

Trustees' Report & Annual Accounts 2019-20



Message from the Chair

Dear All,

As I write this foreword we are still in the middle of the greatest pandemic almost all people alive today have experienced. The impact of the coronavirus on all our lives is something we will never forget, and I sincerely hope never have to live through again.

The effect of the virus on the Trust has been huge, as it has been for all businesses, charities and individuals. The Trust relies for almost all of its income from rental money from commercial properties, which obviously have been impacted by COVID-19. We have as yet not suffered too much loss of revenue, which is in the large part due to government help to keep businesses trading, but as these schemes come to an end, the true picture of which businesses will survive and which fail will become evident. The Trust will then discover just how much of our revenue has been lost.

Any reductions in an already extremely tight budget will have continuing consequences for the essential work the Trust has to undertake with our annual work plan, reactive work, our obligations to maintain and improve/ repair our infrastructure and to provide a safe and happy place for our staff, volunteers and contractors to work in, and the public to explore and enjoy.

Having sounded this warning, the Trust is still doing wonderful things in the beautiful countryside and townscape we are based in, and entrusted to keep in good order for present and future generations. There are many challenges which keep the 4 staff members, contractors and our brilliant volunteers (when they can work) busy, and as I've said previously, the Trust is exceptionally fortunate to have this great team to carry out the varied and often complex work schedules.

This year we have sadly said goodbye to Cadi Price who has retired from the Trust after 10 years. Cadi has been a superb ambassador for the Trust, she has been responsible for running the Volunteering



Programme, which is a brilliant and hugely important part of the Trust. She pioneered the Outdoor Learning Programme and helped with many aspects of the Trust work, she's irreplaceable but we wish her well in her well-deserved retirement, but she knows she is always welcome. Cadi's farewell party was cancelled because of the virus, and it was such a shame that we couldn't give her the send-off she deserved.

We also say a fond farewell to two of our Trustees, Louise Lomax and David Edwards who have both stepped down after many years on the board. We wish them well in the future and thank them for their hard work for the Trust.

Emily has joined the team as Apprentice Countryside Officer and with Nathan as her mentor is proving a great asset to the team. We hope she continues to enjoy her work with us and keeps relishing the varied tasks she undertakes.

Finally, I must thank our CEO, Russell Rowley, Company Secretary and Finance Officer, Kate Chetwood, Head of Countryside, Nathan Morris and Emily Holmes our Apprentice Countryside Officer, along with our contractors and volunteers for all the wonderful work that they do to keep the Trust the superlative organisation it is, and my fellow Trustees on the board for their dedication and commitment, it remains an honour and privilege to be a part of this truly inspiring Trust.

Thank you,

Nick Downes

Chair, Severn Gorge Countryside Trust

Severn Gorge Countryside Trust Trustees' Report 31 March 2020

The Trustees are pleased to present their report and the audited financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2020

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 2020 are as follows:

Name

Nick Downes (Chair)
Maureen Bragg (Vice Chair)
John Box
Simon Harris
Chris Turley
Max Speke
Gina Rowe
Alan Mackenzie
Carolyn Healy
Andrew Cooke
Dylan Webster
Alan Taylor

Nominated by:

Barrow Parish Council
Community Trustee
Shropshire Wildlife Trust
Shropshire Council
Telford & Wrekin Council
Sutton Maddock Parish Council
Community Trustee
Madeley Town Council
Telford & Wrekin Council
Broseley Town Council
Telford & Wrekin Council
The Gorge Parish Council

Staff

Russell Rowley	CEO
Cadi Price	Community Development Officer (to 31 March 2020)
Kate Chetwood	Company Secretary and Finance Officer
Nathan Morris	Head of Countryside
Emily Holmes	Apprentice Countryside Officer (from 1 October 2019)



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 and visitors. 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.





This year the Trust said farewell to Louise Lomax and David Edwards. Louise had been a Trustee since 1999; David joined the Trust in 2011. Both brought a wealth of knowledge and experience with them, especially of the local communities that live in and around the Gorge. Louise was both Chair and Vice Chair and was a great support to staff and fellow trustees.

We welcomed two new Trustees in January 2020, Alan MacKenzie (nominated by Madeley Town Council) and Alan Taylor (nominated by The Gorge Parish Council). We look forward to working with them over the next four years.

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 quarterly and is responsible for the governance of the charitable company, ensuring that it is well managed and that its assets are safeguarded.

At the outset of each year the COM approves an annual work plan which contains clear objectives. During the year the COM monitors progress against the annual work plan.

The day to day management of the Trust is undertaken by the CEO and staff who operate under delegated authority.

The COM has 1 sub-committee (Personnel Committee) whose terms of reference are approved 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 three times this year. They are also responsible for reviewing Trustee training needs.

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.

At the November 2019 Committee of Management meeting, Trustees resolved that the Trust would commit to and declare a climate emergency.

A working group will be set up to report to the Committee of Management on the immediate and longer term actions the Trust can take to become carbon neutral by 2030. The working group will be made up of staff, 4 Trustees and 2 Trust volunteers

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 2019/2020 was set from the 2018/2028 Development Strategy. The plan was ambitious but progress was made in all the essential actions and the majority of the desired ones. All legal and management requirements were fulfilled.

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.

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 have 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.

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, well managed and which has the capacity, infrastructure and support necessary to deliver them.



Staff Update

Farewell to Cadi – Our Community Development Officer

In March 2020 – we said farewell to Cadi Price, our Community Development Officer. Cadi started her role at the Trust in 2009, as the Access to Nature Partnership Officer, but prior to being employed by us she was a regular volunteer. The staff, Trustees and volunteers will miss her knowledge, expertise and sense of fun greatly.

We are glad to know that she will be returning as a volunteer when she has had enough of travelling and exploring the rest of the country/world!

Before she left we asked Cadi to give us a brief oversight of her time with the Trust:



'When I began volunteering for the Trust I had very little practical experience in countryside conservation although I had volunteered all my life! I had just completed an MA in Heritage Management and having particularly enjoyed the environmental conservation module, decided that this was the way forward in my career path and needed some 'hands-on' experience.

On my first volunteering day in July 2006, I met four volunteers who remain friends of mine and who still volunteer for the Trust. As I did then, I still consider a Thursday as my day in 'paradise' where my physical and mental health benefits from being outdoors in a sociable environment.

In October 2006, as a volunteer, I had the opportunity to study an Environmental Conservation NVQ funded by the Trust, a qualification where I received training in hedge-laying, step building, bridge building, path construction, heathland and woodland management, project management, health and safety, green woodworking, chainsaw, pond clearance, tools maintenance, biodiversity surveys, orchard pruning, willow maintenance, Trees of Knowledge and much, much more. Unbeknown to me then, that in the future, I would be employed by

the Trust to lead our volunteers and all this training would be put to good use!

In July 2009, I was employed by the Trust as Telford Access to Nature Partnership Officer which turned out to be a four year project working with partner organisations and volunteers enabling access to all throughout Telford. Funded by the Big Lottery and managed by Natural England, the project 'Access to Nature' delivered outdoor projects with differentiated groups with Telford & Wrekin Council, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, and the Small Woods Association. A User Group carried out access audits on local green spaces for infrastructure and interpretation improvements across Telford. Additional funding gave these groups of volunteers a year of conservation and educational training, and the Telford Green Spaces Partnership was initiated. During the latter period of this project, I also led the Trust's Volunteering Project.

And so, in 2013, when TA2N was completed, I was delighted to be offered the post as Community Development Officer which included the volunteering project, outdoor learning programme, access and of course, community development! My first task was to write a Strategic Access Review detailing the entire access network on the Trust's footpaths and

bridleways, while recording the condition of the furniture such as steps, gates and fingerposts.

Coming from a teaching background I was keen to involve more children, and their parents, in the outdoors and in 2014, introduced regular family walks and then, to satisfy their love in exploring nature, we started the John Muir Award and several families have since completed the four Awards.

The Outdoor Learning Programme, introduced in 2013, to encourage more people to use the outdoors in more ways than walking, continues with a monthly family or guided walk or practical creative workshops led by local professional artists.

More recently, with the ever-growing initiatives in health and well-being, the Feel Good Friday walks in Mindfulness and Forest Bathing, are proving beneficial. Having myself joined a friend for a short flat walk while recovering from surgery; her thought was 'it was great to be outside in the fresh air'. This initial thought has since developed into courses over a four Friday period.

Our Volunteering Project has come on leaps and bounds with a current number of 40 volunteers with 15-20 attending on a regular basis and is a very popular day with many different tasks to help manage the Trust's land. Thursdays prove very beneficial to folk who may be in need of social contact, physical

exercise, and mental well-being. This year, we celebrated 10 volunteers who have attended for 10-12 years – 'The Magnificent 10'!

In 2018, Madeley Nursery children and educators started exploratory sessions in Sunnyside woods and continue every term, bringing with them ideas and interests exploring the woods in all four seasons. I accompany them sharing my knowledge of nature at its best.

Community development also means engaging with folk who are unable to access the outdoors, and so I deliver talks or workshops to many local groups, attend local events, involved in Ironbridge Walking Festival, Local Access Forum to name but a few.

Coming now to an early retirement, I have thoroughly enjoyed my job and everything that comes with it! It's been an honour to work for Severn Gorge Countryside Trust and with all my colleagues. It is my intention to revert to being a SGCT volunteer!

I'm very thankful to the Trust for all that I have learnt and opportunities given to me.

Cadi



Welcome to Emily – our Apprentice Countryside Officer

In October 2019, we welcomed Emily Holmes as our new apprentice. Emily will be following an 18 month programme working towards a level 2 certificate in Environmental Conservation.

Emily explains why she wanted to apply for the post of Apprentice Countryside Officer:

'Caring for the environment has always been my core motivation. Prior to joining the Trust I completed a Post-Graduate Certificate in Brazilian Environmental Law and a Masters in International Environmental Studies. Motivated to gain more practical experience in environmental management, I was extremely excited to be offered SGCT's apprenticeship position.'

As apprentice Countryside Officer I am working towards a level 2 Certificate in Work-Based Environmental Conservation, with modules including managing volunteers and conducting access network surveys. Applying new skills in current GIS technology, I am working on developing a phone survey app for staff and volunteers to report any issues found while on site, for example fallen trees obstructing pathways. Going forward, I aim to explore how this new technology can be applied to develop our surveying processes, and support our environmental conservation work. Other new skills I'm learning include using a chainsaw, and general maintenance of access networks, for example fixing broken steps.'

We look forward to working with Emily over the next 18 months.



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 key way that we can directly benefit wildlife. The Trust's land contains many outstanding examples of scarce and uncommon habitats and species. 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 excellent 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



the identification of new environmental concerns, the prioritisation of issues, and the evaluation of trends over time. Using the information gathered, the Trust is able to 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.

In 2019 ecological monitoring was undertaken at Big Crackshall and Lloyds Meadows.

Big Crackshall is a large meadow between the Old

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

Wynd and the Ironbridge bypass. There used to be a canal across part of it which connected with the top of the two shafts that replaced the Old Wynd for taking goods in and out of the Ironbridge Gorge. The meadow has a large mound at its centre which was formed out of spoil from when the nearby bypass was constructed.

The meadow is slowly improving for biodiversity with an increase in Yellow Rattle which should begin to knock back the more vigorous grasses. With the regular hay cut and aftermath grazing, the development of scrub is not happening. As the management continues the frequency and variety will improve.

The Lloyds is comprised of two meadows which adjoin the Crostan woodland on Madeley Bank. As the site has a bridleway running along its southern end it is not possible to fence and aftermath graze these meadows, but we continue to take a haylage crop.

This sward contains a reasonable variety of herbs given that it is much used by local dog-walkers; it is accepted that there will be little that can be done with this meadow without aftermath grazing. Again Yellow Rattle is on the increase which should help.

We continue to meet with the ecology working group including John Handley from CH Ecology on survey methods and targets. As the current Higher Level Stewardship grant scheme comes to an end in 2020, we will be reviewing which sites are entered into any new scheme and concentrate our limited resources on sites with the most potential to improve.

Bee Hives

Our beehives continued to thrive in 2019. Despite our best efforts to prevent swarming from our original bee hive – the bees had other ideas. The swarm was spotted in a tree not far from the Trust Office – so armed with a box we attempted to collect the swarm. The retrieval did not go quite according to plan but we did manage to secure the majority of the bees. We laid a white sheet on a board up to the entrance of our empty second hive and watched in amazement as the bees started their march up the sheet and through the entrance of the hive! We were unsure as to whether we had been successful in capturing the queen bee – but two weeks later upon examining the new hive we were rewarded with a sighting of the queen and newly laid eggs.



The arrival of wasps had quite a detrimental effect on our hives – we installed several wasp traps but the lure of the hives and their honey stores were greater and we lost a large amount of honey to wasps.

We did however manage to extract some honey from the hives and were very proud of our 11 jars. These were sold at Apple Day.

Farm the Flow

The Farm the Flow partnership working together with Telford & Wrekin Council and a range of other partners continued to build on the success of its first year with much more detailed investigations of the Lydebrook catchment, its geology, soils, ecology and hydrology.

Telemetry gauges were installed throughout the catchment by Hydrologic International to enable Telford & Wrekin Council to begin to produce a Lydebrook Catchment Flood Model working with the Trust.



We installed eighteen forty centimetre long tubes into the ground either side of a hedge in a known flood pathway in Wilderness Meadows to begin measuring soil moisture at ten, twenty, thirty and forty centimetres depth as well as at ground level using specialist equipment. Measurements will be taken over the next 18 months as a scientific experiment to try to determine whether hedges do slow the flow and help mitigate flooding.

After extensive surveys, including ecological via CH Ecology, Access and Habitat Management were contracted to install five silt research woody debris dams and thirty woody debris dams with the permission of Brockton House Farm. The intention is to monitor how these contribute to taking the top off the flood peak, even by a small amount.

Soil surveys have been carried out by Trust staff which have been analysed for soil organic matter, soil moisture and soil bulk density by partner organisation CREST at University Centre Shrewsbury. We have calculated the Soil Organic Carbon from this as part of our work on Climate Change.

Discussions with landowners also continued throughout the year and we are particularly grateful for the ongoing strong support shown by Brockton House Farm.



Learning about Lydebrook – Citizen Science Project

Learning about Lydebrook (LAL) Citizen Science Project held its first launch at Coalbrookdale Community Centre on the evening of 11 April attended by 35 people, where the film 'High Water Common Ground' was shown followed by a presentation about Citizen Science by the Trust Manager. The second launch of LAL was held on Tuesday 7 May in Little Wenlock Village Hall. This was less well attended with 12 people, but they were all knowledgeable participants including the Parish Chair who has written papers on the industrial archaeology of the area.



Michael Fullen, Professor of Soil Technology at Wolverhampton University, has joined the project and is attending the training modules. Given that the Professor of Chemistry from Wolverhampton University is already advising us this ensures that the work we are doing is completed to high scientific standards. Soil scientist Neil Bragg and Environment Agency Geomorphologist; Simon Cuming have also been advising the Project.



The CEO has designed an evaluation process following training in Citizen Science from Reading University and the Company Secretary has turned this data into easy to understand pie charts. This has already shown the need for the project, with fairly low levels of knowledge about issues that may affect flooding. Evaluation is ongoing and will be done at the end of the training modules to test how successful we have been.

All 4 modules of Learning about Lydebrook on Soils, Meteorology, Hydrology and Geomorphology were successfully completed involving 60 person days of training for 23 participants with a total of 40 signed up to the project. Evaluation is still ongoing but so far has been extremely positive with one resident describing the journey they have all been on regarding flood risk and natural flood management.

Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM)

We have been asked by Harper Adams University to lead a day for CIWEM about Farm the Flow and Learning about Lydebrook on 14 of June which will be attended by 20 participants from across the UK.

British Hydrology Society

The CEO attended a 2 day Conference in Lancaster in April including site visits organised by the British Hydrology Society on 'Natural Flood Management – Does it work?' The Trust Manager gave a short presentation to the Conference and produced a poster on the work the Trust is doing. He made a considerable number of contacts and heard about other research which will help inform our project.

Deer Management

The Trust is now into its 6th year of a Deer Management Programme. Deer can have a damaging effect on woodland habitats. Natural regeneration is the principle means of restocking the Trust's woodland and an increasing deer population will adversely affect the success of natural regeneration. Deer have an important role within our woodland and are the largest land mammal to live in the United Kingdom. The management works will seek to reduce deer numbers to a point where the impact on the woodland and their associated plant communities are acceptable.

This year we culled 8 Fallow Deer. The 19/20 season has seen reduced cull figures due to the fencing of the power station. Also due to favourable conditions in the woodland after successful culling in previous years. We have, for the short term moved to a maintenance cull. If we stop management altogether then the population will begin to rise again and the impacts they have on the woodland increase again. Discussions with neighbours have shown that they are seeing less deer moving through.

When the development of the former power station site begins we may see an increased level of damage and activity as the deer are pushed from the site into the woodland.

Work to reduce the Muntjac population's impact has struggled again; this is in part due to the nature of the deer species and possible poaching activity still taking place.

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.

This year felling took place in Loamhole plantation in line with the Forestry Commission management plan. The timber was felled and extracted by N.W Tree Services. 170 tonnes of timber was extracted. All the timber went into local biomass and firewood markets. The felling was completed on time. Due to the location of the site; the timber was moved off site on a small HGV.



Countryside Stewardship

Countryside Stewardship provides financial incentives for land managers to look after their environment through activities such as:

- ◆ conserving and restoring wildlife habitats
- ◆ woodland management
- ◆ keeping the character of the countryside
- ◆ preserving features important to the history of the rural landscape
- ◆ encouraging educational access

This additional funding enables the Trust to continue its management programmes, such as ride mowing, deer and squirrel management and thinning works. Thinning has multiple benefits including letting in light for ground flora, it opens up space for trees, provides financial money back for trees felled and increases bird activity. It will also help to improve biodiversity and enhance resilience to climate change. We will also maintain an appropriate level of dead wood and protect veteran trees from competing tree growth.

Work on the application form to deliver the next 5 years of Countryside Stewardship has started and will be submitted before the deadline of 1 May 2020.

Contractors

The Trust regularly uses over 20 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
- ◆ de-scaling of Jiggers Bank rock face

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 Jiggers 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 £250,000 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 recommended 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.

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.

Pipe Wall – Bower Yard

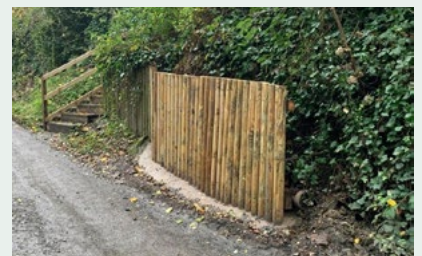
Bower Yard was once the site of a brick kiln in the 1790's, later it was used as a brick works making refractory bricks and then sanitary pipe works until 1955. The buildings were demolished by 1961 and the site is now a picnic area. The retaining wall for the site is built of many white bricks, and occasional sanitary pipes. Broken sanitary pipes can be found scattered on many sites throughout Bower Yard.

The Trust's Structural Engineer has been monitoring the pipe work wall and noted the following:

The pipework is in poor condition with numerous broken or displaced sections. Although only minor changes to the deterioration of the pipework were noted, in places the structure would seem to be providing little support to the bank behind it with small areas of very localised failure evident. However, despite this no signs of larger scaled movement or even tension cracking could be seen within the retained bank behind the structure.

Her advice to the Trust was to repair or replace the retaining structure, rebatter the slopes, or accept that the retained soil or wall may move and that a reactive response may be required at short notice.

The Trust decided that the best course of action would be to install a wooden buttress to prevent further deterioration or slippage of the wall but to preserve its uniqueness. This work was undertaken by Access and Habitat Management.



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

One of the Trust's greatest strengths is our Volunteer Project. The Volunteering programme continues to be a core part of the Trust's work and has 53 active volunteers who help to deliver its charitable objectives contributing to 2,810 hours this year. Over the past 12 years, SGCT volunteers have become the 'face' of the Trust in local green spaces with knowledge and expertise which they have developed on our sites and shared with others.

The level of support provided by volunteers to the Trust is truly immense and this year our volunteers have achieved a varied programme of work.

Our active and enthusiastic volunteer force have completed essential annual tasks and funded projects and the Trust would like to thank them for all their work and their contribution to helping the Trust achieve its access, landscape and nature conservation objectives.



2019 Volunteer Highlights

Some of the highlights were re-surfacing with stone the path behind Woodside Coalbrookdale houses funded by the Gorge Parish Council, a litter pick in Loamhole Dingle as part of the national 'spring-clean' week and cleft pale making with Friends of Apley Woods. Volunteers led 7 guided walks during the annual Ironbridge Walking Festival; removed and re-built a shed for our flock of sheep in Cherry Tree meadow and built a new cleft fence along the Ropewalk. This year the Oilhouse meadow hedge has been layed. Our average Thursday numbers are up, with 22 people and we have had 5 new regular volunteers.



Schools children clubs and families

In an era when it seems children are at risk of becoming increasingly remote from the natural world, we are keen to provide a variety of environmental education opportunities to local schools, clubs and families. There is wide ranging evidence that children who grow up with nature are happier, healthier and more creative. We also encourage young people to gain work experience with us. Our work experience student travelled from Market Drayton and was a very helpful addition to the staff for a week in July where he helped in log cutting, step repair, access surveys, science experiments, sheep welfare, and removing the horse shed in Oilhouse meadows with the volunteers. A busy week!

Additionally, Duke of Edinburgh students require 16 hours of volunteering and in August we had a 14 year old student from Madeley Academy attending 4 Thursday volunteering days, equating to 16 hours, and was a very helpful and popular addition to the group.

The Trust encourages schools and clubs to explore the woodlands on their own initiative while our Community Development Officer offers support with resources or as a guide if required. Coalbrookdale Beavers, Cubs



and Scouts continue to use Loamhole Dingle and Dale Coppice for their activities. There is often evidence of this as den building or badge work activities, especially in Loamhole Dingle.

Madeley Nursery

Madeley Nursery continues to visit Sunnyside every term for exploring, awareness, sharing, map exploration and nature enquiries, as is studied in Reggio education. This year, to celebrate the partnership, a well-attended family walk for the Nursery children was led by the Community Development Officer in Sunnyside, enabling the children to share their adventures with their parents. Additionally, the Nursery staff held an Open Evening at the Trust in July for the parents and children to celebrate this partnership.

Director Louise Lowings said;

'It was a great evening you and the Centre are very hospitable, everyone I have spoken to loved it and I am always happy for the staff to share and celebrate the work. Thanks for an amazing year we have loved it and the engine for learning has been visiting the woods.'



Feel Good Friday walks

Science is now proving what many of us have always known – that spending time in nature is very beneficial to our physical and mental health. Research in Japan has shown that connecting with nature has many health benefits, including lowering blood pressure, heart rate and blood sugars, improving sleep, reducing stress hormones, anxiety and fatigue, and boosting the immune system. These benefits can last for weeks after the experience.

Forest Bathing and Mindfulness in Nature are two approaches to taking a walk in nature, which aim to help us engage more fully with ourselves, and our immediate surroundings. They are also very enjoyable! We walk gently through the landscape, directing our attention either within our bodies, or to our senses. Our day-to-day cares are allowed to fall away, leaving us feeling refreshed and more able to deal with them when we return.

Following a slow, flat walk with a friend, the light bulb idea started this popular course.

This course aims to give you an experience of this state of mind, and some tools to take away with you, so that you can go out and practice anytime, anywhere.

The first course started in June 2019 to enable Telford Town Park staff to experience this state of mind as part of the occupational therapy route. The programme of 6 walks was in partnership with Telford Town Park who funded the pilot scheme engaging Telford & Wrekin Council staff and Friends of Telford Town Park volunteers. The walks were split with 3 in the park and 3 in Sunnyside. The experienced walk leaders are Jan Cafearo and Sally Williams who practice in Forest Bathing and Mindfulness.

The pilot programme proved very beneficial to the regular attendees. The 'Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale' was used as a 'before' and 'after' evaluation and showed a marked improvement in participants' health and well-being. The researchers who developed the evaluation tool say that an improvement of 3 points is significant - we had 10, 10 and 19! A tiny sample, but still thrilling!

'I am noticing more quickly when anxiety arises, and using some of the new techniques to calm it. I feel more confident now too, a bit freer, and more of an active player in my own life – not at the mercy of things so much. Happier to be me!'

'I just wanted to say thank you all again for the lovely sessions. I really enjoyed them and was sad to end today. It was a beautiful setting and the Forest Bathing and Mindfulness were great. I have been able to hold on to some of the lovely feelings from the sessions and will be sharing my experience.'

This course continues as a set of 4 Fridays starting from the Trust Office led by Jan and Sally. The 2nd course was charged by donation only and the 3rd as £20 with a monthly follow-up session. A further course starts in May 2020. A total of 23 people have attended to date, an average of 8 per course.

Further interest has been shown by the Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and also as a Doctor's social prescribing tool.



Tertiary Education

Harper Adams University brought their Heritage Studies group on the interpretation module where the Trust CEO led a guided walk along the Iron Trail.

The Fields Studies Council at Preston Montford visit Benthall Edge for bird and flora identification.

John Muir Award (JMA)

The John Muir Award encourages people to connect with, enjoy, and care for wild places. An environmental award scheme for people of all backgrounds – groups, families and individuals – it is non-competitive, inclusive and accessible.

Three families with children between 3-12 years have completed their Family Discovery Awards and two children completed their Explorer Awards. We ended this 7-year programme with a Woodland celebration and picnic with families who completed their Conserve Award in 2016.



Outdoor Learning Programme

Our Outdoor Learning Programme is now in its 7th year. Its aim is to provide opportunities for people of all ages to experience and reconnect with the local landscape of woodlands, meadows and heritage structures in the World Heritage Site through a wide variety of environmental, heritage and creative subjects.

The programme consisted of 12 monthly events with weekly family walks in August led by Sarah Bates. Highlights were workshops in Christmas Wreaths, Hedgerow Baskets, Knitting & weaving, Ink painting and Lino printing. We are very grateful to our tutors who lead these workshops.

Our Halloween High Jinks on 31 October was well received and much 'high jinks' ensued in Sunnyside woodlands!



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.

Our aim is 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 of 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 25 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.

Poorly tanalised timber treads purchased in 2007-8 to install many hundreds of steps are now rotting on a daily basis and repairing them is time consuming and costly. This is particularly obvious in Lloyd's Coppice and Loamhole Dingle.

We have applied for grant funding to replace many steps and footpaths with stone where the timber steps are in a poor state.

The footpath, which enters Benthall from Bridge Bank, remains in a poor state with a very muddy surface and funding is still to be sought to repair this route.





Guided Walks

To enable and encourage local people and visitors of all ages to use the vast network of paths and trails throughout the Gorge, the Trust runs a variety of guided walks each year.

In conjunction with the annual Ironbridge Walking Festival each May, the Trust, along with 6 volunteers and the Community Development Officer, led 7 themed walks within the Gorge. This gave over 85 participants the opportunity to discover many additional woodland paths and experience flora, trees, birds and heritage. The total number of walkers for the festival exceeded 1000.

The Outdoor Learning Programme had 4 themed walks including a Forest Bathing guided walk; this initial foray into Forest Bathing resulted in a new venture for the Trust as the 'Feel Good Friday' walks courses.



Iron Trail Walk: staff and volunteers guided 53 WI members to mark the Shropshire WI Centenary.

Family activity walks

Following a successful application to Tesco Bags of Help grant scheme, four circular 1km family trails have been created 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 Splosh 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 5 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 Tourist 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.

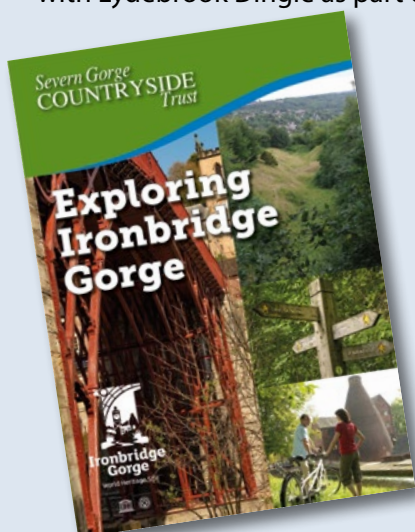
The route for the '**Iron Trail**' links existing paths into a circular walk that includes both built and natural features within the World Heritage Site to encourage visitors to explore beyond the built environment. Its objective is to highlight otherwise unseen heritage such as the remnants and evidence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

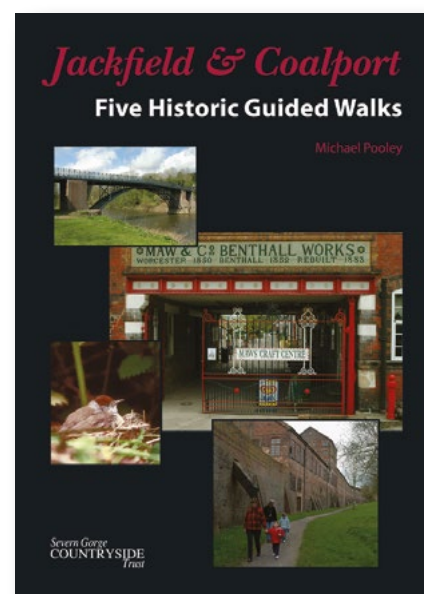
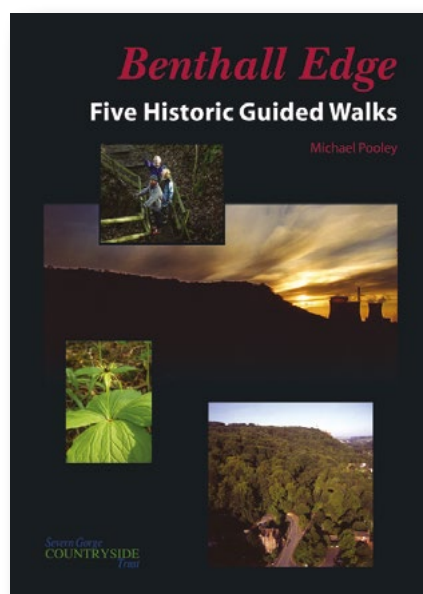
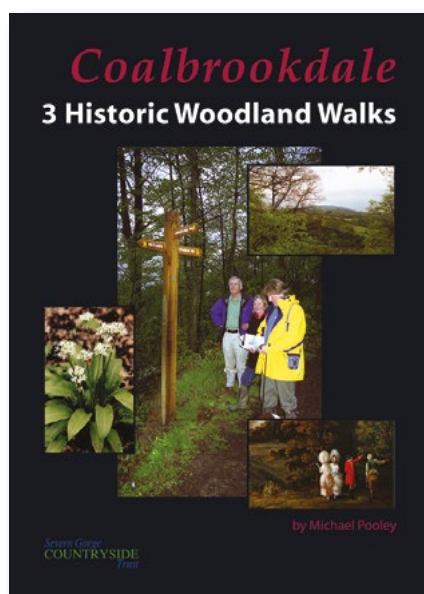
The '**Sabbath Walks Trail**' follows in the footsteps of Richard Reynolds who built the wide footpaths in the 18th Century for his workers and families. This trail takes in Dale Coppice and Lincoln Hill and the viewpoint at the Rotunda with views of the Iron Bridge.

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 Blists 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.



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.



Raising Awareness

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

Trees of Knowledge

The Trees of Knowledge community group was set up in 2007 to provide opportunities for people to learn about, understand and input their own knowledge and become involved in the long term management of the Trust's land. This year, the group was given two talks with practical sessions:

- ◆ John Handley from CH Ecology, the Trust's ecology consultant led a workshop on the identification of grasses with a practical session in Wilderness meadows.
- ◆ Nicola Stone, Officer to Ecology and Green Infrastructure Specialist, led a session on identifying dormice, their habitats and nibbled hazelnuts, with a visit to Lydebrook woods where boxes had been placed several years ago.



By the end of March 2019, the flock had increased by 13 lambs; this was the fourth year that the Trust had produced its own lambs. The ewe lambs are registered with the Rare Breeds Survival Trust. We are keen to increase the number of registered pedigree breeding ewes in an effort to improve Soay's status on the RBST watch list. The Trust's flock makes up between 5% - 6% of the registered population of breeding ewes.

This project relies on the collaboration of our volunteer shepherds who co-ordinate their visits to the sheep via a rota system. Usually in the mornings and afternoons, the Lookers spend some time making sure that the sheep have got all that they need to graze happily.

Work has continued on 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.

'Lookers' Scheme

The flock of native breed Soay sheep that the Trust uses to manage its wildflower meadows continues to increase, and the volunteer shepherds or 'Lookers' now help to look after a flock of over 60 sheep. The Lookers' programme has been running for eight years and currently 14 volunteers are extremely proficient in a wide range of sheep husbandry techniques including handling, ear tagging and injecting.



Community Events

The Trust continues to work with other organisations to support local community events which attracted 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.

World Heritage Site Festival 14-29 September

The Trust helped with organising walks and workshops for the Festival with the local community and SGCT volunteers.

The Trust ran workshops in 'Charcoal Burning' and 'Iron Smelting' and led 2 Sabbath Walks during the festival. We also hosted 6 workshops at our office for the Secret Severn Arts Trail who were included in the WHS Festival programme.

Apple Day

Trust staff and volunteers sold honey, charcoal and wool, with tasters of home-made hedgerow jams and jellies, and generally shared information about the work of the Trust.



West Midlands Museum Volunteer Awards

The Community Development Officer was invited by West Midlands Museum Development to be part of the judging panel for the annual Volunteer Awards held in Birmingham in September. The four categories of young, adult, group and project produced many applications. It was a great honour to be part of such a wonderful event to mark so many excellent volunteers in the Museum world.

Talks

Ironbridge and District of Hereford Church Deanery Synod at Holy Trinity Church, Coalbrookdale: about Feel Good Friday and community projects within the Trust.

Ironbridge Afterschool Kids club: used leaves to press into clay to create prints. It's always a pleasure to work with this group.

Coalbrookdale 'Coffee & Chat' group: talk about community development and Farm the Flow

Speed Networking Event at the Grove School, Market Drayton: For Year 8 students with about 15 other organisations, discussing the work of the Trust and what work experience can lead to.

Annual Open Evening

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.





This year's Open Evening was held at Barrow 1618 School on Wednesday 22 May 2019. This was the first time the Trust had held an event in Barrow.

Mark Bannister was invited as a guest speaker, the topic of his talk was: '*Life in a Beehive*' (*A Model Democracy*)!' Mark's talk was extremely well received by the audience. It was fascinating and informative.

Trust staff also gave short presentations on the following topics; Learning about Lydebrook, Woodland Management, Community Development and the Future Work of the Trust. The audience was then invited to ask any questions. 28 people attended the evening.

Attendees had the opportunity to look at displays showing recent projects completed by the Trust, the work of the volunteers, the Outdoor Learning Programme, bees and the Soay sheep.

A map showing the sites managed by the Trust was also given out which proved very useful.

All of the Trust's walking booklets and free leaflets were available for people to take home with them.

Partnership Working

We've strengthened and developed 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
- ◆ Friends of Rough Park
- ◆ Harper Adams University College
- ◆ Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust
- ◆ Ironbridge Meadows and Pastures group
- ◆ Lodge Field Group
- ◆ Madeley Town Council
- ◆ Madeley Nursery
- ◆ National Trust
- ◆ Natural England
- ◆ Neighbouring farmers and landowners
- ◆ Shropshire Geological Society
- ◆ Telford & Wrekin Council
- ◆ Telford Green Spaces Partnership
- ◆ The Gorge Parish Council
- ◆ The World Heritage Site Steering Group
- ◆ University of Birmingham (Ironbridge Institute)
- ◆ University Centre Shrewsbury
- ◆ West Midlands Regional Flood & Coastal Committee
- ◆ Wolverhampton University



Kew Seed Bank

We set up a research project in partnership with Kew Wakehurst Place, to test whether the Lime or Tilia trees on Benthall Edge were all Large-Leaved or part hybrid. The second

objective was to test if, by checking against a European DNA database, they were the trees which may have been native to the site and remnants of the original 'wildwood'. Benthall Edge has a long industrial history providing limestone, coal and clay as well as to provide charcoal for the iron industry; so determining this for certain would be very difficult. Leaf samples were taken and sent to Newcastle University for DNA testing which showed that they were indeed Large Leaved Lime and not planted. Kew climbed some large trees and tested seed for viability to store some in the Millennium Seed Bank at Wakehurst Place.



CREST

We worked with the Centre for Research into Environmental Science and Technology (CREST) at the University Centre Shrewsbury to fly a drone over Wilderness Meadows to map vegetation moisture using an infra-red camera as well as taking soil samples to test for soil moisture in the laboratory to see if there was a correlation which could aid understanding of natural flood management. The results were inconclusive.

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 2020/2021 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:

- ◆ Re-assessing working methods and practices in light of Covid-19
- ◆ Following the declaration by the Trust of a climate emergency we will work to assess the carbon emissions produced by the Trust and to look at ways to reduce these emissions going forward.
- ◆ Continuing to measure soil organic matter through our meadows and woodlands to be able to build a data set of existing soil carbon to be able to calculate future carbon sequestered through Continuous Cover Forestry and grazing with our native breed Soay sheep and work with APT Group and Telford & Wrekin Council in helping them to calculate their own carbon stock
- ◆ Continuing to seek alternative funding opportunities to replace rotten sections of wooden steps and boardwalks and replace with stone as necessary.
- ◆ Improving the 'Dragon head' path in Benthall to create a family trail via Bower yard picnic site – funding dependent
- ◆ Farm the Flow Partnership - Learning about Lydebrook Soil science – continue to measure soil moisture either side and in the middle of a hedgerow within a known flood pathway from the surface, and at 100, 200, 300 and 400 mm depth, to test whether hedges do slow the flow. To continue to support the EA in replicating this project within Herefordshire and Worcestershire
- ◆ Learning about Lydebrook Citizen Science project – evaluate the hydrology, soils, meteorology and geomorphology training that was carried out by the Citizen Science project. The aim of this project was to enable local people to be better able to assess their own flood risk and share their own knowledge of the Lydebrook catchment
- ◆ Celebrating the Trust's 30th Anniversary via social media and the Trust's website
- ◆ Continuing to monitor and maintain sixty structures
- ◆ Re-fencing sections of Ropewalk and Wilderness Meadow so we can continue to aftermath graze them
- ◆ Maintaining the sheep flock numbers to allow us to continue to manage our hay meadows. Continue to breed replacements and where possible generate a financial return from the flock
- ◆ Continuing to offer our volunteer programme, carrying out priority conservation and access works
- ◆ Implementing the use of Arc GIS alongside the current MapInfo GIS system
- ◆ Developing the use of Survey 123 to assist with the Strategic Access Plan
- ◆ Planning and delivering a Continuous Cover Forestry thinning at Wilderness woods and the Crostan
- ◆ Managing the two beehives to maintain a healthy honey bee colony to support the environmental and ecological benefits that bees provide. Consider products that can be made and sold using beeswax, such as candles, wraps and firelighters
- ◆ 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
- ◆ To work with Telford & Wrekin Council and The Gorge Parish Council, using the data gained from Farm the Flow project, to help them assess the impacts of flood management on the development of the old AGA site to ensure as sustainable a development as possible
- ◆ 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

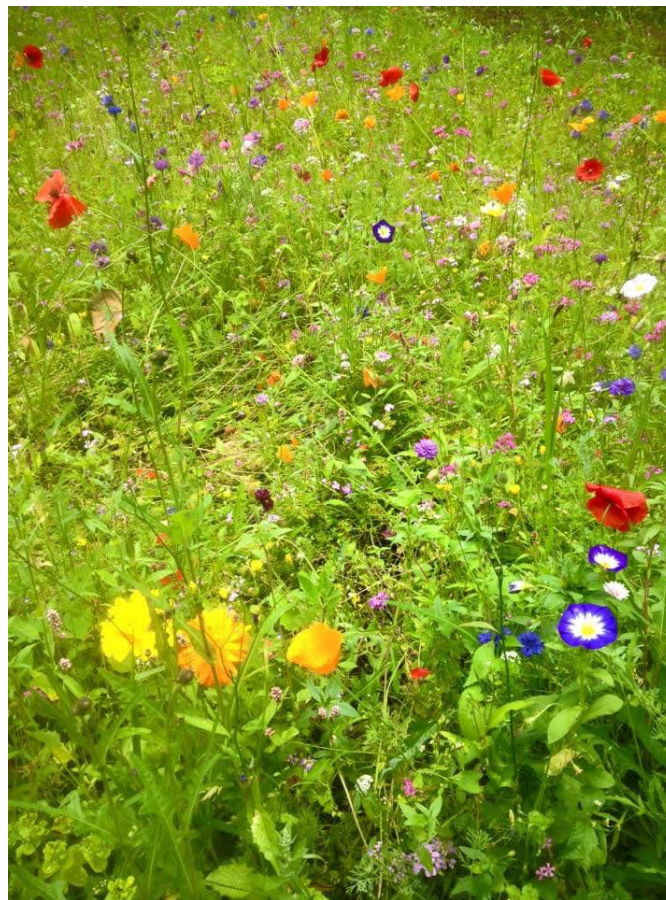
Overview

The Trust ended its financial year in March just as the Corona virus crisis was unfolding and so the long term financial effect on the Trust has yet to be realised. 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, so the potential future loss of rental income is of concern.

Financially the Trust performed well in 2019/20. Funding continued to be challenging but with careful management of a tight budget the financial performance for the year was better than budgeted. 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 and Higher Level Stewardship schemes are extremely important to the Trust. They are a key funding mechanism to support our woodland and meadow management.

The new Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme is due to replace the Countryside Stewardship Scheme from 2021. Under the transition plans, there will be a period of time in which both the old and new systems operate. This will allow us time to plan and prepare for the future.

The majority of the Trust's income is generated from rents received on commercial properties in the Telford area. 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. Moving investment from large office units into smaller commercial properties has been one way of diversifying the property portfolio. This can have the impact of reducing the rental income generated in the short term, but also spreads the financial impact should a property become void. Our rental properties continue to be quite volatile but we were fortunate



that one key property previously occupied by Lloyds Bank was successfully re-let.

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 and 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
- ◆ Outdoor Learning workshop bookings
- ◆ We received £251,028 in income from the rental properties, fishing and grazing rights compared to £223,348 last year. The increase in income is due to a surrender premium of £50,150 from Lloyds Bank due to terminating the lease on 9 High Street, Madeley. The lease on this property has now been taken over by an accounting firm.

Interest and dividends provided £14,711 compared to £14,308 last year reflecting the slightly better performance in investment returns.

Hay and standing timber sales provided an additional £1,519 and £1,490 respectively.

£4,136 was generated by the 'Outdoor Learning' programme. The courses are set at a very reasonable price to enable as many people as possible to attend. Course costs cover tutor fees and materials.

Grants to help with our work

In support of its activities, the Trust received £97,485 (£52,726 in 18/19) from a wide number of bodies and is very grateful to them all for their help and assistance:

Countryside Stewardship – Natural England the Trust received £22,346 in grant aid from this programme. This scheme will contribute towards the Trust's woodland management costs. 2016 was the start of this 5 year programme.

Higher Level Stewardship Scheme

This year, the Trust received £9,373 in grant aid from this programme. Now into its final year of a ten year programme, the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme supports the work the Trust is undertaking to manage its meadows.

Farm the Flow

£41,158 was received from DEFRA via the Environment Agency to facilitate this 3 year Natural Flood Management project. The Trust is working in partnership with Telford & Wrekin Council to deliver natural flood management techniques and monitoring and a Citizen Science Project (Learning about Lydebrook).

Postcode Lottery Trust

Following a successful application the Trust received £20,000 from the Postcode Lottery Trust towards access infrastructure, repairs and maintenance.

Tesco Bags of Help

We were successful in being awarded £2,500 from Tesco Bags of Help to develop and produce 4 family activity walks on the land we manage.

Pride in your Community

£500 was received from Pride in your Community towards family summer activity walks.



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 Trust also maintains an ethical investment policy and does not invest in markets or investments that would directly conflict with its objectives.

During the year the Trust has continued to review its investments in order to maximise returns whilst managing risk, as far as reasonably possible. In a financial environment with historically low interest rates and moderate levels of financial risk, the Trust's investments have generated an acceptable return. The Trust's investment portfolio value now stands at £373,910 with an additional £96,909 being held in bank accounts.

The valuation at the end of March 2020 followed the outbreak of the corona virus epidemic. The investment markets have seen unprecedented falls and the questions remaining are: how deep and persistent will the downturn be; and how much long term damage will be caused. The next 12 months will 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

Reserves are an inherent part of the Trust's risk management process. The need for reserves will vary depending on the Trust's financial position and our assessment of the many risks the Trust faces at a particular time.

The need to build up reserves will be taken into account in the annual planning and budgeting process.

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 19/20 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 £9,337

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 as at the 31 March 2020 is £370,820.

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 £184,000. 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 process.

£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. Trustees approved a transfer of £5,000 to the fund at year end; the balance of the fund as 31 March 2020 was £7,684.

Pension Scheme

In common with other charities with defined benefit pension schemes, our pension scheme shows a deficit which stood at £390,000 on 31 March 2020 (£331,000, March 2019) 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. However, a large pension deficit does not necessarily mean bad news. The Trust will not have to find the whole deficit at once and pension's deficits can be made well over several, often many years.



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 18 years.

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 which disclose with reasonable

accuracy at any time the financial positions of the company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

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

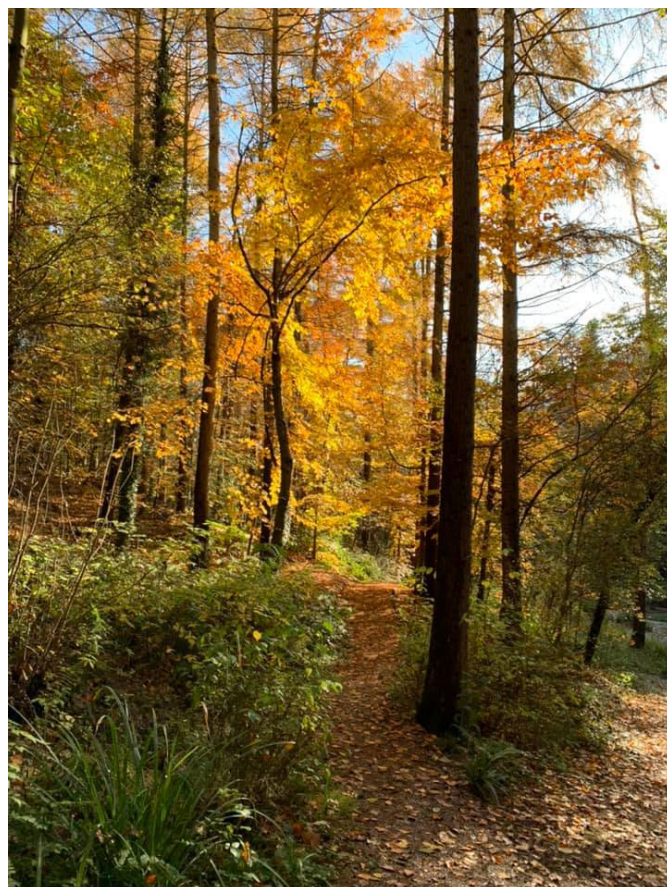
- ◆ so far as we are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the company's auditor is unaware

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 23 September 2020

and signed on its behalf by:

Nick Downes
Chair



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

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
- 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

23 September 2020

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (being INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)

For the year ended 31 March 2020

	Notes	General Fund £	Designated Funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds 2020 £	Total funds 2019 £
INCOME						
INCOMING RESOURCES FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES						
Rents received	4	251,029	-	-	251,029	223,348
Grants	4	97,485	-	-	97,485	52,726
INCOME FROM OTHER TRADING ACTIVITIES						
Investment income		1,458	13,253	-	14,711	14,308
Other income		11,849	-	-	11,849	6,555
Gifts and Donations		1,775	-	-	1,775	1,314
Total Income		363,596	13,253	-	376,849	298,251
EXPENDITURE						
COSTS OF RAISING FUNDS						
Costs of generating voluntary income	5	6,445	-	-	6,445	5,607
EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES						
Woodland/Countryside Management	5	184,873	2,928	1,229	189,030	205,823
Access	5	19,948	63	26	20,037	14,066
Projects	5	114,813	1,609	675	117,097	63,860
GOVERNANCE COSTS	5	22,896	3,102	-	25,998	22,432
Total Expenditure		348,975	7,702	1,930	358,607	311,788
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		14,621	5,551	(1,930)	18,242	(13,537)
TRANSFERS BETWEEN FUNDS		(49,421)	49,711	(290)	-	-
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE) BEFORE OTHER GAINS / (LOSSES) – carried forward		(34,800)	55,262	(2,220)	18,242	(13,537)

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

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

For the year ended 31 March 2020

	Notes	General Fund £	Designated Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2020 £	Total funds 2019 £
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE) BEFORE OTHER GAINS / (LOSSES) – brought forward		(34,800)	55,262	(2,220)	18,242	(13,537)
OTHER GAINS AND LOSSES						
Gains/(losses) on Investments - realised		-	-	-	-	-
Gains/(losses) on Investments – unrealised		-	(17,236)	-	(17,236)	13,766
Pension scheme actuarial (losses)/gains	14	(10,034)	-	-	(10,034)	(36,093)
Revaluation of land		-	-	-	-	17,000
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS FOR THE YEAR		(44,834)	38,026	(2,220)	(9,028)	(18,864)
TOTAL FUNDS BROUGHT FORWARD AT 31 MARCH 2019		49,060	686,309	79,375	814,744	833,608
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD AT 31 MARCH 2020		4,226	724,335	77,155	805,716	814,744

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 2020

	Notes	2020 £	£	2019 £	£
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	6	562,277		577,010	
Investments	7	373,910		382,246	
			936,187		959,256
CURRENT ASSETS					
Stocks		-		-	
Debtors	8	21,016		37,165	
Investments	9	84,860		83,422	
Cash at bank and in hand		156,569		74,212	
			262,445		194,799
CREDITORS - amounts falling due within one year					
	10	(2,916)		(8,311)	
NET CURRENT ASSETS			259,529		186,488
Pension benefit pension scheme liability	12	(390,000)		(331,000)	
NET ASSETS			805,716		814,744
THE FUNDS OF THE CHARITY:	11				
General fund	11	4,226		49,060	
Designated funds	11	508,983		453,721	
Restricted funds	11	77,155		79,375	
Revaluation funds	11	215,352		232,588	
TOTAL CHARITY FUNDS			805,716		814,744

The financial statements were approved by the Committee of Management on 23 September 2020 signed on its behalf by:-

Nick Downes
Chair

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2020

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 2020

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 2020

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES (Continued)

h) DESIGNATED FUNDS - continued

- v) Lloyds Bank Surrender Premium Fund and Carry Over 19/20. Both of these reserves relate to surplus funds arising during 19/20 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

In light of the rapid global spread of the Coronavirus "COVID-19" in early 2020, the trustees have reviewed and stress tested projections and budgets for the next twelve months. Following this review, the trustees consider there to be no significant overall impact on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

The trustees have 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:

	2020 £	2019 £
Auditors' remuneration	2,280	2,220
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets	15,121	14,578
	<hr/>	<hr/>

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2020

3. STAFF COSTS

	2020 £	2019 £
Wages and salaries	125,191	114,735
Social security costs	9,185	8,453
Other pension Costs	74,000	45,000
Other costs	8,986	6,322
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	217,362	174,510
	<hr/>	<hr/>

No employees had employee benefits in excess of £60,000 (2019: None).

No members of the Committee of Management received any remuneration in the year (2019 - £Nil). Apart from members of the Committee of Management, the company had 6 employees at 31 March 2020 (2019 - 5).

4. INCOMING RESOURCES FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	General fund £	Restricted funds £	Total 2020 £	Total 2019 £
Rents received	251,029	-	251,029	223,348
Grants:	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Natural England:				
Higher Level Stewardship	9,373	-	9,373	9,525
Countryside Stewardship	22,347	-	22,347	22,752
Farm the Flow Project	41,158	-	41,158	18,672
Postcode Lottery Local Trust	20,000	-	20,000	-
Other	4,607	-	4,607	1,777
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	97,485	-	97,485	52,726
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	348,514	-	348,514	276,074
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2020

5. ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Generating voluntary income £	Woodland/ countryside management £	Access £	Projects £	Governance costs £	Total 2020 £	Total 2019 £
Direct costs	-	58,787	1,266	32,304	-	92,357	89,387
Employee costs	6,445	106,752	18,265	71,886	14,014	217,362	174,510
Insurance	-	3,875	83	2,129	-	6,087	6,387
Transport	-	2,854	61	1,569	-	4,484	4,652
Office and other costs	-	7,137	155	3,920	1,194	12,406	13,331
Trustee support	-	-	-	-	365	365	393
Professional costs	-	-	-	-	10,425	10,425	8,550
Depreciation	-	9,625	207	5,289	-	15,121	14,578
	6,445	189,030	20,037	117,097	25,998	358,607	311,788

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2020

6. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Plant and machinery £	Land and buildings £	Motor vehicles £	Fixtures & equipment £	Facility Construction £	Total £
COST:						
At 1 April 2019	18,000	629,476	57,579	43,127	4,495	752,677
Additions	-	-	-	388	-	388
Disposals	-	-	-	(419)	-	(419)
At 31 March 2020	18,000	629,476	57,579	43,096	4,495	752,646
ACCUMULATED DEPRECIATION:						
At 1 April 2019	6,375	78,767	57,579	32,496	450	175,667
Charge for the Year	1,800	8,752	-	4,120	449	15,121
Disposals	-	-	-	(419)	-	(419)
At 31 March 2020	8,175	87,519	57,579	36,197	899	190,369
NET BOOK VALUE:						
At 31 March 2019	11,625	550,709	-	10,631	4,045	577,010
At 31 March 2020	9,825	541,957	-	6,899	3,596	562,277

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2020

7. FIXED ASSET INVESTMENTS

	2020 £	2019 £
Balance brought forward	382,245	355,500
Additions	8,900	12,979
Disposals	-	-
Revaluation adjustment	(17,235)	13,766
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Balance carried forward	373,910	382,245
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Historical cost of investments held at 31 March 2020	364,712	355,812
	<hr/>	<hr/>

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

	2020		2019	
	Original cost £	Market value £	Original cost £	Market value £
Black Rock				
- Charinco Common Investment fund				
- Distribution Units	20,000	18,711	20,000	18,535
Standard Life				
- Offshore Income Fund	193,575	215,205	191,820	221,678
- Offshore Global Fixed Interest	76,575	67,150	73,992	71,569
- Phoenix Fund	74,562	72,844	70,000	70,463
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	364,712	373,910	355,812	382,245
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

8. DEBTORS

	2020 £	2019 £
Trade debtors	20,561	37,165
Prepayments	455	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	21,016	37,165
	<hr/>	<hr/>

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2020

9. CURRENT ASSET INVESTMENTS

	2020 £	2019 £
Short term deposits	84,860	83,422

10. CREDITORS - amounts falling due within one year

	2020 £	2019 £
Trade Creditors	2,916	8,311
	2,916	8,311

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2020

11. ANALYSIS OF CHARITABLE FUNDS

	At 1 April 2019 £	Income £	Expend- iture £	Other recognised gains/ (losses) £	Trans- fers £	At 31 March 2020 £
Analysis of movements in unrestricted funds						
General Fund	49,060	363,596	(348,975)	(10,034)	(49,421)	4,226
Long Term Income Fund	258,962	13,253	(3,102)	-	(20,814)	248,299
Land and Structures						
Contingency	4,388	-	-	-	3,296	7,684
Accommodation Fund	188,600	-	(4,600)	-	-	184,000
Revaluation Reserve	232,588	-	-	(17,236)	-	215,352
Bower Yard Steps	1,300	-	-	-	(1,300)	-
Soay Wool	471	-	-	-	(471)	-
Lloyds Surrender Premium fund	-	-	-	-	40,000	40,000
Carry Over from 19/20	-	-	-	-	9,000	9,000
Postcode Lottery Access Fund	-	-	-	-	20,000	20,000
	686,309	13,253	(7,702)	(17,236)	49,711	724,335
Analysis of movements in restricted funds						
Alcoa Grant	7,482	-	(183)	-	-	7,299
Primary Care Trust - New Office project	71,603	-	(1,747)	-	-	69,856
Postcode Lottery Local Trust	290	-	-	-	(290)	-
	79,375	-	(1,930)	-	(290)	77,155
Total Funds	814,744	376,849	(358,607)	(27,270)	-	805,716

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2020

11. ANALYSIS OF CHARITABLE FUNDS continued

The assets comprising each Fund at 31 March 2020 are as follows:

	Tangible fixed assets £	Fixed asset investments £	Current assets / (Liabilities) £	Total £
Accommodation Fund	184,000	-	-	184,000
Long Term Income Fund	-	271,388	(23,089)	248,299
Revaluation Reserve	112,830	102,522	-	215,352
Land and Structures Contingency	-	-	7,684	7,684
Lloyds Surrender Premium Fund	-	-	40,000	40,000
Carry Over from 19/20	-	-	9,000	9,000
Postcode Lottery Access Fund	-	-	20,000	20,000
Restricted Funds	77,155	-	-	77,155
General Fund	188,292	-	(184,066)	4,226
	<hr/> 562,277	<hr/> 373,910	<hr/> (130,471)	<hr/> 805,716

Fund transfers

Long term income fund. The transfer of £814 to general reserve relates to the transfer of dividend income on Charinco investments. A further £20,000 was transferred to general fund in order to meet short-term deficits.

Land and structures contingency fund. A transfer of £1,704 has been made to general fund to cover specific costs incurred during the year. A transfer of £5,000 was also made from the general fund in relation to operating surplus made during the year.

Bower Yard steps fund. A transfer of £1,300 has been made to general fund to cover costs for the year.

Soay Wool fund. The transfer of £471 has been made to general fund to cover processing costs.

Lloyds Surrender Premium Fund. A transfer of £40,000 has been made from the general fund in respect of premium received from Lloyds Bank on the surrender of a lease. This surplus is intended to help cover future additional salary costs.

Carry Over 19/20 Budget. A transfer of £9,000 from the general fund was made in relation to planned works that were not able to be carried out in 19/20 due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Postcode Lottery Access Fund. A transfer of £20,000 from the general fund was made in relation to a grant received from the Postcode Lottery for repair work on steps in the Gorge.

Postcode Lottery Local Trust. A transfer of £290 has been made to general fund to reallocate surplus funds.

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2020

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.

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2020

12. PENSIONS continued

The pension charge for the year amounts to £74,000 (2019 - £45,000), against which employer contributions paid over to the scheme amounted to £25,034 (2019 - £23,093), 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 scheme's assets was £1,494m 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:

	2020		2019	
	%	£000s	%	£000s
Equities	50.0	387	50.6	400
Government Bonds	0.0	0	0.0	0
Other Bonds	22.3	172	16.1	127
Property	4.3	33	5.3	42
Cash/liquidity	1.3	10	6.4	50
Other	22.1	171	21.6	170

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:

	2020	2019
	%	%
Rate of increase in salaries	3.35	3.7
Pension increases	2.2	2.3
Rate of discount	2.4	2.4
Inflation - RPI	-	-
- CPI	2.1	2.2

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 2020, and at previous year-end, was as follows:

	2020	2019
	£000s	£000s
Value of market assets	773	789
Value of accrued liabilities	(1,163)	(1,120)
Deficit	(390)	(331)

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2020

12. PENSIONS continued

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.

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

	2020 £000s	2019 £000s
Operating charge		
Current service cost	45	36
Admin expense	1	1
Past service cost/(gain)	20	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	66	37
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Other finance income		
Expected return on pension scheme assets	(19)	(19)
Interest on pension scheme liabilities	27	27
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Net interest/(return)	8	8
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total charge to expenditure in the SOFA	74	45
	<hr/>	<hr/>

Movement in balance sheet deficit figures during the year:

	2020 £	2019 £
Deficit in scheme at 31 March 2019	(331,000)	(273,000)
Movement in year		
Current service cost	(45,000)	(36,000)
Past service (cost)/gain	(20,000)	-
Admin expense	(1,000)	(1,000)
Net interest/return on assets	(8,000)	(8,000)
Contributions	25,034	23,093
Actuarial gain/(loss)	(10,034)	(36,093)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Deficit in scheme at 31 March 2020	(390,000)	(331,000)
	<hr/>	<hr/>

SEVERN GORGE COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2020

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. EVENTS AFTER THE REPORTING DATE

Since the reporting date, the growth of the COVID-19 pandemic across the world has led to some doubts as to whether the charity can continue as a going concern for the next twelve months.

Due to the nature of the charity, there are potential impacts on both the supply chain and income streams.

The trustees have performed stress tests and applied these to various budgets and forecasts and although there is an impact on the 2020 performance, this will not significantly impact going concern. Given the level of cash held by the charity and its high levels of reserves, the charity is in a position to continue as a going concern for the next twelve months.

Severn Gorge Countryside Trust

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