM. The Member Organisations are made up of a variety of local organisations that have a keen interest in the Ironbridge Gorge and also two Community Trustee places.

When considering appointing Trustees, the Committee of Management (Board of Directors) has regard to the requirement of any specialist skills needed.

Trustee induction and training

The Trust provides an induction session to brief new Trustees on their legal obligations under charity and company law, the contents of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the committee structure and decision-making processes, the Development Strategy and recent financial performance of the charity. They are also advised on the future plans and objectives of the Trust. During the induction they meet the CEO, Company Secretary and other employees. They are advised of appropriate Trustee training courses and are encouraged to attend.

Management

The COM is responsible for setting policies and ensuring legality and good practice in accordance with the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Trust and the Charities Act 2011. The Committee of Management meets formally each quarter. At each meeting, the COM considers reports from the management team on areas such as strategic development, financial performance and health and safety. Addition-

ally, as appropriate the COM considers progress on current and future projects, governance and the annual budget and workplan.

The CEO is responsible to the COM for the management of the Trust and the conduct of the Trust's business in accordance with policies and budgets set by the COM. They are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Trust within this framework and are authorised to act on behalf of the Trust on all matters other than those which by law are required to be decided by the COM. The Chief Executive is supported by Trust staff. The Trust also engages a number of professional advisers to assist in its work.

COM met four times in 2021/2022, due to the ongoing covid pandemic the meetings were moved to a virtual platform, Teams.

The COM has three sub-committees/working groups. These have advisory powers and decision making is retained by the COM.

The Personnel Committee is elected annually from the COM and meets to advise on staffing issues and employee training, development and support. The Personnel Committee met twice this year. They are also responsible for reviewing Trustee training needs.

Working Groups

Two working groups were set up in 2020/2021 to review specific areas of the Trust's work. These were the Investment Working Group to look at how the Trust can change its current investment portfolio to a more ethical model and the Climate Change Working Group to look at what the Trust can do immediately and in the longer term to reduce its CO2 emissions.

Investment Working Group

The Investment Working Group (IWG) met twice in 2021/22.

As part of our commitment to our environmental aims, the Trust has stopped investing in fossil fuel companies. No future investments will be made in companies that derive income from the extraction of coal or oil.

The IWG also looked at including additional environmental, social and governance (ESG) and ethical screening options for the portfolio.

A new Investment policy was drawn up to reflect the changes to the Trusts investments.

Climate Change Working Group

Following the Trust's Climate Change Declaration in November 2019 we have been looking at ways to tackle the causes of climate change. For example, by reducing our own emissions, caring for the land that captures and stores carbon, exploring flood mitigation options and restoring wildlife habitats that are threatened.

We are having to adapt to unpredictable weather patterns including restoring the damage caused by heavy rain, high winds and droughts.

The climate change challenge may be large but so is the opportunity. We can lock up carbon in the woodlands we manage using Continuous Cover forestry and create more opportunities for wildlife to thrive while continuing to champion renewable energy and slash our carbon emissions.

The Climate Change Working Group met once in 21/22. The working group has created a carbon calculator to enable the Trust to measure and monitor its carbon emissions. This calculator will continue to be refined over the coming year and will look into how the methane emitted from the Trusts flock of Soay sheep can be calculated. We are also investigating ways to calculate the amount of carbon locked up in the Trust's woodlands and meadows.

Our pension fund, like many organisations is managed independently and we have no direct influence over how the pension funds are invested. However, we continue to lobby our pension fund (Shropshire Pension Fund) to divest from fossil fuels and hope that they will consider the best approach for them to meet their commitment to prioritise the interests of the pension fund.

Overleaf are our annual CO2 emissions for 21/22.

Annual Carbon Calculator

April 2021 to March 2022 – Report, Reduce, Change

Summary

The focus is on CO₂ emissions from fossil fuels (oil, gas, coal). The main sources of CO₂ emissions currently are the two Trust vehicles (Land Rover and Minibus) together with staff vehicles used for Trust business and the gas boiler. The electricity comes from 100% renewable sources and is monitored, reduced if practicable, and reported. The gas comes from natural gas but not from a renewable source. This will be reviewed in early 2023 ahead of the contract ending in April 2023. The approximate weight of logs used in the stove is monitored but those CO₂ emissions do not form part of these calculations as logs are renewable. The unavoidable residual emissions are 4.1 tonnes CO₂. A carbon reduction plan is being prepared that deals with the supply of gas from renewable sources rather than natural gas and with the vehicle replacements when these become necessary.

Scope 1: direct emissions of CO ₂ (kg) annually from fuel combustion and Trust vehicles (see Notes & Sources)			Scope 2: indirect emissions of CO ₂ (kg) annually from purchased electricity (see Notes & Sources)			Scope 3: other indirect emissions of CO ₂ (kg) annually: for example, transport-related activities in non-Trust vehicles, national grid transmission and distribution, outsourced activities, water, waste disposal (see Notes & Sources)		
Source of Scope 1 CO ₂ emissions			Source of Scope 2 CO ₂ emissions			Source of Scope 3 CO ₂ emissions		
		kgCO ₂ e/year			kgCO ₂ e/year			kgCO ₂ e/year
Gas boiler - kWh annually	6,445	1,180	Electricity - kWh annually	5,602	0	Electricity grid transmission & distribution - kWh annually	5,602	0
Wood burners - weight of logs annually	3 to 4	0				Gas grid transmission & distribution		0
Landrover (diesel, 2950 kg GVW) - annual mileage	5368	2,292				No figures given in Government guidance and it is assumed to be zero		
Minibus (diesel, 3960 kg GVW) - annual mileage	666	284				Water supply & Water treatment - cubic metres annually	23	10
Toyota Hilux (diesel, 2730kg GVW) - annual mileage	2947	966				Total emissions (Scope 3)	10	
Fiat 500 (petrol 1.142kg GVW) - annual mileage	494	119						
Total emissions (Scope 1)		4,842	Total emissions (Scope 2)		0	Total emissions (Scope 2)		0

FINAL OUTCOME: 4.9 tonnes CO₂

Notes & Sources overleaf>>

NOTES & SOURCES

Renewable energy supplies: Electricity or gas supplied from purely renewable sources where the supplier can demonstrate that the energy supplied to customers only comes from renewable sources can be included in calculations as having zero carbon emissions.

Electricity: is supplied from 100% renewable sources by OPUS energy on a contract until February 2023. With Opus Advance, our electricity comes from renewable sources including solar, wind, hydro and anaerobic digestion (AD).

www.opusenergy.com/our-energy-sources

Transmission and distribution factors should be used to report the Scope 3 emissions associated with national grid losses; the energy loss that occurs in getting the electricity from the power plant to the organisations that purchase it. Not included in assessment as electricity purchased is from 100% renewable sources.

Gas: is supplied by Opus Energy on a contract from April 2020 to April 2023. "The gas we supply to our customers is natural gas. This is, broadly speaking, the case for all energy suppliers in the UK. Biomethane (sometimes called "green gas" or "biogas") is considered renewable but is not widely available. It is mixed with natural gas in small quantities to reduce the carbon footprint of gas consumption; according to BEIS, gas supplied in the UK in 2018 was 0.4% biomethane. The Green Gas Certification Scheme (GGCS) certifies producers of biomethane in the UK. This is produced by anaerobic digestion (a renewable technology) and exported to the national gas grid. For every kilowatt equivalent of green gas injected into the grid, the producer is issued with a Renewable Gas Guarantee of Origin (RGGO). Energy suppliers can buy these certificates and offset them against a customers' consumption. The money is used to further develop biomethane production, helping to create a less carbon intensive gas infrastructure. We don't currently offer an official customer product for either of the above options, but we hope to in the near future, as there has been some demand from our customers for such an offering." Opus Energy email 29 May 2020.

Wood burners: CO_{2e} emissions from the two wood burners are not included as wood is renewable energy source.

The CO₂ released by burning wood was accumulated over decades in the trees and would eventually be released naturally. This should be separately reported and can be counted as carbon neutral. "Due to the biogenic differences between fossil fuels and biomass, they are categorized differently in national inventories. Emissions of CO₂ from the combustion of biomass are reported for informational purposes, but not included in national totals." <https://ghgprotocol.org/calculation-tools-faq>.

"Carbon dioxide produced from biologically-sequestered carbon, e.g. from the combustion of biomass for electricity and/or heat generation, or from other industrial processes, such as industrial fermentation, should be reported separately to emissions in scopes 1, 2, and 3. This is because the carbon dioxide would have been emitted anyway when the plants - from which the biomass is derived - decayed naturally at the end of their life. However, two other GHGs – nitrous oxide and methane – are commonly emitted when biomass is combusted. These would not be emitted during natural decay and any nitrous oxide or methane emissions from biomass/biofuel consumption should therefore be included in your emissions under the three scopes. This is the approach generally taken in international accounting standards. " Page 62 of 'Environmental Reporting Guidelines' (HM Government, 2019).

Carolyn Healy email 7 May 2020: "Paul Allan from the Centre for Alternative Technology doesn't count burning logs as contributing to global CO₂. He considers above ground carbon as part of the natural carbon cycle that the earth can manage. The idea of using tree planting and rewilding to sequester carbon being emitted from fossil fuels is that it's the only real way of taking it out of the atmosphere." Paul Allan is CAT's External Relations Officer and heads their Zero Carbon Project www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUJs4ZfQkI4

Office building: The Severn Gorge Countryside Trust is based in an award-winning sustainable building. The office is timber framed, wool insulated and heated by two log burners. The outside cladding is larch which we harvested from our woodlands. The office has a Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR) ventilation system that both supplies and extracts air throughout the office. This system is used to reduce the heating and cooling demands of buildings. The (MVHR)

that continually draws and circulates fresh air from outside, pre warmed by heat exchangers capturing heat from the stale air as it is expelled. The roof is made up from approximately ten thousand western red cedar shingles. The office is insulated with sheep wool mixed with recycled polyester; it has remarkable properties, in that during the winter it keeps the building warm and in the summer, it keeps the building cool.

CO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent) is a standard unit for measuring carbon footprints. The idea is to express the impact of each different greenhouse gas (CO₂, methane, nitrous oxide) in terms of the amount of CO₂ that would create the same amount of warming. That way, a carbon footprint consisting of lots of different greenhouse gases can be expressed as a single number.

Detailed official guidance Environmental Reporting Guidelines, HM Government, March 2019 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/850130/Env-reporting-guidance_inc_SECR_31March.pdf

Conversion factors (electricity, electricity transmission & distribution, natural gas, water, waste, vehicles). www.gov.uk/government/publications/greenhouse-gas-reporting-conversion-factors-2021 – full set for advanced users in order to include the Land Rover and minibus which are classed as ‘Delivery Vehicles’. These are set annually in May.

Scope 1, Scope 2 & Scope 3 The Greenhouse Gas Protocol (<https://ghgprotocol.org>) is recognized by the UK government as an independent standard for reporting greenhouse gases. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carbon_emissions_reporting.



Planning for the Future

The significance of the Trust's landholdings dictates the need for a planned, long-term approach to give direction and continuity to management.

This is achieved through comprehensive management plans for the Trust's sites and a Development Strategy that governs the work of the Trust.

The Development Strategy was approved by Trustees in November 2017 and will guide the work of the Trust until the end of 2028. It sets out the Trust's vision, aims and plans for achieving its charitable objectives, identifies the successful methods of working that will be continued, the developments that will be introduced over the ten years and the opportunities that will be taken up if time and resources allow. Copies of the full strategy can be downloaded from the website (www.severngorge.org.uk) or obtained from the Trust Office.

Annual Work Plan/Budget

Annual work plans and budgets are developed to ensure the core work in the management plans and Development Strategy are achieved without overstressing the Trust's resources or compromising its long-term viability.

The annual work plan for 2021/2022 was set from the 2018/2028 Development Strategy.

Risk Management

In accordance with the Charity Commission's Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) 2005, Trustees have a risk management strategy in place which comprises:

- ◆ An annual review of the risks the Trust may face, which also identifies any new risks that the Trust may be exposed to
- ◆ The establishment of systems and procedures to mitigate against those risks identified in the review; and
- ◆ The implementation of procedures to prevent any potential impact on the charity should those risks materialise.

The Trust believes that risk management is an essential part of good business practice and will continue to ensure that risk management principles become incorporated into all aspects of its work.

It should be noted that any risk management system can only manage risks and not eliminate them.

Three major risks have been identified and arrangements have been put in place to mitigate these risks:

Future levels of income – if our income falls then the Trust would not be able to continue to manage the ‘living landscape’ of the Ironbridge Gorge for the benefit of local people, visitors and the environment. The majority of our income is generated from rental income from our property portfolio. The Trust pay a management fee to Telford & Wrekin Council to manage these properties. We will continue to work with them to look at ways of diversifying the property portfolio by looking to invest in more modern properties to ensure the level of income is sufficient to cover the majority of our core costs. Ensuring that the portfolio is effectively and efficiently managed is key to generating sufficient income to enable the Trust to fulfil its charitable aims. Additional funding will continue to be sought via grants and other funding opportunities.

Climate Change – we are assessing all of our operations from travel to gas and electricity usage to reduce our CO₂ emissions wherever possible. We are also looking at the best ways to manage our woodlands and meadows to ensure they are as resilient as possible.

Ash Dieback – We have been monitoring the spread of ash dieback in the Gorge since it hit the headlines in 2012. 2020 was the year when the extent and severity became obvious in the Gorge. The Trust is continuing to use an independent arboriculturist to survey the trees on the Trust land and has written a policy to inform the work of the Trust and the treatment of trees affected by ash die back. Additional funding has been set aside to deal with the increase in planned and reactive tree work.

Public Benefit

This annual report looks at what we have achieved over the previous twelve months. The report looks at the work and outcomes of each key aim and the benefits that has been provided to the public. In setting our aims and planning our activities, Trustees have given careful consideration to the Charity Commission’s guidance on Public Benefit.

Trustees believe that the provision of such benefit is an integral part to each of the Trust’s charitable objectives. We work hard to deliver public benefit by promoting and protecting the beautiful landscape of the Ironbridge Gorge for everyone to enjoy. The Trust land and activities are available to all and we try to make special provision wherever possible for the disabled and disadvantaged.

We believe that the work of the Trust has a positive impact on people, communities, wildlife and the environment.

This report also helps us ensure our aims, objectives and activities remained focused on our stated purpose. In order to achieve our aims the Trust must strive to maintain an efficient and effective organisation, that is well governed, professionally managed and which has the capacity, infrastructure and support necessary to deliver them.



Objectives and activities

WHAT WE DO...

The Trust is responsible for promoting, protecting and conserving the living landscape of the Ironbridge Gorge for the benefit of local people and visitors. It aims to balance the needs of public access, landscape and nature conservation, safeguarding historic and cultural features, whilst engaging with the public and developing a wider awareness and knowledge of the Trust and its work.

To achieve these aims the Trust has five main charitable objectives:

to enhance a living and working landscape that retains its locally distinctive characteristics, habitats and species populations

to conserve and interpret, where appropriate all features of cultural and historical significance

to provide inspiring experiences of the natural world and encourage people to manage their local environment through volunteering opportunities

to provide high quality access for informal recreation for the enjoyment of all and to encourage outdoor activity for the benefit of health and wellbeing

to develop and promote a wider awareness and understanding of the Trust's work



HOW WE DO IT...

Examples of activities carried out and impacts and benefits achieved under each of these strategic aims are as follows:

Landscape and Nature Conservation

AIM: to enhance a living and working landscape that retains its locally distinctive characteristics, habitats and species populations.

Looking after and managing our sites is a keyway that we can directly benefit wildlife. Each of our sites is an exceptional place for wildlife with many containing outstanding examples of scarce and uncommon habitats and species. Every year they surprise and delight visitors to them.

All of our land is open to the public and provides excellent opportunities for contact with nature which in turn has a positive effect on the quality of life and well-being of the community.

Each year, the Trust undertakes extensive management programmes to safeguard these special places. For example,

- ◆ clearing woody regeneration from the floor of Patten's Rock Quarry, an example of limestone grassland with colonies of Twayblade, Bee, Greater Butterfly and Common Spotted orchids
- ◆ managing the merging of areas of woodland, grass and scrub. These untidy and complex edges are where insects thrive and food chains begin
- ◆ clearing scrub trying to colonise the important small patches of heathland found in The Crostan and Dale Coppice
- ◆ managing important areas of wildflower rich hay meadow and pasture. By using our flock of Soay sheep together with contractors and volunteers, the Trust is able to ensure that the techniques and machinery used are ideally suited to these small sites and based on traditional methods

Ecological Monitoring

The Trust commissions ecological consultants to carry out annual ecological monitoring of Trust sites. Ecological monitoring provides the Trust with the information required to assess and respond to ecosystem changes.



Monitoring can also assist with the identification of new environmental concerns, the prioritisation of issues, and the evaluation of trends over time. Using the information gathered, the Trust can plan its future management of sites.

Our ecological monitoring reviews carried out on key sites have shown the high quality of our habitats and their management.

Managing such a complex landscape relies on clear objectives and good quality ecological and management information. But in reality, this is complicated by the fact that any ecosystem is in a constant state

of change which can sometimes make meeting our objectives more challenging.

An annual ecology day is held during the summer months where our ecologist meets with Trust staff and the ecology working group to look at the sites that have been managed and discuss proposals as to how to best manage the sites to achieve their objectives.

We continue to meet with the ecology working group including John Handley from CH Ecology on survey methods and targets.

While we postponed the Countryside Stewardship (CS) Application, we did bring forward some monitoring of sites to help ensure that they were eligible for the restoration/maintenance of species rich grassland option within the scheme.

We have worked with CH Ecology to simplify the working copies; the document has become difficult to use making information hard to find. The new layout will be on a single sheet of A4 with all the key information readily available along with comments from the years monitoring. We are also looking into using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to store data to make it even more accessible.

At our annual Ecology Day, the notes made at the ecology day in 2019 (pre pandemic) were reviewed, and there was a discussion on the rewilding strategy, Shakespeare meadow, the new working copy document, woodland edges of the Ropewalk and Wilderness, Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Pattens Rock Quarry. Visits were made to Shakespeare Meadow and the Ropewalk Meadow to discuss the meadows' management.

'Light gives Life'

The Trust was successful in applying for funding from the Potter Group Landfill Community Fund together with the Postcode Local Trust. The primary aim of the 'Light gives Life' wildlife corridor project is to secure measurable improvements in habitats for biodiversity. This will be achieved by creating edge habitat and enhancing wildlife corridors throughout six different sites within the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage site.



Creating new varied habitats will provide a fantastic opportunity for wildlife to flourish and promote the wider economic and social benefits that healthy ecosystems offer.

3,039 metres of improved edge habitat will be created. Timber felled will be extracted where feasible and as much as possible turned into sustainable products including firewood, charcoal, sawn timber and turnery blanks, the latter which can lock up carbon longer term. We have finished work at the Crostan and Preenshead. The work was carried out by Watch Oak Tree Care and Access and Habitat Management in conjunction with Trust staff.

This work will also support/complement a possible dormouse re-introduction programme in discussion with the People's Trust for Endangered Species and Shropshire Dormouse Group.

Dormice

The dormice project was a collaboration between the Trust and the Shropshire Dormouse Group, receiving a £500 grant from the Shropshire Ecological Data Network (SEDN) to purchase footprint tunnel materials. We were exploring the presence/absence of dormouse

and whether the River Severn forms a barrier to dormice distribution in Telford & Wrekin and if woods under the Trust's management are suitable for dormouse re-introduction.

The project covered five woodlands with surveys carried out between June and November 2021. We surveyed forty-nine dormouse boxes in Sutton Wood, and 192 footprint tunnels located in five woodlands: Sutton Wood, Haywood, Jiggers Bank, Benthall and Workhouse Coppice.

The dormouse box and footprint tunnel surveys were intended to provide additional information, to be analysed along with ecological and forestry surveys over several years within Trust sites regarding suitability of habitat for dormice. It was delivered with support from thirty-four volunteers, and Telford & Wrekin Council staff, totalling 104.5 project days.

We learned as we went, including how to ID the footprints, the best places to put the tunnels, and how to find them. We held bi-weekly analysis sessions to ID the tunnel papers and look out for dormice prints. We found footprint activity was most active in the woodlands where we have been carrying out Continuous Cover Forestry works, highlighting the benefits of letting light reach the woodland floor allowing bramble and ground vegetation to develop. Unfortunately, we did not find any dormouse prints or signs of dormice in the boxes, however the data collected provides insight into which sites would be most suitable for a future dormice reintroduction based on the current mammal and bird activity.

Beehives

The bees from our hives have been hard at work foraging and pollinating plants within at least a two-mile radius of the Trust office which takes in our amazing wildflower meadows at the Wilderness and Ropewalk.

We continue to learn how to manage our hives, paying attention to the weather conditions when we inspect the hives and trying to control potential swarms, not always successfully!



Whilst honey is one of the major benefits of keeping honeybees, we have also experimented with making beeswax wraps and wood furniture polish.

We sold over forty jars of our 'Ropewalk Honey' to local people.

Deer Management

Deer can have a substantial impact on woodland vegetation and play a significant role in woodland ecosystem function. In the absence of control, deer populations can rise to very high densities due to lack of predators. Management of deer populations is necessary to limit their impact.

Under the Trust's Continuous Cover Forestry System, natural regeneration is the principle means of restocking our woodlands and an increasing deer population will adversely affect the success of natural regeneration.

Our management works will seek to reduce deer numbers to a point where the impact on the woodland and their associated plant communities are acceptable.

Unfortunately, we have struggled with our management works this year, in part due to our stalker being ill for a prolonged period. Deer management is still an important task that we need to undertake. We will continue to monitor the effects of deer as any improvements in reduced impact and activity will be lost if the frequency of shooting is further reduced or stopped.

Forestry

The Trust continues to manage its woodlands under Continuous Cover Forestry principles which aim to create a structurally and visually diverse woodland ecosystem with trees of all sizes which helps to protect the soil and keep the land stable.

The new woodland management plan was approved by the Forestry Commission in 2021. The aspirations of the plan have not changed our forestry direction. The revised plan takes into account Ash Die Back (ADB) and climate change, it also has felling permissions for the next 10 years.

With ADB's hold tightening on the woods, we took the decision to use a clear fell system in three areas of woodland. This is not a permanent change in use of forestry system for the Trust, it is a tool we have used to tackle the ADB, which incorporates tree safety, earning income and fulfilling habitat improvement works linked to our Countryside Stewardship agreement. Jiggers Bank and a part of Vane coppice have been worked and all the ash trees within falling distance of a target have been felled. We sold the timber standing to Will Haywood. Will is a long-standing contractor and he carried out the work using a harvester and forwarder. Haywood will be worked in an analogous way in the winter of 2023.

Countryside Stewardship

After postponing the application last year, we resubmitted it in April 2021 and were successful in getting an agreement which started on 1 January 2022. We entered a reduced area into the scheme, which in turn reduces the amount of grant income the Trust will receive but the agreement is now less complicated, and ultimately more achievable. Works included in the agreement include, ride mowing/creation, squirrel control, deer management, thinning and meadow management. We will also be undertaking capital works in fencing, gate replacement and hedge laying.

Machinery Purchases

Like most organisations the Trust is constantly changing and evolving as new opportunities and challenges present themselves. To facilitate adapting to these changing circumstances the Committee of Management approved investment in capital purchases including a tractor, forwarding trailer and a 6.5-ton winch. This investment will aid staff in improving current processes, increase productivity and provide the capacity to undertake tasks in house.

Hay cuts

Investing in the machinery has given us greater control and flexibility over the hay cuts. Our current contractor: is considering reducing his workload and no longer wants to undertake the hay cuts on his own. Having our own machinery (as we do already with the baler and wrapper) will enable us to continue managing the meadows to a high standard and would allow us to take advantage of weather windows and make hay whilst the sun shines! Our own machinery will also enable us to conduct works such as harrowing and mowing of headlands when it was best for the meadow rather than being at the mercy of contractors' workloads and timescales.



Firewood Production and Estate Timber

We would like to increase the sales of firewood. The large amount of timber generated from the Western Power line clearance has been the catalyst to this production. Our own machinery will facilitate the processing and movement of the large volume of wood. It will assist with moving the saw logs onto the sawmill to produce material we can use on site, such as gateposts. We can maximise the use of timber that will be produced from tree safety work caused by ash die back.

Ash Dieback

Having our own machinery will ensure that we are able to deal with the ongoing ADB crisis. The tree safety report produced by our consultant arborist, made for somber reading. We had to assess and work on over one hundred trees this year. It is likely that the situation is only going to get worse as the disease takes hold. We will continue to follow our approach approved by the Committee of Management, by working on trees next to paths, roads and houses and when possible, felling in groups or incorporating it into forestry works. As we have done at Jiggers Bank.

There will be an increase in tree felling throughout the Ironbridge Gorge due to ADB, and we need to keep working with T&W Council regarding tree management and keeping the local community informed.

Sheep

The Sheep have continued to earn their keep, grazing all the hay meadows once the hay cut has been taken. We lambed well with one hundred percent survival rate. We took some wethers and a ram to the abattoir and sold it to the Lookers and local people.

Arc GIS

We have continued to migrate mapping data over to our new ArcGIS programme. ArcGIS is used by Telford & Wrekin council as well as other partners, which allows for easy access and dissemination of mapping information. Some of ArcGIS's greatest benefits are its associated apps. One of these apps, called Survey123, allows for data to be easily collected on site, capturing a GPS location and photo, including options to write notes etc. The Trust is now using Survey123 to record culvert

checks, tree safety checks, and conduct biannual access surveys. The app is also being used by volunteers to report access infrastructure issues they encounter on SGCT sites.

Following on site data collection, the data can then be easily accessed and visualized on a map. This is helpful for staff and contractors because it provides a GPS location for any issues that need addressing, thus saving time. It also enables data collection in all weathers which is beneficial as using paper records during rainfall presented a challenge.

Contractors

The Trust regularly uses over twenty local contractors to carry out a variety of works on its land. From landscape maintenance to tree surgery to repairs to historic brickwork, each self-employed contractor brings their own skills and knowledge to the work. Some of these contractors have worked for the Trust since its creation in 1991 and have built up a wealth of knowledge about the sites the Trust manages.

Some of the jobs contractors carry out on an annual basis include:

- ◆ hedge cutting
- ◆ hay cutting and baling
- ◆ ragwort spraying with citronella
- ◆ Japanese knotweed control
- ◆ ride mowing
- ◆ strimming of footpaths
- ◆ thistle topping
- ◆ bracken control

Contractors are also called in to undertake any 'reactive' work that happens. For example, when a tree has fallen across a path, a contractor will carry out the necessary work to make the tree safe and clear it from across the path.

Specialist work, such as the descaling and torque testing of the bolts on Jigger's bank rock face is also carried out by contractors. Contractors carry out maintenance twice a year by abseiling down the rock face and clearing any loose rock, cutting back small trees and testing the bolts that secure the netting on part of the rock face.

Cultural and Historical Features

Aim: to conserve and interpret, where appropriate all features of cultural and historical significance

The industrial past of the Ironbridge Gorge has left its mark on the area in more ways than just the Iron Bridge itself. Many types of industry thrived here, and the Trust looks after sixty historic structures from small retaining walls to brick arches, lime kilns to mine breathers and adit entrances. The Trust has spent over £275,000 in conserving the industrial heritage of the Ironbridge Gorge.

The World Heritage Site status of the Ironbridge Gorge serves to remind us of this area's unique contribution to the history and development of industrialised society. The Trust will continue to conserve and interpret (where appropriate) features of cultural and historical significance for the benefit of the public, enabling them to have a greater understanding and appreciation of the industrial and cultural history of the area.

The Trust commissions an annual Structures Inspection Report. The structures are monitored from fixed baselines, any condition changes are noted, and recom-

mended actions identified. These resultant actions are further analysed from a risk management perspective looking at things like potential impact on highways, intensively used public spaces, and neighbours.

Five risk management priority categories are identified with required actions allocated to a category from level 0 (no action necessary) to level 4 (repair imminently).

In response to the annual report an action plan will be developed to implement, where possible, all level 4 actions or in discussion with engineers alternative risk mitigation strategies.

This year we checked Maws Wall for 'blown' bricks and checked our historic walls for loose stones.

Archaeological surveys are commissioned whenever required to ensure no features of cultural and historical significance are damaged by work and also to record anything found or uncovered for future reference.



Community Engagement and Outdoor Learning

AIM: to provide inspiring experiences of the natural world and encourage people to manage their local environment through volunteering opportunities

Providing opportunities for people to engage and interact with the natural world is a key remit for the Trust. Working together outdoors to conserve nature is a great way to engage with the natural environment. Opportunities like these are not just essential for personal development they also provide inspirational moments of awe and wonder which stay with people forever. Our Outdoor Learning Programme is about providing experiences that teach and inspire people.

Our Volunteering Programme provides opportunities for the local community to learn more about and help with the management of the landscape on their doorstep. We hope that participants will be inspired and empowered to improve our environment for the benefit of nature and the community.

The land that we are responsible for provides a focus for community involvement. It also offers fantastic opportunities for research, education, exploration and, most importantly, having fun!

Volunteering Programme

The Trust has a fantastic group of volunteers who for the past 16 years have contributed to helping the Trust achieve its access, landscape, and nature conservation objectives.

Due to Covid-19 the volunteer programme was paused until May 2021, however, was able to recommence in June 2021 and continued throughout the year. To mitigate risks, group sizes were limited to ten volunteers using a booking-in system. Our volunteers rose to the challenges of the pandemic with enthusiasm and they have continued to support the charity through another difficult year.



We had some great days coppicing, making cleft pales, scrub clearing, doing footpath maintenance, conducting ecological surveys, creating a new pollinator garden, carrying out dormouse project activities, and litter picking-walks. For partnership work, volunteers dismantled an old outdoor classroom at Madeley nursery, and cleared scrub and installed a new bench in Lodge Field in partnership with Ironbridge Meadows Group.

Thirty-three volunteers contributed 1,140 volunteer hours, nine of whom were new volunteers.

Although the 2020 volunteer Christmas party was cancelled due to the Covid-19 lockdown, we were able to hold the 2021 Christmas party outside with a walk, fires, food, drinks, and games. Two volunteers, Richard and Derek, created quizzes which were great fun, and volunteers Nigel and Teresa donated beautiful handmade wooden prizes.

Access and Recreation

Aim: to provide high quality access for informal recreation for the enjoyment of all and to encourage outdoor activity for the benefits of health and wellbeing.

Over the past 18 months the land we are responsible for managing has been a lifeline for hundreds of people. During very challenging times, access to the outdoors and nature has been a respite for many of us. During lockdowns, local people have visited our sites for the first time and have grown to love exploring their local area. These visits have now become an integral part of their lives. We estimate that the number of people visiting our sites over the pandemic doubled, clearly demonstrating the need for access to green spaces and its positive impact on our health and wellbeing.

We aim for our sites to feel as natural as possible, so we strive to balance the need for good paths, signs and interpretation with the need to preserve the very sense of countryside we all head outdoors for. We have also tried to remove any unnecessary barriers to people's enjoyment, by removing squeeze stiles and replacing them with kissing gates and providing rest points to pause and savor the fantastic views. We still have improvements to make and will continue to strive to be better. Enabling people to explore and enjoy the natural world is fundamental to the work of the Trust and that is why all our land is free for everyone to enjoy.

As well as improvements on the ground, we continue to look at the quality of the experience we offer, from the clarity of our maps to the information and history that our free leaflets provide.

Strategic Action Plan

Approximately twenty-five kilometres of footpaths have to be maintained each year. The Strategic Access Review which was completed in 2015 continues to be used to feed into the Annual Work Plan. The Strategic Action Plan will be updated each year using information taken from the bi-annual footpath surveys to identify any repairs or maintenance required. We are now using Survey 123, a mobile phone app to record any maintenance/repairs.



Footpath Repairs

We are continuing to invest in the access infrastructure we have installed throughout the gorge. The increase in use of our sites over the pandemic, together with increasingly wet winters has meant that some of our footpaths/boardwalks have deteriorated quicker than anticipated. Our bi-annual survey picks up any area of footpath that need repairing. The repairs are then prioritised and resources allocated accordingly.

Walking Festival

The main Ironbridge Walking Festival was cancelled in 2021 due to Covid-19, however a mini version was held in September. Trust ACO, Emily led a walk in Loamhole and Lydebrook Dingle, explaining the history, ecology, and management of the sites. SGCT volunteers also led walks; Cadi Price led a fascinating bat walk in Coalport and Jackfield, and Jackie Bletcher led a walk around the beautiful Lodge Field and Beeches Local Nature Reserves in Ironbridge.



Family activity walks

The Trust has produced four circular 1km family trails using footpaths in Benthall, Haywood, Loamhole and Maws. All are part of a group of maps which show Milly and Orla the office dogs in cartoon form, each with a variety of activities to do whilst exploring the routes.

Bounding in Benthall: along past Doris the Dragon, the Lime kiln and Bower yard picnic site

Maws Paws: along the new Tile Trail, Preenshead and Boat Inn meadow path.

Hilly Haywood Adventure: up the zig zag path to Silkin Way and into Haywood Plantation.

Splish Splash Splish in Loamhole Dingle: along the path to the footbridge and stream and through the meadow.

All of the Milly and Orla family friendly walks can be downloaded from our website

Walking Trail Leaflets

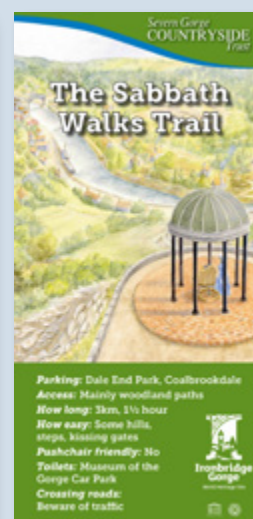
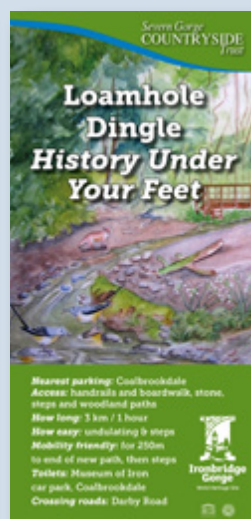
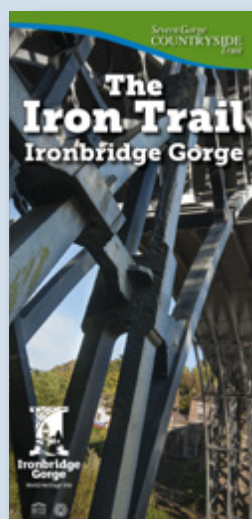
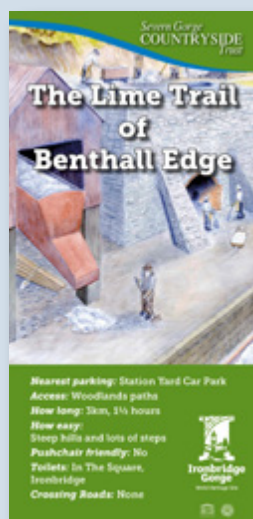
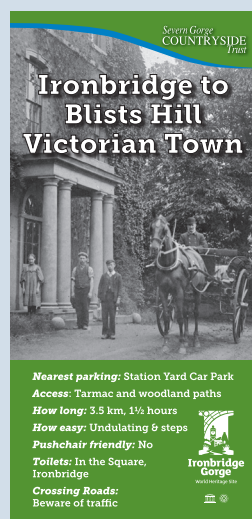
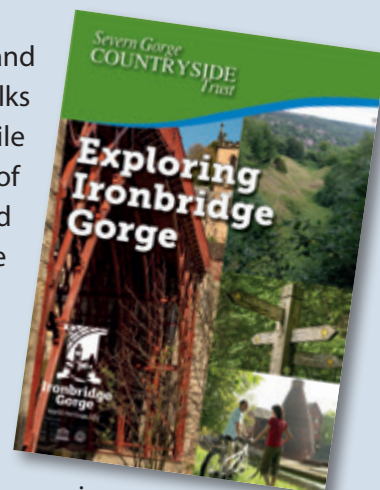
The Trust has produced five **free** Walking Trail leaflets that showcase some of the best walking routes around the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site. The walks provide people with the opportunity to discover some of the hidden gems of the Gorge and learn more about the landscape and history of the area whilst they explore. Visitors can make a day of it by visiting some of

the many historic sites and attractions along the walks and stopping for a while for refreshment at one of the many cafés, pubs and restaurants in Ironbridge and the surrounding area.

The leaflets are available to download from our website, from the Visitor Information Centre and from various outlets in the Gorge. The leaflet dispenser in Station Road car park is regularly refilled and around 20,000 leaflets have been dispensed this year.

The route for the **'Iron Trail'** links existing paths into a circular walk that includes both built and natural features within the World Heritage Site to encourage visitors to explore beyond the built environment. Its objective is to highlight otherwise unseen heritage such as the remnants and evidence of the iron production process that made the Gorge 'the birthplace of industry' within the natural landscape.

The **'Lime Trail'** of Benthall Edge takes the walker through a wooded landscape steep in the geology which benefitted the past industries of the Gorge. The footpath follows a circular route taking the walker through beautiful SSSI woodland with iconic viewpoints of the Gorge and Coalbrookdale before descending to the valley bottom along the Severn Valley Railway.





Walks Books

To support people to get outdoors and closer to nature we have published several guided walks books. These will help everyone to visit our sites and enjoy their natural beauty and find out more about the forces that have shaped them – natural and man-made. Each book offers a number of self-guided walks that offer opportunities to explore the history of the area as well as the diversity of landscape, geology and wildlife. All the books can be purchased from the Trust Office, and are also available at Ironbridge Gorge Museum sites, the Visitor Information Centre, The Green Wood Cafe and some local shops. Copies of the routes can also be downloaded from our website:

www.severngorge.org.uk.

The **'Sabbath Walks Trail'** follows in the footsteps of Richard Reynolds who built the wide footpaths in the 18th Century for his workers and families. This trail takes in Dale Coppice and Lincoln Hill and the viewpoint at the Rotunda with views of the Iron Bridge.

The **Ironbridge to Blists Hill Victorian Town Trail** is as it says, linking Ironbridge to Blists Hill with a safe traffic-free route through Lloyd's Coppice whilst seeing historic remnants on the past once linked to Blist Hill furnaces.

The circular Trail **'Loamhole Dingle; History under your feet'** takes you from Upper Furnace Pool and through the wooded dingle to the Ropewalk where nature meets the industrial past. This walk can also be linked with Lydebrook Dingle as part of the Shropshire Way.

These trails will hopefully encourage more visitors to explore the landscape of the World Heritage Site on foot.



Raising Awareness

Aim: to develop and promote a wider awareness and understanding of the Trust's work

Volunteer Lookers

Our volunteer 'Lookers' play a key role in looking after the flock of sixty native breed Soay sheep that the Trust uses to manage its wildflower meadows.

Many years ago, 'Lookers' were self-employed countrymen who lived outside for much of the year, looking after the grazing animals on several farms at once. Grizzled, wind hardened characters by all accounts, they often walked many miles, camping wild under the stars.

Today, 'looking' is a much more civilised affair. Our Soay sheep are crucial in grazing our wildflower meadows and conserving vital habitats. Our volunteer

'Lookers' work in a rota, visiting the flock daily and confirming all is well via the technology of a *WhatsApp* group!

The Lookers' programme has been running for ten years and currently fourteen volunteers are extremely proficient in a wide range of sheep husbandry techniques including handling, ear tagging and injecting.

Each year we lamb ten ewes, the ewe lambs are registered with the Rare Breeds Survival Trust. We are keen to increase the number of registered pedigree breeding ewes to improve the Soay's status on the RBST watch list.



Work has continued selling some of the sheep both as breeding stock and meat. The sheep will be sheared this year and the fleeces sold to the Sheep Shed in Leominster. Shearing should reduce the chance of flystrike, reduce the cost of preventative medication and improve the wellbeing of the sheep in warmer weather.

Sales of timber

The Trust has started selling seasoned firewood to volunteers and local people. During 21/22 we collected timber from tree safety works, fallen trees and reactive works and have built up a considerable supply of timber. The demand for logs has been positive. Woodland is the biggest asset of the Trust and using that to generate a modest income as well as working towards climate change goals is a positive move.

We have large scale powerline clearance work beginning soon and it is hoped that this will ensure sure we do not sell out of fire wood. Moving forward we will retain some timber from standing sales to sell locally.

Community Events

The Trust continues to work with other organisations to support local community events which attract many hundreds of visitors. Supporting such events allows the Trust to engage with people that may not be aware of the work and activities the Trust carries out, or the opportunities available to them to enjoy and use the land managed by the Trust.

Annual Open Evening

Because of concerns about large gatherings of people, Trustees supported the suggestion not to hold an Open Evening in 2021. The purpose of the Annual Open Evening is to give local residents a chance to meet Trust staff, Trustees and Volunteers and learn more about the work we undertake. It also provides an opportunity to raise any concerns or issues they may have. It is hoped that we will be able to hold an open evening in 2022 or look at providing a virtual event to disseminate information.



Partnership Working

We continue to develop and strengthen partnerships with a wide range of organisations and individuals for the benefit of local communities, visitors and wildlife. Successful partnership working allows us to develop new areas of work, including 'Outdoor Learning,' environmental arts and alternative land management techniques.

- ◆ Broseley Town Council
- ◆ Dawley Angling Society
- ◆ Deer Initiative
- ◆ English Heritage
- ◆ Environment Agency
- ◆ Forestry Commission
- ◆ Harper Adams University
- ◆ Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust
- ◆ Ironbridge Meadows and Pastures group
- ◆ Lodge Field Group
- ◆ Madeley Town Council
- ◆ Madeley Nursery
- ◆ Moonshine & Fuggles
- ◆ National Trust
- ◆ Natural England
- ◆ Neighbouring farmers and landowners
- ◆ People's Trust for Endangered Species
- ◆ Shropshire Geological Society
- ◆ Shropshire Wildlife Trust
- ◆ Small Woods Association
- ◆ Telford & Wrekin Council
- ◆ Telford Green Spaces Partnership
- ◆ The Gorge Parish Council
- ◆ The Coracle Trust
- ◆ The World Heritage Site Steering Group
- ◆ University of Birmingham (Ironbridge Institute)
- ◆ West Midlands Regional Flood & Coastal Committee
- ◆ Wolverhampton University

Community engagement is essential to the success of all of our work. We aim to work with local communities to engage people of all ages through events, volunteering opportunities and education to ensure the sustainability of our 'Outdoor Learning' programme.

The active involvement of local people is also vitally important in the management of the land in the Severn Gorge. Local people have a strong interest in their local environment and the Trust is keen to harness the help of local residents to act as its 'eyes and ears' reporting any problems and suggesting improvements.

The Trust tries to ensure a rapid response to issues. People are informed about any management work by talking to neighbours, putting detailed information up on site, providing articles for local newsletters and giving details of work on the Trust's website.

With the increase in popularity and usage of social media sites, the Trust now regularly uses Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to give out information on the work that it is doing. Regular updates on the work of the volunteers, key projects the Trust is managing and the 'Outdoor Learning' courses ensure that followers are able to access up to date information. These outlets are also brilliant for disseminating information on potential problems such as road closures, flooding etc.



FUTURE PLANS

In 2022/2023 the Trust's focus will be to continue to promote, protect and conserve the landscape of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site

Key Projects include:

- ◆ Communicating the Trusts vision, purpose, work and impact effectively through our website, media and social media, to increase awareness of the dual climate and biodiversity emergencies, so that more people take action for nature.
- ◆ Ensuring future financial stability – continue to work with Telford & Wrekin Council and other organisations to investigate alternative funding opportunities.
- ◆ Exploring potential funding opportunities to improve and repair the access Infrastructure installed in the Gorge
- ◆ Investing in capital machinery to enable staff to carry out necessary countryside management tasks in house and reduce reliance on contractors
- ◆ Recruiting and investing in staff to enable them to continue to deliver the key aims and objectives of the Trust
- ◆ Reviewing Trust policies and procedures to ensure that they are compliant, relevant and up to date.
- ◆ Complying with Defra's 'Ready to Burn' firewood accreditation to enable us to sell our firewood.
- ◆ Producing more timber infrastructure in house for fencing, access infrastructure etc.
- ◆ Continuing to work with the People's Trust for Endangered Species and the Shropshire Dormouse Group re the potential translocation of dormice
- ◆ Completing Zone 2 Countryside Stewardship Works.
- ◆ Investigating growing some Large Leaved Lime (*Tilia platyphyllos*) seed from Benthall Edge as part of an in-situ conservation project working with Kew and Newcastle University.
- ◆ Working with Chester University and University Centre Shrewsbury to measure woody biomass within one sample plot (to begin with) within a Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) stand at Sutton Woods using a drone and ground-based LIDAR. This together with on the ground basal area measurements and a soil sample to measure soil humus and carbon will be replicated after 3, 5 and 10 years to very accurately measure carbon sequestered using a CCF system.
- ◆ Continue to develop a relationship with the new owners of the former Power Station site Harworth, to help them deliver as sustainable a development as possible, should planning permission be granted, working in Partnership with Telford & Wrekin and the Gorge Parish Councils.
- ◆ Continuing to be an efficient and effective organisation that is well governed, well financed and well managed and which has the capacity, infrastructure and support necessary to deliver its objectives.



FINANCIAL REVIEW

Overview

The Trust started its financial year in April 2021, the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic. Although the most severe impact of Covid-19 is hopefully behind us, the ongoing effect is still apparent. The core income of the Trust is generated by rents received on commercial properties in the Telford area and many of these are small businesses, who are continuing to struggle.

The Trust in conjunction with Telford & Wrekin Council's Land and Property Services (who manage the properties on the Trust's behalf) have continued to work hard over the last 12 months to manage the property portfolio to try to ensure that in the long term it is able to provide sufficient income to enable the Trust to deliver its core activities. The Trust is working with businesses that are struggling, to set up long term affordable repayment plans for outstanding rental payments.

The Trust was eligible to claim the Small Business Relief Grant and along with many other organisations we have accessed the Government's Job Retention Scheme, and flexibly furloughed our four members of staff. Who, where possible worked remotely for the majority of the pandemic.

The Trust is continuing to face financial pressures with ageing access infrastructure and ash dieback emergencies. With cuts to Government agri/environmental grants and a downturn in rental income this does present financial challenges for the future

Income

Income in the year reduced relative to 2020/2021. (£287,546 21/22 to £307,664 20/21) This was primarily due to reduced grant income. The current Countryside and Higher-Level Stewardship schemes have finished. The vast majority of the Trust's income continues to be invested in the management of the landscape.



Agri-environment payments such as the Countryside Stewardship schemes are extremely important to the Trust. They are a key funding mechanism to support our woodland and meadow management. We have however been successful in applying for an additional 5-year Countryside Stewardship grant; however, no grant income will be received until January 2023.

The Trust continues to apply for grants from a variety of sources but is careful not to stray from its aims and objectives when looking for potential funding sources.

Income was generated largely from:

- ◆ rentals received on commercial properties in the Telford area. (The need for a balancing package to provide sufficient income for the annual upkeep of the sites was recognised when the Trust was established. A package of commercial properties was transferred to Telford & Wrekin Council. They own the freehold of these income generating properties and are responsible for their management. They are covenanted to pay 85% of the income generated to the Trust to cover the cost of maintaining the land in the Gorge).
- ◆ investments purchased by the Trust. These consist of Charity Investment funds, and an interest paying Bank Account
- ◆ grants
- ◆ small amounts from book sales/timber sales

We received £234,867 in income from the rental properties, fishing and grazing rights compared to £175,619 last year. An increase of 33%, this is primarily due to the repayment plans put in place with businesses to help them pay the outstanding rent due (following the pandemic) over an agreed time period.

Interest and dividends provided £8,397 compared to £12,903 last year reflecting the changes in the Trust's investment makeup together with the impact of Covid-19 on the performance in investment returns.

Hay and timber/log sales provided an additional £1,768 and £3,993, respectively.

Grants to help with our work

In support of its activities, the Trust received £28,683 (£103,959 in 21/22) from a wide number of bodies and is incredibly grateful to them all for their help and assistance:

Countryside Stewardship – Natural England the Trust received £4,272 in grant aid from this programme. This scheme contributes towards the Trust's woodland management costs. This is the final payment for this 5-year programme.





Additional Relief Grants

£500 was received from the Government schemes put in place to help businesses and charities through the pandemic.

Furlough Grant

Like many charities, the Trust flexibly furloughed staff, £11,130 was received from the Furlough scheme.

Awards for All

£10,000 was received from the Lottery funded Awards for All grant programme. This funding will go towards path/access improvements along the Dragon path at Benthall Edge.

Telford & Wrekin Council - Councillors Pride Fund

£300 was received from the Councillors Pride Fund towards the Outdoor Learning Area which is to be created at the Trust Office.

Shropshire Ecological Data Network (SEDN)

£500 was received from SEDN towards equipment and materials to undertake dormouse surveys.

Donations

The Trust was fortunate to receive donations from individuals and organisations and we are very grateful to them for their support.

Moonshine and Fuggles of Ironbridge have donated £300 from the sales of their Coalport Cucumber gin and would like to continue their partnership with the Trust. Ironbridge Fish and Chip shop customers donated £132 in SGCT's donation box.

Expenditure

Despite the impact of C-19, overall costs were well controlled in 21/22 and some areas of expenditure such as the Outdoor Learning and Volunteering programmes were down due to activities being curtailed due to C-19 Investment policy, powers and performance.

Trustees are responsible for the financial policies under which the Trust is managed. Under the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the Trust has the power to deposit or invest funds.



The Investment Policy of the Trust is:

- ◆ for the capital invested to maintain its value whilst building up a dependable, growing stream of income that will keep pace with inflation.

The investment policy was substantially revised in 2021, in particular to take account of ethical and environmental considerations and is now publicly available on the Trust's website.

The investment performance is monitored by the Investment Working group by reviewing regular reports from our investment advisors, Aberdeen Standard Capital. The movement in the stock market affects the value of our investments. The short-term gains and losses on the investments make little difference on the day to day running of the charity until the point where we have to sell our investments and realise the gain or loss.

The value of the Trust's investments has fluctuated greatly over the last 12 months but by the end of March 2022 had started to recover.

The Trust's investment portfolio value now stands at £431,335 with an additional £116,729 being held in bank accounts.

The next 12 months will continue to be a difficult time for the investment market, but the Trust continues to focus on long term aims rather than on the short-term market noise currently prevalent.

Reserves policy

The Trust's reserves are held in order to manage the risks to which the charity is exposed in the course of its activities. The Trustees ensure that the charity is in a

responsible and secure financial position to carry out its day-to-day core services and is able to absorb unforeseen setbacks in the event of a significant financial downturn. The reserves policy is reviewed in the annual planning and budgeting process by Trustees and considers changes to the environment in which the Trust operates, and any other internal or external risk factors that might impact on the level of reserves required.

The reserves policy balances the need to build up long-term reserves against the need for short term spending on the Trust's core purposes.

Funds

The Trust's funds are divided between unrestricted funds, restricted funds and designated funds.

The designated funds and their specific purposes are detailed below:

Long Term Income Fund

The purpose of this fund is to provide income for the Trust's core work during the rental income modernising process, provide protection against additional voids that may occur and provide a dependable, growing stream of income that will keep pace with inflation, thus enabling the Trust to fulfil its objectives. £20,000 will be transferred each year (when income levels allow) into this fund. No transfer took place in 21/22 as there was insufficient income received from the rental properties to cover this cost. However, the interest and dividends (less Management fees) generated by Aberdeen Standard Capital Investments has been retained. This equated to £3,719.



Should the rental income drop below the level that is required to fulfil the basic obligations of the Trust then money will be withdrawn from the fund to cover this expenditure. The balance held in the Long-Term Income Fund together with the revaluation of investments as at the 31 March 2022 is £373,064.

New Accommodation Fund

This fund was created to set aside money to be used to fund the new office accommodation for the Trust. Money that had previously been held in the Long-Term Income fund has been released into the New Accommodation Fund. The balance of the fund is £174,800. This fund will be used in conjunction with the restricted grant funding from the NHS and the Alcoa Foundation. This fund will be written down over a 50-year period as part of the new office depreciation calculation.

The Land and Structures Contingency Fund was created to allow appropriate responses to substantial problems arising from geotechnical features, structures such as walls, land instability, drainage and watercourses.

Since 2003 the Trust has commissioned a programme of regular visual inspections of all known built structures on Trust land and a geotechnical inspection of Jiggers Rock face, as part of its risk management processes

£10,000 will be transferred to the fund each year (when income levels allow) and the work undertaken when sufficient funds have accumulated. Some works may be able to be undertaken at an earlier date if external funding becomes available. Due to income levels no transfer was made at year end; the balance of the fund as 31 March 2022 was £6,950.



Restricted Funds

Alcoa/NHS New Office Accommodation – grant funding received towards the building of the new office. These funds are being written down over a 50-year period as part of the office depreciation costs.

Councillors Pride Grant – £300 towards the Outdoor Learning Area at the Trust Office site

Awards for All – £10,000 towards path/access repairs – Benthall Edge

Pension Scheme

In common with other charities with defined benefit pension schemes, our pension scheme shows a deficit which stood at £445,000 on 31 March 2022 (£465,000 March 2021) and, under UK accounting standards we are required to account for this deficit. Like all parts of our economy, charities have been hit by rising life expectancy and lower than expected return on investments. The conclusion of the Trustees is that the Trust is able to meet the annual increase in employer contributions and is still able to deliver its charitable objectives. They confirmed that they were re-assured that there was not a significant risk that the pension liability would crystallise in the short to medium term and that the Trust can meet the required projected further income without significantly impacting the ongoing business.

Actuarial valuation

At the last valuation, the contribution rate to be paid into the Shropshire County Pension Fund was assessed in two parts. First a standard contribution rate was determined. This is the contribution, expressed as a percentage of the salaries of staff. Secondly, a supplementary contribution is payable if, as a result of the actuarial review, it is found that the accumulated liabilities of the pension for benefits to past and present staff are not fully covered by the standard contributions to be paid in future and by the notional fund built up from past contributions. The total contribution rate payable is the sum of the standard contribution rate and the supplementary contribution rate.

Shropshire County Pension Fund has been working hard over the last few years to reduce the pension deficit and has set out a clear framework in which to achieve this over the next 16 years. The Trust now pays an increased employer contribution rate (21%) and also an annual deficit contribution (£1,100 in 2021/2022) to reduce the deficit.

Trustees' responsibilities in relation to the financial statements

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.



Company law requires Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. The financial statements are required by law to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the profit or loss of the company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- ◆ select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- ◆ observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP
- ◆ make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- ◆ state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- ◆ prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the group and parent charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011 and the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets

of company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the financial information included on the charity's website.

In accordance with company law, as the company's directors, we certify that:

- ◆ so far as we are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the company's auditor is unaware

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice – Accounting and Reporting by Charities and in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.

Approved by the Committee of Management on
21 September 2022
and signed on its behalf by:

Maureen Bragg
Chair



Severn Gorge Countryside Trust

REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2022

Company No. 2647374

Muras Baker Jones Limited
Chartered Accountants
Wolverhampton

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Severn Gorge Countryside Trust (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31 March 2022 which comprise the statement of financial activities (including income and expenditure account), statement of financial position and the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2022 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require us to report to you where:

- the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the trustees have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the charity's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST (CONTINUED)

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the trustees' report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the trustees' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the trustees' report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustees were not entitled to take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the directors' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement, the trustees (who are also the directors for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST (CONTINUED)

- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal control
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the trustees
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charity to cease to continue as a going concern
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

.....
Oliver Ross BSc(Hons) FCA (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of Muras Baker Jones Limited
Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditor

Regent House
Bath Avenue
Wolverhampton
WV1 4EG

21 September 2022

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (being INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)

For the year ended 31 March 2022

	Notes	General Fund £	Designated Funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds 2022 £	Total funds 2021 £
INCOME						
INCOMING RESOURCES FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES						
Rents received	4	234,867	-	-	234,867	175,619
Grants	4	18,383	-	10,300	28,683	103,959
INCOME FROM OTHER TRADING ACTIVITIES						
Investment income		859	7,538	-	8,397	12,903
Other income		14,148	-	-	14,148	13,818
Gifts and Donations		1,451	-	-	1,451	1,365
Total Income		269,708	7,538	10,300	287,546	307,664
EXPENDITURE						
COSTS OF RAISING FUNDS						
Costs of generating voluntary income	5	6,435	-	-	6,435	6,064
EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES						
Woodland/Countryside Management	5	253,835	3,181	1,335	258,351	197,589
Access	5	24,857	982	412	26,251	68,692
Projects	5	7,607	437	182	8,226	21,584
GOVERNANCE COSTS	5	24,668	3,819	-	28,487	24,859
Total Expenditure		317,402	8,419	1,929	327,750	318,788
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		(47,694)	(881)	8,371	(40,204)	(11,124)
TRANSFERS BETWEEN FUNDS		(5,903)	5,903	-	-	-
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE) BEFORE OTHER GAINS / (LOSSES) – carried forward		(53,597)	5,022	8,371	(40,204)	(11,124)

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (being INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT) continued

For the year ended 31 March 2022

	Notes	General Fund £	Designated Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2022 £	Total funds 2021 £
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE) BEFORE OTHER GAINS / (LOSSES) – brought forward		(53,597)	5,022	8,371	(40,204)	(11,124)
OTHER GAINS AND LOSSES						
Gains/(losses) on Investments - realised		-	5,789	-	5,789	-
Gains/(losses) on Investments – unrealised		-	(1,538)	-	(1,538)	61,315
Pension scheme actuarial (losses)/gains	14	52,005	-	-	52,005	(52,519)
Revaluation of land		-	-	-	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS FOR THE YEAR		(1,592)	9,273	8,371	16,052	(2,328)
TOTAL FUNDS BROUGHT FORWARD AT 31 MARCH 2021		5,796	722,366	75,226	803,388	805,716
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD AT 31 MARCH 2022		4,204	731,639	83,597	819,440	803,388

All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

BALANCE SHEET

At 31 March 2022

	Notes	2022 £	£	2021 £	£
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	6	581,490		554,009	
Investments	7	431,335		435,225	
			<hr/>		<hr/>
		1,012,825		989,234	
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	8	64,947		58,316	
Investments	9	86,734		85,895	
Cash at bank and in hand		116,382		138,164	
			<hr/>		<hr/>
		268,063		282,375	
CREDITORS - amounts falling due within one year	10	(16,448)		(3,221)	
			<hr/>		<hr/>
NET CURRENT ASSETS		251,615		279,154	
Pension benefit pension scheme liability	12	(445,000)		(465,000)	
			<hr/>		<hr/>
NET ASSETS		819,440		803,388	
			<hr/>		<hr/>
THE FUNDS OF THE CHARITY:	11				
General fund	11	4,204		5,796	
Designated funds	11	450,721		445,699	
Restricted funds	11	83,597		75,226	
Revaluation funds	11	280,918		276,667	
			<hr/>		<hr/>
TOTAL CHARITY FUNDS		819,440		803,388	
			<hr/>		<hr/>

The financial statements were approved by the Committee of Management on 21 September 2022 signed on its behalf by:-

Maureen Bragg
Chair

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2022

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

a) BASIS OF PREPARATION

The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland issued in October 2019, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006 and UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

The financial statements are prepared on a going concern basis under the historical cost convention, modified to include investments and certain freehold property at fair value.

b) INCOME

Rental income is included when receivable.

Income from contracting projects is recognised when receivable.

Grants are recognised in full in the Statement of Financial Activities when receivable.

Income from investments and other income, including small sales of timber and refunds, are included when receivable.

c) EXPENDITURE AND IRRECOVERABLE VAT

Resources expended are recognised in the period in which they are incurred. Resources expended include attributable VAT, which cannot be recovered.

The proportion of employees time spent fundraising is shown as costs of generating voluntary income.

Resources expended are allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates directly to that activity. The cost of overall direction and administration on each activity is apportioned based on the direct costs incurred for each.

d) DEPRECIATION

Depreciation is provided on the cost of fixed assets to write off the cost less estimated residual value of each asset over its estimated useful life at the following rates:

Freehold property	Depreciated over 50 years
Fixtures & Equipment	33 ¹ / ₃ % straight line
Plant and Machinery	10% straight line
Motor vehicles	20% straight line/33 ¹ / ₃ % straight line
Facility Construction	10% straight line

No depreciation is provided on Freehold Land.

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2022

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES (Continued)

e) TANGIBLE ASSETS

Tangible assets are initially recorded at cost, and subsequently stated at cost less any accumulated depreciation and impairment losses. Any tangible assets carried at revalued amounts are recorded at the fair value at the date of revaluation less any subsequent accumulated depreciation and subsequent accumulated impairment losses.

An increase in the carrying amount of an asset as a result of revaluation, is recognised in other recognised gains and losses, unless it reverses a charge for impairment that has previously been recognised as expenditure within the statement of financial activities. A decrease in the carrying amount of an asset as a result of revaluation, is recognised in other recognised gains and losses, except to which it offsets any previous revaluation gain, in which case the loss is shown within other recognised gains and losses on the statement of financial activities.

f) INVESTMENTS

Investments held as current assets are stated at the lower of cost and net realisable value.

Investments held as fixed assets are revalued annually and the aggregate surplus or deficit is transferred to Revaluation Reserve.

g) GENERAL FUND

This represents unrestricted funds that are available for use at the Trustees' discretion in furtherance of the objectives of the Trust.

h) DESIGNATED FUNDS

- i) Long Term Income Fund - this fund arises from the combining of the Income Security Fund and the Long Term Development Reserve and reflects monies held within Fixed and Current Asset Investments. The purpose of the fund is to provide additional income for the Trust's core work when rental income declines as properties reach the end of their expected commercial 'life' circa 2015 to 2025.
- ii) Land and Structures Contingency - this reserve reflects monies held within current asset investments. The reserve has been created to cope with expenditure arising as a result of land instability, drainage and watercourse issues and potential problems with existing structures.
- iii) New Accommodation Fund - the reserve has been created to set aside funds towards the new office accommodation for the Trust.
- iv) Revaluation Reserve – this reflects the increase in the fair value of investments and land over their original cost.

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2022

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES (Continued)

h) DESIGNATED FUNDS - continued

- v) Lloyds Bank Surrender Premium Fund and Carry Over Funds. These reserves relate to surplus funds arising on certain projects during the year for which the trustees have designated against specific expenditure over the next 2 years.
- vi) Postcode Lottery Access Fund. Being grants received in respect of work to be carried out on steps in the Gorge. Re-designated by the grant provider as unrestricted.

i) RESTRICTED FUNDS

These represent grants received for specified projects, the use of each grant being restricted to that project.

j) GOING CONCERN

The trustees remain mindful of the ongoing impact of the global pandemic on the charity and as a result regularly review projections and budgets for the current and subsequent periods. Based on these reviews, the trustees consider there to be no significant overall impact on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

The trustees have also reviewed the supply chains, key income sources and the capital resources available and consider that the charity has adequate resources in place to continue operating for the next twelve months.

k) EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

The charity contributes to a defined benefit plan for certain employees. A liability for the charity's obligation under the plan is recognised net of plan assets. The net change in the net defined benefit liability is recognised as the costs of the defined benefit plan during the period. Pension plan assets are measured at fair value and the defined benefit obligation is measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method.

The trustees believe that the scheme currently meets statutory minimum funding requirements. It is intended that the level of annual contributions to the scheme will be adjusted following the next detailed actuarial valuation. The directors note that the calculated notional deficit or surplus calculated under FRS102 can vary greatly from year to year depending on the assumptions made at the valuation date, but with normally little or no effect on short term cashflows.

2. (DEFICIT)/SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR

The (deficit)/surplus for the year is stated after charging:

	2022 £	2021 £
Auditors' remuneration	2,400	2,300
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets	15,587	14,891

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2021

3. STAFF COSTS

	2022 £	2021 £
Wages and salaries	119,600	116,281
Social security costs	7,615	7,335
Other pension Costs	58,000	48,000
Other costs	3,473	6,322
	<u>188,688</u>	<u>175,923</u>

No employees received remuneration in excess of £60,000 (2021: None).

No members of the Committee of Management received any remuneration in the year (2021 - £Nil). Apart from members of the Committee of Management, the company had 5 employees at 31 March 2022 (2021 - 5).

4. INCOMING RESOURCES FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	General fund £	Restricted funds £	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
Rents received	234,867	-	234,867	175,619
Grants:				
Natural England:				
Countryside Stewardship	4,272	-	4,272	20,938
Farm the Flow Project	-	-	-	39,905
Postcode Lottery Local Trust	-	-	-	-
Other	2,481	-	2,481	7,182
Business relief grant	500	-	500	3,201
Furlough grant	11,130	-	11,130	7,734
Heritage lottery fund	-	-	-	10,000
Small business grant	-	-	-	10,000
Nineveh trust grant	-	-	-	5,000
Benthall Path Improvements	-	10,000	10,000	-
Councillors Pride grant	-	300	300	-
	<u>18,383</u>	<u>10,300</u>	<u>28,683</u>	<u>103,959</u>
	<u>253,250</u>	<u>10,300</u>	<u>263,550</u>	<u>279,578</u>

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2022

5. ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Generating voluntary income £	Woodland/ countryside management £	Access £	Projects £	Governance costs £	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
Direct costs	-	80,833	-	3,064	-	83,897	96,471
Employee costs	6,435	140,915	25,221	3,736	12,381	188,688	175,923
Insurance	-	6,205	174	242	-	6,621	6,061
Transport	-	5,786	163	225	-	6,174	2,478
Office and other costs	-	10,011	282	390	4,534	15,217	11,722
Trustee support	-	-	-	-	745	745	253
Professional costs	-	-	-	-	10,827	10,827	10,989
Depreciation	-	14,607	411	569	-	15,587	14,891
(Profit)/loss on disposal of tangible fixed assets	-	(6)	-	-	-	(6)	-
	<u>6,435</u>	<u>258,351</u>	<u>26,251</u>	<u>8,226</u>	<u>28,487</u>	<u>327,750</u>	<u>318,788</u>

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2022

6. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Plant and machinery £	Land and buildings £	Motor vehicles £	Fixtures & equipment £	Facility Construction £	Total £
COST:						
At 1 April 2021	18,000	629,476	57,579	39,008	4,495	748,558
Additions	41,056	-	1,000	1,341	-	43,397
Disposals	-	-	-	(335)	-	(335)
	<u>59,056</u>	<u>629,476</u>	<u>58,579</u>	<u>40,014</u>	<u>4,495</u>	<u>791,620</u>
At 31 March 2022	59,056	629,476	58,579	40,014	4,495	791,620
ACCUMULATED DEPRECIATION:						
At 1 April 2021	9,975	96,271	57,579	29,375	1,349	194,549
Charge for the Year	2,792	8,752	17	3,577	449	15,587
Disposals	-	-	-	(6)	-	(6)
	<u>12,767</u>	<u>105,023</u>	<u>57,596</u>	<u>32,946</u>	<u>1,798</u>	<u>210,130</u>
At 31 March 2022	12,767	105,023	57,596	32,946	1,798	210,130
NET BOOK VALUE:						
At 31 March 2021	8,025	533,205	-	9,633	3,147	554,009
	<u>46,289</u>	<u>524,453</u>	<u>983</u>	<u>7,068</u>	<u>2,697</u>	<u>581,490</u>
At 31 March 2022	46,289	524,453	983	7,068	2,697	581,490

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2022

7. FIXED ASSET INVESTMENTS

	2022 £	2021 £
Balance brought forward	435,225	373,910
Additions	482,598	-
Disposals	(484,950)	-
Revaluation adjustment	(1,538)	61,315
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Balance carried forward	431,335	435,225
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Historical cost of investments held at 31 March 2022	432,873	364,712
	<hr/>	<hr/>

Investments are acquired to provide fixed funding for certain of the Designated Funds set up by the Trust (see Note 11).

	2022 Original cost £	Market value £	2021 Original cost £	Market value £
Black Rock				
- BLK Charities UK Bond Fund A Inc	-	-	20,000	18,281
Aberdeen Standard Capital				
- Offshore Income Fund	-	-	193,575	259,912
- Offshore Global Fixed Interest	-	-	76,575	75,350
- Phoenix Fund	-	-	74,562	81,682
- Various Listed investments	432,873	431,335		
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	432,873	431,335	364,712	435,225
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

8. DEBTORS

	2022 £	2021 £
Trade debtors	64,421	57,826
Prepayments	526	490
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	64,947	58,316
	<hr/>	<hr/>

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2022

9. CURRENT ASSET INVESTMENTS

	2022 £	2021 £
Short term deposits	86,734	85,895

10. CREDITORS - amounts falling due within one year

	2022 £	2021 £
Trade Creditors	16,448	3,221
	16,448	3,221

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2022

11. ANALYSIS OF CHARITABLE FUNDS

	At 1 April 2021 £	Income £	Expend- iture £	Other recognised gains/ (losses) £	Trans- fers £	At 31 March 2022 £
Analysis of movements in unrestricted funds						
General Fund	5,796	269,708	(317,402)	52,005	(5,903)	4,204
Long Term Income Fund	181,257	7,538	(3,819)	-	20,000	204,976
Land and Structures						
Contingency	7,130	-	-	-	(180)	6,950
Accommodation Fund	179,400	-	(4,600)	-	-	174,800
Revaluation Reserve	276,667	-	-	4,251	-	280,918
Lloyds Surrender Premium fund	40,000	-	-	-	(1,000)	39,000
Carry Over from 19/20	1,110	-	-	-	(1,110)	-
Postcode Lottery Access Fund	20,000	-	-	-	(6,600)	13,400
Farm the Flow	2,302	-	-	-	(1,207)	1,095
Carry Over From 20/21	14,500	-	-	-	(14,500)	-
Carry Over From 21/22	-	-	-	-	10,500	10,500
	722,366	7,538	(8,419)	4,251	5,903	731,639
Analysis of movements in restricted funds						
Alcoa Grant	7,116	-	(182)	-	-	6,934
Primary Care Trust						
- New Office project	68,110	-	(1747)	-	-	66,363
Councillors Pride Grant	-	300	-	-	-	300
Awards for All -Benthall Edge Path	-	10,000	-	-	-	10,000
	75,226	10,300	(1,929)	-	-	83,597
Total Funds	803,388	287,546	(327,750)	56,256	-	819,440

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2022

11. ANALYSIS OF CHARITABLE FUNDS continued

The assets comprising each Fund at 31 March 2022 are as follows:

	Tangible fixed assets £	Fixed asset investments £	Current assets / (Liabilities) £	Total £
Accommodation Fund	174,800	-	-	174,800
Long Term Income Fund	-	263,247	(58,271)	204,976
Revaluation Reserve	112,830	168,088	-	280,918
Land and Structures Contingency	-	-	6,950	6,950
Lloyds Surrender Premium Fund	-	-	39,000	39,000
Carry Over from 21/22	-	-	10,500	10,500
Farm the Flow carry over	-	-	1,095	1,095
Postcode Lottery Access Fund	-	-	13,400	13,400
Restricted Funds	73,297	-	10,300	83,597
General Fund	220,563	-	(216,359)	4,204
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	581,490	431,335	(193,385)	819,440
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

Fund transfers

Long term income fund. The transfer of £20,000 has been transferred from the general fund due to the pension fund deficit decrease for the year being returned to this designated fund.

Land and structures contingency fund. A transfer of £180 has been made to general fund to cover specific costs incurred during the year.

Farm the Flow carry over. This transfer relates to costs still to be incurred during 22/23.

Carry Over from 19/20. A transfer of £1,110 was made to the general fund in relation to work carried out during the year that was originally planned to be carried out in 19/20.

Carry Over from 20/21. A transfer of £14,500 was made to the general fund in relation to work carried out during the year that was originally planned to be carried out in 20/21.

Carry Over from 21/22. A transfer of £10,500 from the general fund was made to cover work planned for 21/22 still outstanding at the year end to be incurred in 22/23.

Lloyds Surrender Premium Budget. A transfer of £1,000 was made to the general fund to offset the depreciation of capital machinery.

Postcode Lottery Access Fund. A transfer of £6,600 was made in relation to a payment for 10% match funding for Light Gives Light project.

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2022

11. ANALYSIS OF CHARITABLE FUNDS continued

Purpose of Designated Funds

These are detailed in note 1(h) to the financial statements and also in the Trustees Report.

Purpose of Restricted Funds

These represent grants received and related expenditure in respect of specific projects as outlined above.

12. PENSIONS

Defined Benefit Scheme

The company is a member of the Shropshire County pension fund which operates a pension scheme providing benefits based on final pensionable pay. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the company. Contributions to the scheme are charged to the profit and loss account so as to spread the cost of pensions over employees' working lives with the company. The contributions are determined by a qualified actuary on the basis of triennial valuations using assumptions that: project the benefits forward into the future and then adjust them to current day values; estimate the probability of payments needing to be made. The most recent valuation was as at 31 March 2019. The company receives annual reports from the pension scheme which identify its share of the assets and liabilities of the scheme.

The pension charge for the year amounts to £58,000 (2021 - £48,000), against which employer contributions paid over to the scheme amounted to £25,995 (2021 - £25,519), together with the actuarial gains and losses on the scheme for the year is recognised in the statement of Financial Activities in accordance with SORP (FRS 102).

The most recent actuarial valuation showed that the market value of the whole scheme's assets was £1,951m and that the actuarial value of those assets represented 76% of the benefits that had accrued to members, after allowing for expected future increases in earnings.

The company's share of the market values of the main asset classes, at the year end were:

	2022		2021	
	%	£000s	%	£000s
Equities	50.6	494	50.4	470
Government Bonds	0.0	0	0.0	0
Other Bonds	18.9	185	21.1	197
Property	3.7	36	3.9	36
Cash/liquidity	1.7	17	0.3	3
Other	25.1	245	24.3	226

The assets of the Scheme are included in the accounts at open market value as at the year-end, and the liabilities have been calculated using the following actuarial assumptions:

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2022

12. PENSION -continued

	2022 %	2021 %
Rate of increase in salaries	4.65	3.95
Pension increases	3.5	2.8
Rate of discount	2.8	2.1
Inflation - RPI	-	-
- CPI	3.4	2.7

The liabilities are determined using the projected unit method as distinct from the aggregate method used in the triennial valuation. Under the projected unit method, the current service costs will increase as the members of the scheme approach retirement. On this basis, the calculated notional funding position, in respect of the Scheme at 31 March 2022, and at previous year-end, was as follows:

	2022 £000s	2021 £000s
Value of market assets	977	932
Value of accrued liabilities	(1,422)	(1,397)
Deficit	(445)	(465)

The actuary has confirmed that the valuation made above under the requirements of FRS102 does not indicate that there is either an immediate funding requirement or any immediate need to change the agreed contribution rates currently in force. The actuary has excluded from both assets and liabilities items which have neutral effect on the Scheme's financial position i.e. additional voluntary contributions, annuities secured in respect of pensions in payment and insurance contract for death in service benefits.

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2022

12. PENSION –continued

The charge to the Statement of Financial Activities over the financial year comprised:

	2022 £000s	2021 £000s
Operating charge		
Current service cost	47	39
Admin expense	1	1
Past service cost/(gain)	-	-
	<hr/> 48	<hr/> 40
Other income/charges		
Expected return on pension scheme assets	(19)	(19)
Interest on pension scheme liabilities	29	27
	<hr/> 10	<hr/> 8
Net interest/(return)		
	<hr/> 58	<hr/> 48

Movement in balance sheet deficit figures during the year:

	2022 £	2021 £
Deficit in scheme at 31 March 2021	(465,000)	(390,000)
Movement in year		
Current service cost	(47,000)	(39,000)
Past service (cost)/gain	-	-
Admin expense	(1,000)	(1,000)
Net interest/return on assets	(10,000)	(8,000)
Contributions	25,995	25,519
Actuarial gain/(loss)	52,005	(52,519)
	<hr/> (445,000)	<hr/> (465,000)

13. MEMBERS' GUARANTEE

Severn Gorge Countryside Trust is a company limited by guarantee. Members' liability under the Memorandum of Association is limited to £1 each and the liability continues for one year after the cessation of membership.

14. TAXATION STATUS

The company is a charity under the provisions of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.

15. CAPITAL COMMITMENTS

At the year end 31 March 2022, the trust was committed to purchase a trailer and winch for £26,479 (2020 - £nil).

Severn Gorge Countryside Trust

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