

Inkberrow Millennium Green Trust

Trustees' Annual Report for the Year ended 29 February 2020

Reference and Administrative Information:

Registered Charity 1075736

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Inkberrow
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Trustees

James Booton	
Dinah Griffin	Parish Council nominee
Wendy Johnson	Work party organiser
Frances Merrony	
Timothy Patrickson	Chairman
Jennifer Powis	
Mark Robbins	
Gareth Thomas	
John Tromans	Vice-Chairman
David Willis	Treasurer (<i>resigned 29 February 2020</i>)

Minutes Secretary Gabriel Allison (*to January 2020*)
Clerk to Trustees Lucy Hewitt (*from January 2020*)

Advisers Gabriel Allison
Roger Winn

Solicitors	Kerwoods	Bankers	Barclays
	7 Church Road		Leicester
	Redditch B97 4AD		LE87 2BB

The Trustees of Inkberrow Millennium Green Trust present their Report for the year ended 29 February 2020. The Report follows guidance from the Charity Commission that the Charities Act 2011 requires all registered charities to prepare a Trustees' Annual Report, and in particular, Section 162 of the Act.

Structure, Governance and Management

The Trust is an unincorporated charity, set up by a Declaration of Trust dated 17 March 1999. Its principal asset is land of approximately 8.7 acres in total divided into two fenced fields ("the Millennium Green"), situated near the centre of the village of Inkberrow, Worcestershire. The title to the land is vested in the Official Custodian of Charities, by an Order of the Charity Commission dated 17 August 2000. The land is a public open space. The Millennium Green has notable features, including a historic moat and fishponds, ridge and furrow, MG5 grassland and various other habitats.

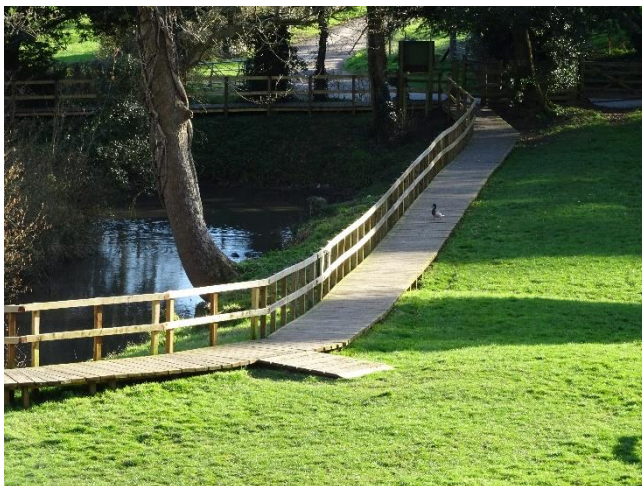
The Trustees are responsible for the management of the Millennium Green. Trustees serve for four-year terms and may be reappointed. New Trustees are sought by the existing Trustees, in line with paragraph 6.4 of the Trust Deed, with one Trustee being appointed by Inkberrow Parish Council. New Trustees are given an appropriate induction, meeting other Trustees including the Chair and the Work Party Coordinator. They also receive a copy of the Trust Deed and other relevant documents such as Minutes, and are shown around the Green, to familiarise them with current work and future plans.

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A part of Field 1 is designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, supervised via Historic England (formerly English Heritage). In addition, the archaeology of the whole site is protected under a Higher-Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement with Natural England. This started on 1 June 2009 and runs (with extensions) until 31 May 2021. The HLS Agreement is primarily to protect and improve the wildflower grassland and to improve the biodiversity of the whole site, as well as to offer educational access. The Millennium Green is designated a Special Wildlife Site for its relict neutral lowland flower-rich grassland.

The Green is maintained for the inhabitants of Inkberrow and the surrounding area by volunteer work parties on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of every month. The Trustees are grateful to Wendy Johnson for the organisation of the work parties. Trustees are also grateful to the Advisers and volunteers who help at the Green, with the work parties and with visits of the children from Inkberrow Primary School. The Trust actively encourages students doing Duke of Edinburgh Awards to undertake their volunteering for Bronze, Silver or Gold and is pleased to have had one student from Alcester Grammar School doing his Gold Award, one for bronze from Pershore High, and a third from King's Worcester for bronze.



*The new boardwalk, built in October 2017 to replace the original structure, is of a simpler construction and has been well received.
: photo: T Patrickson*



*False Oxlip - a naturally occurring hybrid between a primrose and a cowslip - flourishing in Field 1, March 2019
: photo: T Patrickson*

Objectives and Activities

The objects of the Trust are to provide and maintain an open space to be known as the Millennium Green for the benefit of the Inhabitants of Inkberrow and to be used as an area for informal recreation, other leisure occupations and community events.

The aims of the Millennium Green as set out in the Trust Deed are to

- be open and evident to visitors to the locality as well as Inhabitants;
- be able to be enjoyed by people of all ages and physical abilities;
- be an attractive place for people to take air and exercise and pursue leisure activities;
- include an area suitable for community events and celebrations;
- include significant 'natural' areas where people can enjoy nature and wildlife;
- make a positive contribution to the local environment and respect the character of the area;

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The Trustees acknowledge that they have paid due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit. During the year, the Trustees' main activities undertaken in relation to the objects have been to ensure that the Millennium Green is open to the public and well maintained as above, to raise funds and carry out necessary maintenance and improvements for the benefit of the community, to encourage the D of E students and to maintain and improve the biodiversity of the site.

All activities are directed towards making the Green an attractive place to visit and towards showing the public that it is cared for and can be used safely and enjoyably. The Trust has complied with all the requirements of the HLS Agreement. The Trustees met four times in the year, including their regular Trustee site inspection visit in summer, to look at the Green in detail and make recommendations.

Risk Assessment

The Trustees have considered the risks to which the Trustees and the public are exposed - and have acted upon them: a hawthorn overhanging the boardwalk with a dead branch was removed and a fence was repaired following a suspected break-in to a neighbouring property. To improve working relationships with the statutory body, Trustees decided in 2017-18 to consider entering a Management Agreement with Historic England – though a draft is still awaited from the HE Birmingham office.

No activities are undertaken which might disturb the ground in the SAM area without prior Consent.

Trustee resignations and appointments

At the AGM in March 2019, the Trustees decided that the current level of 10 Trustees was satisfactory, but of greater importance was the quality and skill of Trustees. The former lapsed position of Adviser was renewed in support of the Green's aims and security. At the year end, Mr David Willis stood down as a Trustee and Treasurer after serving the Trust since its inception. Trustees are very grateful for his huge contribution to the work of the Trust.

Safeguarding

All school visits from Inkberrow First School are supervised by teachers; the D of E students are under the supervision of their scheme, and of the work party organiser. Trustees are satisfied that there is no requirement for safeguarding checks on any volunteers or Trustees of the charity.

Achievements and Performance

The Trustees are pleased to report that the Millennium Green was open every day of the year, for the benefit of the public of Inkberrow and other visitors. Working parties have again followed seasonal work plans, with each Sunday working party having a clear objective. Excellent feedback has been heard from users of the Green, who describe it as “beautiful” and “therapeutic”.

The Trust's year started with a wet and windy early March that turned into a calm and warm end to the month, with little rain and cold nights. The working parties tackled fence improvements in Field 2 and a general tidy-up. The warm weather at the end of March brought out Brimstone and Tortoiseshell butterflies, the beautiful blackthorn blossom, one or two previously unseen fungi, and the reappearance of the tiny blue beetles in the field 1 wet area. The second week of April saw the first brood of at least 11 Mallard chicks take to the water with their mother – quickly followed by two other broods. In April, the weather was dry until the last week of the month; cowslips and dandelions were out in profusion. Wild bluebells flourished early, and a notice was put up explaining the difference between English and Spanish bluebells. On Good Friday, a metal detectorist was turned away by two members of the public.

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A local nursery brought their children to the Green in the Easter week – and were asked politely not to pick the cowslips (which they had, in quite larger numbers!). Litter was cleared regularly, and the leaflets replaced (with the brilliant late Easter weekend, they were in good demand).

May was generally calm. On an early morning, rabbits could be seen in Field 2, and a pair of Moorhens with three chicks on pond 2 in field 1. Maintenance continued, with the grass paths mowed twice by our regular contractor, and a vandalised fence in Field 1 mended. Nettles, docks and invasive willow herb were cleared where appropriate in Field 2 in May and June. At the Trustees' annual walk around the site on 10 June, various actions were noted for implementation by the work parties.

Despite a few administrative problems at the School, the 5 nature visits in May and June by children from Inkberrow First School were successful. The groups seem to be getting larger – as many as 30 children is common. The children are usually well behaved and participate well in their activities around understanding habitats and being “nature detectives”. Trustees are grateful to Wendy Johnson.

From late June through till early August our ‘signature’ Marbled White butterflies appeared – this year they were more abundant than ever. Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper butterflies also had a good year, as recorded in the annual ‘Big Butterfly Count’. Grassland bloomed with yellow rattle, ladies’ bedstraw, and knapweed.

The slopes in Field 1 were strimmed in late August by our regular contractor and the hay raked up by Trust volunteers – a substantial task. By contrast with the hot July of 2018, the time pressures on our contractor Tieren Price and the cool and wet start to August 2019 made it difficult to get the main grassland in field 1 cut for hay. By September, the chances of getting a good, dry hay crop had largely disappeared.



Moorhen on Pond 2 – Jul 2019. Picture: T Patrickson



Marbled White butterfly – Field 2, Jul 2019. Picture: T Patrickson.

The flat amenity areas were eventually cut on 20 September and raked up by work party members.

As touched on earlier, aquatic wildlife also had a good year, with Mallards breeding and a Moorhen hatching five chicks on its elevated nest in pond 2 in July. By the end of summer, with quite a bit of rain though generally light or showery, water levels were low.

In spring and summer, inroads were made into the lower end of the wet flush in field 2 producing a more varied and interesting habitat. Paths in field 2 were strimmed, and as a safety precaution, to prevent slips or falls, wire netting was laid on the small wooden bridge.

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Fundraising from local charitable trusts has continued. However, most grant-making trusts like to support projects: it is increasing difficult to get local charitable trusts to contribute to 'core' funding. The Trustees are most grateful to the Heart of England Community Foundation (Harry Payne Fund), the G J W Turner Trust and the Dumbreck Charity for their support in 2019. They are also very grateful for the generous donation made by Mr John Harris from the raffle of one of his paintings, in November.

On 11 November, the Duckworth Worcestershire Trust again brought a team to support our projects and maintenance – an invaluable service. The four volunteers rebuilt the barriers near pond 1 in the first field, and removed a partially dead hawthorn by the boardwalk, as mentioned above. The Trustees are grateful for the commitment and hard work of James Birbeck and the DWT volunteers.

The very wet autumn made the paths muddy but restored the pond water levels. Winter 2019-20 work included cutting back the vegetation around both ponds, the roadside hedge, clearing brambles from the Copse and both fields and other annual maintenance. Nest boxes were cleared in February, the entrance path was reconstructed and resurfaced, and maintenance was also carried out on the paths through the gates into Field 2, which had become flooded and very muddy. The Green fortunately stood up well to storms Ciara, Dennis and Jorge in February 2020.

At the final Trustees' meeting of the year, in January, the Trustees welcomed a new Clerk to the Trustees, Dr Lucy Hewitt, retained on a voluntary basis to carry out the administrative duties previously split between the Minutes Secretary and the Chairman. The Trustees are very grateful to Mrs Gaby Allison, who has kept the Trust's Minutes for many years, and welcomed her as an Adviser.

The Trust continues to rely on volunteers: the total volunteer hours in the year was in excess of 500 (2019: 550+), including fundraising. The annual butterfly count and fungus record update were also carried out during the year. The leaflet dispenser continued to prove popular all year, with stocks being replenished regularly. The new litter bin is working well.



The sun's rays – Field 1 Picture: D Willis

Plans for the future

Trustees are aware that the HLS Agreement has been extended, and that there are currently no specific plans to continue or replace it until the Government's proposals for the support of agriculture in the post-Brexit period are made clear. It is reasonable to hope that some form of continuity from the Rural Payments Agency can be expected: the sentiments coming from Government about support for the environment on farms are encouraging. However, the possibility of substantially reduced income from this source, if any future HLS programme is different, is also a risk. Developments are awaited.

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There have been suggestions in the year that Trustees should plant more trees, to respond to climate change. However, the nature of the charity is that Trustees are custodians (under the guidance of Natural England) of an equally important habitat - lowland neutral wildflower grassland - 95%+ of which has already been lost. Grassland habitat is especially important for insects, especially pollinators, which are in great decline and are needed by many food crops. Such grasslands, which have not been ploughed for probably 100 years or more, are in themselves a good carbon sink when properly maintained. If Trustees opened the site for the planting of trees, this main grassland resource would quickly be lost, along with the HLS agreement which is specifically for maintaining and improving the wildflower grassland. Trustees take the view that there may be scope for trees to be planted in less sensitive areas of the village – for example, the village hall area, car park and around the playing fields. This would be a matter for the Parish Council and other village bodies.

Trustees are also considering the potential to hold back more water in the moat, which would make the moat more attractive through each season and help in a small way to control flooding downstream in the Avon catchment. Discussions leading to a possible application for Consent from the Secretary of State to carry out work to regulate the significant outflow from the southeast corner of the moat will form part of the Trustees' work in 2020-21. Such a project would probably involve a separate fundraising programme to pay a professional contractor's costs.

2020-21 will also be the 20th anniversary of the original opening of the Millennium Green and Trustees may also consider any appropriate way of marking this, subject at the time of writing to the coronavirus epidemic.

Financial Review 2019-20

Income in the year was £3,594 (2019: £4,669). In respect of the Higher-Level Stewardship funding, the Trustees are again very grateful to Wendy Johnson for the work put in to comply with our HLS agreement and obtain the valuable income stream arising from it. In the autumn, Trustees learned that the Agreement would be extended by one year, to 2021.

Expenditure was £1,603 (2019: £2,954). The Trust therefore made a surplus in 2019-20 of £1,991 (2019: £1,715). Undesignated free cash reserves at 28.02.20 were £9,759 (2019: £7,768). As no funds were designated at 28.02.20, total funds at the year-end were also £9,759 (2019: £7,768). A small petty cash float of £31 (2019: £54) is not included in this total.

The accounts do not value fixed assets, such as picnic tables, gates and benches. The main asset is the land, vested with the Charity Commission custodian.

The Trustees' policy on reserves is that all Trust funds are unrestricted. They consider there are enough funds to cover expenditure in the foreseeable future to maintain the Millennium Green for the public benefit and to meet the HLS requirements. The land of the Millennium Green was acquired without any debt, and the Trustees also confirm that the Trust has no long-term debts. As mentioned, the Trustees are very grateful to David Willis, who retired on 28 Feb 2020 after 21 years as a Trustee, Vice-Chairman, Chairman, and latterly as Treasurer, for his work in overseeing the finances of the Trust.

Authorized to be signed on behalf of the Trustees

T J Patrickson
Chairman

23 March 2020