

Inkberrow Millennium Green Trust

Trustees' Annual Report for the Year ended 28 February 2023

The Trustees of Inkberrow Millennium Green Trust present their Report for the year ended 28 February 2023, in line with guidance from the Charity Commission in Section 162 of the Charities Act 2011.

Reference and Administrative Information:

Registered Charity 1075736

Principal Office 3 Poplar Piece
Inkberrow
Worcester WR7 4JD

E-mail mail@inkberrowmilgreen.co.uk **Website:** www.inkberrowmilgreen.co.uk

Trustees

James Booton	
Dinah Griffin	Parish Council nominee
Wendy Johnson	Work party manager (<i>resigned 19 Dec 2022</i>)
Edward Manns	Treasurer
Frances Merrony	
Timothy Patrickson	Chairman
Dr Jane Richardson	
Dr Mark Robbins	
Lt Col Richard Shepherd	(<i>appointed 20 June 2022</i>)

Clerk to Trustees Gordon Allison

Solicitors Kerwoods
7 Church Road
Redditch B97 4AD

Bankers Barclays
Leicester
LE87 2BB

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 c.8.7 acres divided into two fenced fields (“the Millennium Green”, “the Green”), situated in 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 Official Custodian is a member of the Charity Commission’s staff. This service simplifies ownership of charity land - for example, new deeds are not needed when trustees change).

The land is a public open space. It features a historic moat and fishponds, ridge and furrow, MG5 grassland and other habitats. The Trustees are responsible for the management of the Green. They 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 induction, meeting other Trustees, and signing a declaration to the effect that they are a ‘fit and proper person’. They receive a copy of the Trust Deed and other relevant documents and are shown around the Green. The Trustees met four times in 2022-23, including a full site inspection.

The Trust’s overall regulator is the Charity Commission for England & Wales. In addition, there are agreements with, and responsibilities to, both DEFRA / Rural Payments Agency (with advice available from Natural England) and Historic England (HE - formerly English Heritage). In respect of Natural

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England, the whole of the Green is shown on DEFRA Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) maps as a land-based / agri-environment scheme under Entry Level plus Higher Level Stewardship. In respect of Historic England, part of Field 1 is designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) under the 1979 Act. The archaeology of the whole site is also protected under the HLS agreement.

The agreement with Natural England, which started on 1 June 2009 and runs (with extensions now administered by the RPA) until 31 May 2028, is to protect and improve the wildflower grassland and the biodiversity of the whole site, and to offer educational access. The Millennium Green is designated a Local Wildlife Site for its relict neutral lowland flower-rich grassland – a valuable store of carbon.

Trustee appointments and resignations:

At the first Ordinary meeting on 28 March 2022, as mandated by the Trust Deed, the Trustees reconfirmed the ideal level of 10 Trustees. With 8 Trustees at the start of the year, a priority was therefore to search for new Trustees with suitable skills and commitment. At the June meeting, Lt Col Richard Shepherd was welcomed as a new Trustee. Mrs Wendy Johnson moved to the Republic of Ireland in September and subsequently stood down as a Trustee. The Trust owes a huge debt of gratitude to Wendy for her tireless work with so many aspects of the running of the Green - from organising and running regular work parties, to managing the educational work with Inkberrow Primary School, and developing the relationship with Natural England. The Trustees wish her well in her new life.

Objects and Aims (as set out in the Trust Deed):

The Objects of the Trust are to provide and maintain an open space (the Green) for the benefit of the inhabitants of Inkberrow and for use as an area for informal recreation, other leisure occupations and community events. The Aims of the Green are to -

- make a substantial contribution to the life of the whole community
- 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.

Risk Assessment:

Trustees have considered the risks to which the Trustees and public are exposed and have acted upon them. Notices were posted to help dog walkers avoid harming sheep (Sept - Nov), and also when parts of Field 2 were sprayed (see below); fences and other barriers were maintained; notices to dog walkers were also posted when schoolchildren were present on the Green. The increasing number of tree and plant diseases is also regularly assessed, including particularly Ash Dieback. Nothing is undertaken which might disturb the SAM area without prior HE Consent. A Risk Register review is carried out each January. Trust policies are reviewed annually.

Safeguarding:

The site is regularly inspected to ensure its general safety for the public, and appropriate repairs done. School visits from Inkberrow Primary School are supervised by teachers. Duke of Edinburgh students are under the supervision of their scheme, and of the work party organiser. Trustees are therefore satisfied that there is no requirement for safeguarding (DBS) checks on volunteers or Trustees.

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Achievements through the year (1st March 2022 – 28th Feb 2023):

Community: The Trustees have paid due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit. The Trustees ensure that the Millennium Green is accessible to the public and well maintained, and have raised funds to enable this. The site is open 24/7 all year round, and is well appreciated by its users.

Trustees aim to keep the Green relevant and enjoyable for the Inkberrow community and visitors. Access for disabled people is maintained via entrance and exit ramps. These give people with wheelchairs an ability to roam the first field on the boardwalk and the mowed paths (the second field is more difficult due to the topography, but paths are maintained).

Information on the Green is widely available - through notice boards at the entrance, leaflets at the entrance and in the nearby pub, on the Green's website, by advertising in the monthly village "What's On" magazine and by using the Community Facebook page. During the year a full update and refresh of the Green's website was carried out, with new 'links' and an up-to-date work party schedule added.

At the Platinum Jubilee, Trustees partnered with Friends of Inkberrow Primary (FOIP) to promote a 'treasure hunt' event as part of the 'family lunch' on Sunday 5th June. Despite the cool, overcast weather, this proved entertaining and enjoyable for the 25 to 30 family groups who participated.

The Trust encourages local students doing Duke of Edinburgh Awards to do their volunteering hours at the Green: two students have been doing their Gold Award this year, two more started their Bronze in November, and four more started Bronze at the beginning of January (both work parties in December having been cancelled due to bad weather).

Trustees have also started to develop possibilities for Corporate Social Responsibility activity with regional organisations: in October the Trust hosted a group of 11 volunteers from NFU Mutual Insurance at Stratford-upon-Avon, agreeing with them a project of clearing brambles and scrub on the moat island. The group put in some 24 man-hours. The work was successfully completed during the rest of October by Trust volunteers - altogether, taking some 45 man-hours.

In total, Trustees and volunteers from the community and elsewhere worked some 700 hours in 2022-23 (2021-22: 600+), including fundraising and administration.

Maintenance: A seasonal maintenance plan is prepared and followed, with activities conforming to the requirements of the HLS plan: volunteer work parties meet on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month.

At the start of the Trust's year, March 2022 was noticeably warmer, drier and sunnier than average. Activity continued to clear brambles in the second field. April was drier and cooler than average, with only one day of serious rain - on 12th. Invasive brambles, nettles and thistles were tackled in both fields, and paths round the stream in Field 1 given a cut. In addition, parts of Field 2 were sprayed with Grazon Pro by our approved contractor on 23rd June to tackle the nettles, thistles and brambles.

The level grassland in the first field was once again cut by Anthony Steel, on 19th July, and baled on 21st. Despite fuel price increases, Trustees were pleased that the price was similar to 2021, at £260 (2021 - £278). The baled hay was removed from the site. A major effort by volunteers took place in August and September to cut and remove the summer's grass growth from the steeper slopes that could not be cut and baled. In Field 2, the programme of grazing with sheep was again carried out during the winter of 2022-23 - five sheep were brought in on 24 September and stayed until mid-November.

Our regular local contractor Chris Bonehill kept the main paths in Field 1 mowed each month of the spring and summer. The rubbish bin worked well, and Trustees are grateful to Fran Merrony for emptying it and keeping it hygienic. In January, a second (recycling) bin was introduced.

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Late autumn and winter work was carried out on the moat banks, hedges and ponds. On 8th January 2023, one of the largest volunteer groups of recent years – 17 people, including the 8 D of E Award students – made a substantial impact on the invasive brambles on the upper grass slopes of Field 2 (*see below*).



Upper slopes of Field 2 before bramble clearance 8 Jan 2023



.....and the result afterwards

Natural Environment: The regular maintenance programme, including the sheep grazing, ensures that seasonal beauty, including the natural grassland flora, is maximised and that the terms of the Natural England Stewardship Agreement are carried out.

In the spring, Buttercups and Red Campion bring the grassland to life, with Marsh Marigold and Yellow Flag Iris in the wet areas. In summer, native wildflowers such as Ladies Bedstraw and Yellow Rattle are in abundance. In the late summer and autumn, blackberries, apples and pears are plentiful, though with the very dry summer of 2022, fruits were smaller this year.

The variety of flora in turn encourages insect activity. During the year, a new Blackthorn rotation plan was implemented, to encourage the Brown Hairstreak butterfly, whilst aiming to regulate the invasive growth of Blackthorn. On 18th July, the annual Big Butterfly count was carried out by Wendy Johnson and Jane Richardson. A total of 176 butterflies was recorded (2021: 181). This is an invaluable and skilled exercise, tracking butterflies on the site over time. The 176 in 2022 was above the average for the past 6 years. In the autumn, a series of moth surveys were conducted by two local experts, adding significantly to the Trustees' understanding of the wildlife on the Green.

In December, early results of the Blackthorn plan bore fruit, with the exciting find of some Brown Hairstreak eggs on blackthorn suckers. In February, a small group from West Midlands Butterfly Conservation made an impromptu visit, describing the Green as a 'wonderful and special place', and commenting on the 'excellent' job that the Trust was doing on Blackthorn management.

Education: A major activity is the series of visits by all 7 year groups (Reception and Years 1 to 6) from Inkberrow Primary School (IPS) for outdoor education. Representatives of the Trust met with the nominated coordinator for school visits at IPS in early April to set up plans for the 2022 season. Visits started on 23 May, when Trust volunteers welcomed 21 pupils from the IPS Year 5, studying life-cycles on land and in water. IPS visits continued through June and into July. Fortunately, the weather was fair for all of them. Visits were planned carefully by Wendy Johnson, aided by Trust volunteers and supervised by the Year Teacher and Teaching Assistant.

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Pond 2 ready for Inkberrow Primary School visit 23 May 2022



IMG volunteers supporting teachers and pupils from IPS

The format of the school visits varies, but typically will involve the class of 25 to 30 children being split into two groups to look at different habitats on the Green. The picture (*above left*) shows equipment set out at one of the prepared “stations” around Pond 2, ready for Year 5 children to do ‘pond dipping’ and identify the creatures netted - with help from the Trust’s volunteers (*above right*).

On the evening of 19th January, a teacher from Studley High School (part of the Shires MAT) brought a party of students for an outdoor Astronomy class at the Green. Trustees will try to follow up this activity, as it opens up the possibility of other school visits and different types of activities.

Liaison with Government Departments: In December, the Trust received an invitation to renew the Environmental Stewardship agreement with DEFRA for another five years. An acceptance was returned to the Rural Payments Agency. This was welcome news and will provide a level of financial support towards the annual management cost of the site.

Also in December, after more than a year of delays, Historic England made a site visit to review the moat leak. A comprehensive follow up was received from HE in February (‘free cycle of advice’). A pre-application planning enquiry to Wychavon DC received a helpful and prompt reply that planning permission for a repair was not needed. Subject to Trustees’ approval, the next actions will be the retention of a professional archaeologist and a fresh ‘Consent’ application to HE.

Fundraising: No provision was made by Government for the ongoing running costs of Millennium Greens when the programme was first established in 1998-2000. Fundraising, donations and the income stream from the RPA are therefore both valuable and essential to the Trust’s activity.

With no major projects this year, fundraising from local charitable trusts was for ‘core costs’. Trustees were grateful for a grant of £1,000 from the Heart of England Community Foundation (Harry Payne Fund). There was also a generous donation of money collected at the funeral of Mrs Iris Cottrill (and doubled by her family), and a further initiative from Mrs G Allison in selling sets of greetings cards.

Financial Review 2022-23

Income: Total Income was £4,152 (2022: £3,298). The sum of £900 was received from Natural England (RPA) for core work, and a further £1,200 for the educational visits in the year (£500 core payment and £700 for 7 visits). A further sum of £643.16 was received through the Higher-Level Stewardship agreement. The rest of the income (£1,409) is as described above, under Fundraising.

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Expenditure: Total Expenditure - for grass cutting, insurance, meeting costs, maintenance costs, tree surgery, printing and other core costs - came to £1,756 (2022: £2,151).

Net outcome: The Trust therefore made a surplus in 2022-23 of £2,396 (2022: £1,147). The accounts do not value the land or other assets, such as picnic tables, gates and benches or boardwalks. A small petty cash float of £11 (2022: £11) is also retained by the Treasurer.

Designated and Free Reserves:

Designated Reserves: The Trustees' policy on reserves is that all Trust funds are unrestricted. However, Trustees have considered the Charity Commission Guidance CC19 "Charity Reserves: Building Resilience", and in particular, Paragraph 3.4. This states that a level of reserves should be informed by the charity's "analysis of any future needs, opportunities, commitments or risks, where future income alone is likely to fall short of the amount of the anticipated costs".

The Trust has both annual running costs, averaging £2,183 p.a. over the past 12 years, and also periodic large capital expenses, where a combination of reserves and fundraising is required. Including these, average total expenditure over the past 12 years rises to £4,294 per year. Within this average is the 2017 replacement of the moat boardwalk, at £21,654. As the boardwalk again wears out, the next replacement is likely to cost c. £25,000 - £30,000. So in 2021-22, Trustees voted to designate £10,000 as the basis of a 'Future Capital Expenditure Fund' to build resilience and to provide for such expense.

A sum of £2,500 was added during the year to the Future Capital Expenditure Fund, making it £12,500 at 28 Feb 2023 (28 Feb 2022 - £10,000). In line with CC19, Trustees reserve the right to reallocate this reserve if essential - to allow for unforeseen changes to the HLS Scheme, or a funding emergency.

Free Reserves: With the above action, the level of undesignated free reserves was £2,473 at 28 Feb 2023 (28 Feb 2022 - £2,576). As can be seen from the 12 year average, this is a little over one year's core running costs. It is conceivable, however, that with storms and tree surgery being unpredictable, this could possibly reduce to c.6 months' only.

Long-term liabilities: The land of the Millennium Green was originally acquired without any debt, and the Trustees also confirm that the Trust is a going concern and has no current long-term debts.

The Trustees are grateful to Edd Manns for his management of the Trust's finances during the year.

Plans for the future:

- To continue to fulfil the Objects and the Statement of Aims as set out in the Trust Deed;
- To continue to look for new Trustees;
- To keep abreast of the Government plans including the Environmental Land Management Scheme;
- To ensure correct and accurate financial claims are submitted to the Rural Payments Agency;
- To continue to raise funds from other sources, such as grant-making charities and local activities.
- To progress the Consent for the Moat leak repair with HE, and funding and quotations for any work;
- To continue school educational access and encourage school staff to take a more active role.
- To maintain involvement with the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme;
- To continue - and expand as appropriate - the regular work party volunteer maintenance programme.

Authorized to be signed on behalf of the Trustees

T J Patrickson
Chairman
27 March 2023