



Bury Water Meadows Group CIO

Charity Number: 1185321

Trustees' Annual Report & Financial Statements for the Period 16 September 2019 to 31 December 2020



Bury Water Meadows Group CIO

Trustees' Annual Report

for the Period from 16-09-2019 to 31-12-2020

Section A: Reference & Administration Details

Charity Name	Bury Water Meadows Group CIO
Registered Number	1185321
Principal Address	14 Bridewell Lane, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 1RE

Names of the charity trustees who manage the Charity

Name	Office	Date Appointed (if during year)	Resigned (if during year)
Andrew Hinchley	Chair		
Ian Campbell	Treasurer		
Elizabeth Ranzetta	Secretary		
Jillian Macready			
Stephen Brunner			
Michael Palmer			21 Feb 2020
Julian Case		14 May 2020	
Iain Carruthers-Jones		18 Sept 2020	

Andrew Hinchley is also a trustee of the River Lark Catchment Partnership with charity registration number 1177318.

Names of trustees holding title to property belonging to the charity

NONE. Title to land held for the previous unincorporated entity has been transferred into the name of Bury Water Meadows Group CIO during the period.

Funds held as custodian trustees on behalf of others

NONE

Section B: Structure, Governance & Management

Description of the charity's trusts

Type of Governing Document	Association model constitution with voting members other than its charity trustees
How the Charity is Constituted	Charitable Incorporated Organisation
Trustee Selection Methods including details of any constitutional provisions	There must be at least three trustees under the Constitution. We have aimed to maintain a minimum of six members on the CIO management committee and periodically ask the members via newsletter if anyone is interested in adding their expertise. The member would then attend and participate in the management committee for a three-month trial period and subject to this being successful they are invited to become a trustee. No body external to the charity has any entitlement to appoint trustees.

Additional information (optional)

Policies and procedures adopted for the induction and training of trustees	In accordance with the Constitution a copy of the Constitution including any amendments made to it along with a copy of the latest trustees' annual report and statement of accounts will be made available to each new trustee. Having already served on the management committee the new trustee will be familiar with all discussions regarding the running of the CIO.
Other Governance	<p>The CIO management committee normally meets once per month and the secretary maintains minutes of each meeting's actions and decisions.</p> <p>The following policies have been reviewed and adopted during the period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Equality & Diversity➤ Conflicting Interests➤ Volunteer Management➤ Complaints Handling➤ Risk Management➤ Safeguarding Vulnerable Beneficiaries



Section C: Objectives & Activities

The purposes of the charity as set out in its governing document are

To conserve, preserve and improve the Rivers Lark and Linnet in Bury St Edmunds and adjacent areas for the benefit the public in particular but not exclusively by:

1. Improving access and encouraging the appropriate use of the Rivers and their environs by members of the public.
2. Educating the public about the Rivers and their environs
3. Facilitating community involvement in the conservation of the River Lark and Linnet, Bury St Edmunds's water meadows and critical adjacent areas such as Leg of Mutton
4. Improving the biodiversity of the Lark and the Linnet
5. Working in partnership with like-minded organisations

Summary of the main activities in relation to these purposes for the public benefit:

➤ River flow and water quality policy:

The rivers Lark and Linnet in Bury St Edmunds are chalk streams. These rare rivers are one of England's most important natural habitats and are ecosystems of global significance. Chalk streams are particularly suited to water meadows which are areas of grassland modified with controlled irrigation to increase agricultural productivity. Sadly, these two rivers are suffering from lack of water and the water that is in the rivers does not derive from the aquifer as it should but is often run-off and polluted both upstream and downstream of the town.

We are working at policy level to tackle the root causes of these problems, essentially due to over-abstraction for the public water supply and pollution from agriculture and water treatment works. The charity has joined the stakeholder group of Water Resources East (WRE), the strategic advisory group charged with planning for the water needs of the environment and the public for the next 25 years, in order to participate in its study work on reducing extraction.

We are also working with the River Lark Catchment Partnership (RLCP) to review sewage pollution following Rivers Trust data published on "Is My River Fit to Play In" which documented spilled sewage frequency from the Fornham treatment works just downstream from the town. Our local MP Jo Churchill is now actively engaged in the setting up of a task and finish group which includes the Environment Agency and Anglian Water to come up with solutions now ahead of the longer-term abstraction reform which is also necessary.

➤ Green space protection and planning control:

We supported RLCP's prior submission which proposed a green river corridor to the West Suffolk Plan that is now pending revision of the national planning framework. We also monitor planning applications and make submissions where we feel they do not adequately deal with riparian habitat in the environs of the town's rivers.

We have recently commissioned a site survey at Ram Meadow of noise from the A14 main road with 3d modelling and a report to support a future noise barrier.

➤ River path access:

Currently the 13 mile River Lark path follows a route from Mildenhall to end ingloriously by the UPS depot in Bury St Edmunds. We have worked with West Suffolk Council and British Sugar to create the route for a path from Barton Hill to Bury St Edmunds station hill and the pre-charity status group purchased a plot of land to provide access at the Barton Hill end. Once opened this would leave one remaining stretch to complete between Tollgate Bridge and UPS.

We have previously published a walking guide "A Tale of Two Rivers" illustrating circular routes alongside the rivers in the town. We are now leading a project with other groups in the town to develop a new one-mile circular walk showcasing the natural and historic assets of the town.

➤ Education and communication:

Traditional hall-based lectures and public events such as the Green Fair have not been possible this year leading to a rethink as to how to communicate and educate. In 2020 we established a fortnightly programme of online webinars from scratch and we have also hosted fortnightly webinars for the Chalk Aquifer Alliance, a new network of chalk stream groups. Our website contains recordings of these talks for anyone to view as well as features on the work taking place in the various habitat locations and the Water Meadows Chronicles blog. Our active Facebook page educates readers on the regular activities of the group with pictures and videos.

➤ **Habitat conservation and maintenance:**

The charity is active with its volunteer work in five main water meadow locations in Bury St Edmunds. Going from south to north the work involved in habitat conservation and maintenance for biodiversity can be briefly summarized as follows:

- **No Mans Meadow**

This meadow area is bounded by the two rivers and is crossed by drainage ditches. We are undertaking suppression control of dominant poplar and nettles and have started a programme of clearing the ditches. The objective is for a habitat management plan to be produced so that we have a practical formal guide for future maintenance and management work.

- **The Crankles**

Formerly thought to be the site of the Abbey's monastic fishpond complex, this area is bounded by the two rivers and is now divided by a pathway. We are maintaining the meadow areas and tree saplings including nettle suppression. The objective is to finalize a habitat management plan with more diverse woodland/glade in the north section and a transition from rough ground with nettle dominance to wildflower meadow and a variety of trees for pollinators in the south section.

- **River Lark path bankside east**

This area is bounded by the east bank of the river Lark and the path between the Crankles and the Abbey Gardens. We have undertaken nettle suppression and wildflower turf and seed planting. The objective is to enhance habitat alongside the proposed new one mile circular walk with a transition from formal horticulture to conservation area.

- **Abbey Gardens bankside west**

This area is within the grounds of the Abbey Gardens alongside the west bank of the river Lark from the iron footbridge to the Abbots bridge. We have installed revetments consisting of coir matting planted marginal plants and faggot bundles of hazel brash to contain the banks and stop erosion, and on the bank we have laid wildflower turf. In future, further bank erosion protection work is envisaged through installing more substantial revetments on the deeper bank section.

- **Ram Meadow**

This area used to be the main holding meadows for livestock going to market before being passed on to the local council in 1996. Its bounded to the east by the river Lark and the A14 and to the north by Compiegne Way. In 2020 we commenced a multi-year rotation management plan in conjunction with West Suffolk Council in order to focus habitat management benefitting fauna and flora that are less common or vulnerable. The Council has indicated agreement to designate as a Local Nature Reserve which would further improve access to people for study, education, or to simply enjoy nature in an urban setting.

➤ **Invasive species:**

The charity's volunteers work in partnership with RLCP in tackling the removal of the invasive species Himalayan Balsam along the rivers Lark and Linnet in the town. This is an on-going annual summer activity.

➤ **Biodiversity survey:**

In the late summer of 2020 a small team of volunteers undertook a biodiversity survey over 5 hectares of green space in the Crankles, No Mans Meadow and Ram Meadow areas. This year's survey will serve as a benchmark for the following year when we hope that a longer observation and recording window will permit a more comprehensive survey in every category. Plans are being developed to run a Bio-Blitz event in 2021 where a group of scientists, naturalists and members of the public work together to discover as many species of plants, animals and fungi as possible over a defined 24 hour time period.

➤ **Partnerships:**

We work closely with West Suffolk Council to help manage and maintain council owned and leased green spaces and we have formal links with the Bury Society, the Friends of the Abbey Gardens and are a member of the Heritage Partnership. We are closely involved with the River Lark Catchment Partnership, and we collaborate with the Environment Agency and other local river groups on river conservation projects and water quality monitoring. We helped to set up the Chalk Aquifer Alliance and we recently joined the advisory board of Water Resources East.

Statutory declaration on public benefit

The trustees declare that they have complied with their duty to have due regard to the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers or duties.



Section D: Achievements & Performance

➤ Membership:

The charity was successful in growing its membership through the period by over 10% to 237 members at the renewal date of 1st November. New members are often attracted through personal contact networking with existing members, including seeing volunteers in action. New members have also found us through our online presence.

➤ Volunteer Work Parties:

We mobilise our volunteer base in the conservation, maintenance and most recently in the management of the rivers Lark and Linnet and their surrounding water meadows in and around Bury St Edmunds. Typical volunteer work parties are of between 4 up to 20 volunteers taking place on average 3 or 4 times per month throughout the year. This year volunteer work parties were suspended between mid-March and mid-June due to coronavirus restrictions. 67 members have been involved in work parties this year clocking up 735 hours.

With volunteering everyone wins with benefits to the individual, local community, wider society, and the environment. We have seen first-hand through the effects of lockdown that volunteering is good for the mind and body, helping people stay physically healthy and providing a sense of purpose. The social contact aspect of helping and working with others can have a profound effect on overall psychological well-being and helps keeps people in regular contact with others to provide a solid support system which in turn protects against depression.

- Ram Meadow

Starting in 2020 West Suffolk Council agreed a multi-year site management plan with the charity taking on conservation activities with the aim of creating and maintaining more favourable habitats for flora and fauna over all of Ram Meadow. The site is part of the river Lark floodplain consisting of low-lying meadow with a network of drainage ditches and an open water scrape. The encroachment of non-native woodland species and coarse nettle scrub on to the meadows, along with the silting up of the ditches and the drying out of the scrape through willow and bur-reed have combined to threaten the site's habitats.

Volunteers began the year by planting 5000 snowdrops and clearing overhanging trees and scrub by the football ground entrance and followed up with clearing the Barwell Road balancing pond area. Post lockdown we continued in June by clearing hemlock from the meadow area around the wetland habitat area known as "the scrape" which took four work parties over a very hot weekend. In September we cleared some of the 1668m of overgrown ditches that drain the site. Three work parties involving some 50 volunteer hours have transformed parts of the West ditch visible from the Barwell Road entrance bridge and ditch F3 which runs parallel to the allotments.

Next we tackled "the scrape" which had been largely hidden from the public's view through willow, nettles and hemlock around the edges and bur-reed in the water. Upon starting there was only 15% open water and the habitat was less attractive for reed and sedge warblers, water vole and dragonfly & damselfly species, all of which have all be recorded there in the past. In conservation, you never do all the work at once. Firstly, non-native white poplars blocking light to the scrape were felled by the Council and then three more work parties began a programme of coppicing willow and reed-pulling which will last through 5 to 7 years. Volunteers with in-water training went into the scrape and pulled the bur-reed by hand which was then left in habitat piles on the side for grass snakes and other reptiles to shelter over the winter. Other volunteers were busy managing the willow coppicing, creating wood piles and brash habitat and laying out wood-chipped poplar to help combat muddy public footpaths created by a high footfall. A further event opened up the entrance from Barwell Road and created a new stag beetle habitat.

This effort has already had the effect of opening up part of the water habitat to light and air and reducing the impact of trees and scrub drying-out the water. Another benefit of removing these trees, nettles, hemlock and reeds is that they support fewer of our native insects, birds and bats, in turn making room for increasing those plants which are of more use to our wildlife.

- The Crankles, Abbey Gardens Bankside and No Mans Meadow

Volunteers have undertaken a number of work parties through the year. In the Crankles much of the effort has been on maintenance work though the cutting and raking of the meadow grasses and nettles. During 2020 some volunteers were trained in the ancient art of scything following which four Austrian scythes were purchased which will make the group less reliant on using petrol mowers in the future and will reduce the effort required to rake the arisings as scything mows the cut vegetation into windrows.

Abbey Gardens bankside work has included thistle pulling, turf cutting, plug planting and planting in the gabions protecting the riverbank. In No Mans Meadow we have commenced a programme to clear the ditch network in order to create more light and reduce blockages.

➤ **Invasive Species:**

Volunteers have made a major contribution to controlling Himalayan Balsam working in co-ordination with our partner RLCP. Himalayan Balsam is so invasive that it is illegal in the UK to plant or encourage it to grow in the wild. With each plant capable of producing as many as 800 seeds that remain viable for two years, it soon invades, smothering riverbanks. Once it is allowed to disperse its high velocity seed, it's carried by rivers and streams to other sites downstream and so the cycle continues.

Building on previous years efforts this year we surveyed 7km of the Lark & Linnet rivers in Bury St Edmunds using the iRecord App so that we have a benchmark for future years. We then worked downstream along the riverbanks, usually at water level and pulled up plants individually by their roots before the seed is set. This action effectively kills the plants but the scale of the task and nature of the habitat with steep riverbanks and nettles, makes this very labour intensive work. Altogether volunteers clocked up 92 hours on this project and the good news is that our survey has shown that where we pulled plants last year they have not returned and so this year's efforts upstream should restrict further spread downstream to Fornham, Hengrave and beyond.

➤ **Biodiversity:**

We took a big step forward in 2020 by undertaking a recorded biodiversity survey for the first time over 5 hectares of green space comprising the Crankles, No Mans Meadow and Ram Meadow areas. The intention had been to start the survey in the spring but the coronavirus lockdown was announced in the days before the start date and the project had to be postponed, losing the opportunity to record during Q2. From the perspective of recording flowering plants and trees this delay was relatively immaterial but for other categories such as birds and butterflies/moths the delay was very important. Instead the survey began and continued for the whole of Q3.

The survey recorded 37 species of birds, 27 different types of tree and 108 types of plants. Several mammal species were recorded but no reptiles were seen. It wasn't possible to do a survey of bats, bees, other insects and fish but it is hoped that they will be included in future years' surveys to add to the existing butterfly transect which has been carried out since 2018. All records are fed into iRecord and will be submitted to SBIS (Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service) to be subsequently available on the National Biodiversity Network (NBN Atlas).

➤ **Online Webinars:**

We believe that there is a need to engage more residents in nature appreciation and recognition and that this need for heightened awareness is especially important with the Covid-19 epidemic. The green urban environment provides a common language for all and a shared purpose independent of gender, ethnic background, age, physical ability, mental functioning, socio-economic status or knowledge.

The group's planned hall-based lectures had to be cancelled due to coronavirus but were replaced with online webinars. From scratch a programme was developed with talks on a fortnightly basis and the group also hosted fortnightly webinars for the new Chalk Aquifer Alliance, a network of chalk stream groups. Since April we ran over 30 online talks covering a range of topics from being specific to the town, on chalk streams and the threats they face, to general environmental interest. The webinars are open to both members and non-members and are free to join.

The result has been a significant increase in our capacity to educate and inform our audience. We have attracted a high-quality range of speakers including nationally renowned experts whom we would not have been able to bring to the town to speak. A talk by Feargal Sharkey attracted over 170 attendees. Social contact has also been promoted through these online talks, keeping people in regular contact with the benefit to mental health that this brings.

➤ **Environmental improvement:**

In December 2020 we received the report from the site survey commissioned at Ram Meadow to assess the possible options to support building a noise barrier to mitigate the impact of the A14 road which runs alongside. This indicated that the project is feasible under different construction scenarios. This will form a key element in future discussion with the Highways Agency backed by our local MP Jo Churchill.

One of the main issues in tackling water quality policy is the lack of data being made available by Anglian Water and the EA. In December 2020 we arranged with Proteus instruments to install one of their sensing units on a short trial in the river Lark. This equipment measures dissolved organic matter, providing real-time BOD and DOC data alongside traditional parameters (pH, conductivity, turbidity). The results will provide hard data in the ongoing discussion with Anglian Water about sewage spills and water quality in the river Lark.



Section E: Financial Review

Review of the financial position at the end of the period

The charity held a total of £4,400 in funds at the end of the period comprising £738 in restricted funds and £3,662 in unrestricted funds. For the start of the period the corresponding sums were total £5,636, restricted £2,083 and unrestricted £3,553.

Principle sources of funds

The charity's total income in the period was £6,718. The charity received grant funding totalling £4,046 as follows:

1. £1,500 from Bury St Edmunds Town Council for volunteer work party equipment and to support local nature reserve designation of Ram Meadow.
2. £2,046 from Suffolk County Council to fund a site noise survey, 3d modelling and report to support a future noise barrier alongside Ram Meadow.
3. £500 from Canal & Rivers Trust to support the group's costs during the COVID-19 restrictions in establishing webinar talks to communicate to members and the public.

After the period end in January 2021 the charity received significant grant funding of £9,277 from Bury St Edmunds Town Council to fund a programme of activities intended to raise the status of the town's rivers and their environs for the public.

The balance of income in the year of £2,672 was primarily received from membership dues and donations. Annual membership runs from 1st November each year so the reporting period included two years of membership receipts.

Statement of the charity's policy on reserves

The charity does not have a reserves policy and does not hold funds in reserve.

Details of any funds materially in deficit

The Trustees declare that the charity had no funds which were materially in deficit at the date of the statement of assets & liabilities.

Particulars of any outstanding guarantee given by the charity

The trustees declare that the charity has given no guarantee where potential liability is outstanding at the date of the statement of assets & liabilities.


Particulars of any outstanding debt

The trustees declare that the charity has no outstanding debts which are secured by an express charge on any of the assets of the charity at the date of the statement of assets & liabilities.

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature	
Full name	Ian Campbell
Position	Trustee & Treasurer

Date	26/02/2021
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Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

16-Sep-19


To

31-Dec-20

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Membership & Donations	2,472	-	-	2,472	1,011
Booklet Sales	-	-	-	-	207
Community funding	-	-	-	-	466
Benefit Concert	-	-	-	-	627
Web Hosting	200	-	-	200	-
Grant West Suffolk Council	-	-	-	-	970
Grant Bury St Edmunds Town Council	-	-	-	-	1,560
Grant Bury St Edmunds Town Council	-	1,500	-	1,500	-
Grant Suffolk County Council	-	2,046	-	2,046	-
Grant Canal & Rivers Trust	-	500	-	500	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	2,672	4,046	-	6,718	4,841
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total Receipts	2,672	4,046	-	6,718	4,841
A3 Payments					
Professional Surveys & Reports	792	2,766	-	3,558	576
Work Party Tools & PPE	149	543	-	692	168
Scythes	437	349	-	786	-
Chainsaw & PPE	-	211	-	211	-
Wildflower Planting	-	1,017	-	1,017	162
Nettle Cutting	238	-	-	238	175
In River Tools & PPE	315	-	-	315	374
Work Party Expenses	10	-	-	10	-
Training	138	-	-	138	-
Printing/Stationery	86	-	-	86	235
Insurance	161	-	-	161	128
Legal & Professional	23	-	-	23	-
Volunteer Evening	-	-	-	-	231
Hall Hire	-	-	-	-	145
Speaker Exp/Web Hosting	111	500	-	611	125
Shelving/Storage	57	-	-	57	137
Other	51	-	-	51	61
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	2,568	5,386	-	7,954	2,517
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	2,568	5,386	-	7,954	2,517
Net of receipts/(payments)	104	(1,340)	0	(1,236)	2,324
A5 Transfers between funds	6	(6)	0	0	0
A6 Cash funds last year end	3,552	2,084	-	5,636	3,312
Cash funds this year end	3,662	738	-	4,400	5,636

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Current Account	3,662	738	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	3,662	738	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets			Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use		Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
	Land for Footpath Entrance	Unrestricted	-	-
	Work Party Tooling & Equipment	Unrestricted	-	-
	Personal Protective Equipment	Unrestricted	-	-
	Publicity Display Material	Unrestricted	-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities		Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees		Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
			IAN CAMPBELL	26/02/2021