

Annual Report 2023 -24

This report covers activities from 1st July 2023 to 30th June 2024

Introduction

Over this period most of our work has focussed on the continuing development and maintenance of Gorse Hill Nature Reserve and this report concentrates on our progress and the monitoring of our flora and fauna. The Management Committee met once a month during this reporting period and sub groups met regularly to progress Publicity and Project Development; the principal officers are the Trustees, Treasurer and Secretary.

Gorse Hill

All the work on the Reserve is carried out by volunteers; we have no paid staff. Volunteer work parties meet every Wednesday and Saturday. Since Covid the group of adults with learning difficulties has not reformed. Open Sundays are run on the first Sunday of the month from July - September with a cafe and guided walks. From October 2023 opening was extended to every Sunday from 1-4pm with a café run by volunteers. To boost sales a series of events were publicised that included a Santa's grotto, Snowdrop Sundays, Easter Bunny Trail and Bluebell and Blossom trails to name but a few.

Other work that took place included topping up and cleaning the bird feeding stations twice a week, hedgelaying the southern boundary of Cabin Wood, cutting out alder and willow in the 24 Acre reedbed, cutting a section of the reedbed and dredging Seldom Pond.

We also joined the Ready to Burn log sales scheme via the Small Woods Woodfuel Group that certifies us to sell seasoned mixed wood that is guaranteed less than 20% moisture content.

Snowdrops, native wild daffodils and bluebells in the green were planted in Cabin Wood. The Reserve provides a wide diversity of habitats from ponds and wetlands to meadows, woodland and heathland, encouraging small mammals, birds (both resident and migratory), insects and amphibians.

Meadows

Haymaking in three meadows started in August with the 5Acre but due to earlier than forecast rain, the crop was sold at half the usual price. Two more meadows were harvested successfully in early September. The great advantage this year was the new pole barn we built. For the first time we could unload hay trailers with the tractor bale grab and stack in the barn. This hugely reduced the labour input. The hay was gradually sold over the year to our regular customers. From May to late August the 5Acre provided visitors with access to the wildflowers and wildlife via a mown path circuit through the meadow.

Polytunnel

Vegetable and salad crop production was boosted by new management by one of our volunteers who is very experienced in permaculture techniques. Raised planting beds were constructed and expanded as areas previously used for storage were cleared. This resulted in 20 varieties of produce being grown in the first season. Hanging strawberry beds were constructed and wire mesh dug into the ground to increase protection from mice and rabbits. A trickle irrigation system was extended across the beds to enable regular but targeted irrigation that reduced our mains water consumption. New crops were sown in November, were harvested in February with a further round of sowing for late spring and summer consumption. Sales have grown with regular supplies.

Polytunnel Barn

This received its first hay bales in late August and September. The mechanical unloading of hay bale trailers made bale collection, storage and later distribution much less labour intensive and made all the construction work worthwhile.

Orchards

Early work consisted of thinning out excess small fruit, weeding and foliar feeding. The grass in Heritage Orchard was cut in August, allowing the carpet of cowslips and other wild flowers to set seed. 12Acre Orchard was cut sooner and most of the old sheep netting tree guards removed because the posts and wires were wounding the branches. Green plastic tree guards were fitted to each tree to provide protection from deer grazing over the winter.

Apple picking started in mid-August, with many normally later cropping varieties cropping early. It was noticeable that the apples were smaller on the barked trees. Apple juice making started in mid-August and ran through to

December. The new bottled juice storage unit proved very useful, streamlining our production. The new hay barn meant that the production areas were much less dusty and could be kept cleaner with less work. The trees that were barked by roe deer last year produced less blossom and smaller apples. We were very relieved that they produced what they did and hope that in time we will see production return to normal. The Apple Weekend raised over £1500 and we were able to make good use of the extra space in the New Barn as it was now free from hay bales.

Education and Monitoring

Again our 150 bird boxes were cleaned out over early winter by students from Edge Hill University and major repairs and replacements undertaken by a small group of workshop volunteers. Recording bird activity during the breeding season was undertaken by two pairs of MSc students.

Despite our best efforts the new swift boxes failed to attract residents despite the continued use of the swift call recordings. Bird life and mammal activity is monitored regularly and the results logged on to BirdTrack which is run by BTO. Additional surveys are also carried out by MSc students and moth results are sent to the County Recorder. The Moth and Newt evening was a success with visitors able to watch by torchlight, newts swimming around in Seldom Pond and were then able to observe moths being attracted to the moth traps and later being identified. Likewise, the Blossom and Bluebell Sunday allowed visitors to marvel at the blossoms in the Heritage Orchard followed by the English bluebells in Bluebell Wood.

Duke of Edinburgh students continue to use us for their volunteering and skills sections of their awards.

Publicity

A new website www.gorsehillnaturereserve.co.uk was discussed and is gradually being introduced and updated with Facebook and Twitter being used. Two issues of Nature Trail were published for our subscription supporters during the year. We also continued opening every Sunday, providing a café and access to Cabin Wood and used this to promote our work.

Finance and Administration

Our main income streams have come from grants, hay, apple juice, café and log sales, subscriptions and gift aid. More detailed finances can be found in the annual accounts for this period.

Conclusion

We are very grateful to the many volunteers who give up their free time to help with the work developing Gorse Hill Nature Reserve. We could not have achieved any of this without the dedication of our volunteers and supporters.

J. Atkins B.Sc. C.Biol. MSB
Secretary to the Trust

INCOME EXPENDITURE REPORT JUL 23 - JUN 2024

Current Account		
Opening Balance	1st July 2023	£16,234.66
Total Income		£29,745.72
Total Expenditure		£32,787.69
Closing Balance	30th June 2024	£13,192.69

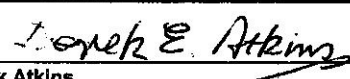

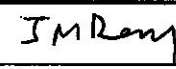
Petty Cash		
Opening Balance	1st July 2023	£281.33
Drawn from Current		£249.00
Closing Balance	30th June 2024	£255.01
Petty Cash Spent		£275.32

Summary of 2023-2024		
Assets at 1st July 2023		
Cash at Bank		£16,234.66
Petty Cash		£281.33
Total Cash		£16,515.99
Assets Changes in 2023-2024		
Total Income (includes opening balance)		£45,980.38
Total Expenditure (less petty cash drawn)		-£32,538.69
Petty Cash Spent		-£275.32
Asset Change in year		£13,166.37
Assets at 30th June 2024		
Cash at Bank		£13,192.69
Petty Cash		£255.01
Total Cash		£13,447.70
Net Change in Assets		£13,166.37

THE ABOVE IS A FAIR AND TRUE RECORD OF THE STATE OF THE ACCOUNTS OF NORTH WEST

Hon Treasurer	Dated
	15.10.24
Kate Wildman	

Hon Auditor	Dated
	15 th October 2024
Ian Culshaw	

Trustees	Dated
	16/10/24.
Derek Atkins	
	12/11/24
Jonathan Atkins	
	12-11-24
John Berry	



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

North West Ecological Trust

**On accounts for the year
ended**

30/06/2024

**Charity no
(if any)**

327788

**Responsibilities and
basis of report**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 30/06/2020.

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination (other than that disclosed below *) which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed:

Date:

15th October 2024

Name:

Ian Culshaw

**Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):**

Address:

27 Westover Road, Maghull

Liverpool

L31 7BT

