



Annual General Meeting 15th June 2023 Annual Report from the Chairman of Trustees of The Watercress Way

*Reporting on the year 2022-23 up to the anniversary of
the foundation of the Charity on 16 June 2016.*

As the months have progressed since 2020, the impact of Covid 19 is thankfully lessening and volunteers are being encouraged to 'get involved' with our team.

Volunteer development has been a key feature of the work.

I really must thank our Trustee volunteers for being so adaptable in the work that they do, they are so loyal to the charity: preparing accounts, organising events, the website, managing contractors and volunteers, writing letters and carrying out practical tasks: thank you.

But we cannot do everything and I'd like to thank our volunteers who carry out work that may not have a cost, but contributes huge value to the charity.

Since our beginning in 2016, the yearly pattern of the Charity's work is emerging:-

Events, Planning applications, Fund raising, Improving signage, Promotion, research and public awareness of the ecology and heritage and conservation of the route and providing supporting infrastructure such as seats.



Unfortunately there appears to be someone who takes delight in vandalising signs and leaflet boxes. With help from the 'Community Shed' in Kings Worthy, we have replaced the boxes and the signage.



Not only do Trustees hold events to promote the charity, they have also commented on relevant planning applications and argued for potential changes to improve and lengthen public access to the dismantled lines between Sutton Scotney, Kings Worthy and Alresford.



A section of the old railway line in the Worthys has finally been agreed as part of the 'definitive map' which means that it will be on the next version of the OS map. We are really pleased because we believe that every metre of line gained is a triumph, and worth fighting for. In this case, we will change our map too.



We hold events related to the walks and cycle routes throughout the Summer and carry out conservation and maintenance projects from Autumn to Spring.

There are various roles-using some items of equipment need training, but the majority of skills are similar to gardening -theres a lot of raking to do!

We raised funds by selling 2023 Calendars to promote the views of The Watercress Way.

Some events held as part of the Watercress and Winterbourne project have been online: an online talk with an eminent ornithologist was followed by an in-person walk which was very popular and fully booked.

A low point in the year was the felling of about 150 ash trees at Itchen Abbas/Martyr Worthy. They were felled because the trees were suffering from ash die back. Stumps of varying heights have been left to see if they regenerate. The County Council has agreed to keep a watching brief on this.



Dawn to Dusk Day is an important day in the calendar for us. We led walks on the day in 2023, one virtual so the public could self-lead their treasure hunt.

We also hosted a Dawn Chorus walk in Sutton Scotney, a fascinating history walk in Itchen Abbas and Martyr Worthy, and a heritage and conservation

walk based around the Worthy Halt in Kings Worthy.

You can see longer descriptions about these and other events on our

website.www.thewatercressway.org.uk. In 2024, Dawn to Dusk Day will be on 28thApril.



Meanwhile, our work to put in infrastructure had been halted during Covid, but we were delighted to complete the fencing/gate on the Wonston Road Bridge in April too. Funding for the work was supported by Wonston Parish Council and the Railway Ramblers association, and crowd funding through Winchester City Council.

A new notice board will be installed, including a view to show what the route could look like if extended.

Thank you to all the organisations and individuals who supported this project.





A magpost was installed near the bridge at Worthy Down. This will give everyone the chance to look closely at flora and fauna under the magnifying glass set into the post.

Four new oak seats have been installed, making welcome stopping off points at Worthy Down, in Alresford on the Millennium Walk, and on the mile section at Bridgets Lane and west of Couch Green. These were funded from the generous Newitt legacy provided by

Alresford Rotary. Thanks to the HCC officer who assisted us.

The next part of this work is to install memorial plaques with relevant birdsong references on each seat so that the public can recognise the sounds they hear as they rest on the seats.



We were pleased to host a stall at the Watercress Festival, where we talked to over 300 people for the second year running. It was a great day in the sunshine with many people stopping to chat and support us, and offer to volunteer.

But it's not all about public facing work. Two of our Trustees have been developing a new section on the website which now offers an opportunity to register their wish to volunteer. Please make use of it if you haven't done so already!

And so, like The Watercress Way itself, this report comes round full circle.

Our Trustees have done so much this year, but to do even more, we need an army of volunteers to help. Could you give a few hours even once a year to help develop the routes along our old railway lines? If you can, we'd thank you from the bottom of our hearts!



Jackie Porter

Chairman of The Watercress Way
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