

**Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG)**

Registered Charity Number: 1157957

Principal Address: c/o 25 The Birchlands,  
Forest Town, Mansfield NG19 0ER



*Registered Charity No. 1157957*

## **Forest Town Nature Conservation Group**

### **Annual Report and Accounts 2019**

(for the period 1 April 2018 - 31 March 2019)

#### **Object of the Charity:**

*'to promote for the benefit of the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment in and around Forest Town'*

Produced by **Josh Downen** (Treasurer) and **Shlomo Downen** (Secretary)

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## **Declaration**

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The Trustees of the Forest Town Nature Conservation Group declare that they have approved this Trustees' Report and Accounts for the period 1 April 2018 - 31 March 2019.

Signed on behalf of the charity's Trustees by Shlomo Downen, Secretary of the Forest Town Nature Conservation Group, on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

## **1. Introduction**

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The Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG) continues to hold meetings and work sessions that are open to the public. These activities take place at various locations around Forest Town, including at the Spa Ponds Nature Reserve which we purchased, with the active support of the wider community, in May 2014.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2014 the Forest Town Nature Conservation Group was formally registered as a Charity with the Charity Commission (Registration No. 1157957), and in March 2015 FTNCG formally transferred the deeds for Spa Ponds to the Charity Commission's Landholding Service.

This is our fifth formal Report and Accounts as a registered charity. This Report and Accounts was written to ensure compliance with FTNCG's obligations under the Charities Act 2011 in accordance with Section 27 of our Constitution.

As of 12<sup>th</sup> May 2019 the Forest Town Nature Conservation Group comprised 49 members under the terms of Section 8 of FTNCG's Constitution. In accordance with Section 12 of FTNCG's Constitution, this means that the quorum for the Annual General Meeting (AGM) would be 5 members entitled to vote on the business to be conducted at the meeting.

In accordance with Sections 10, 11, 12 and 31 of the Constitution, formal notice for the AGM was formally issued on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2019 to all FTNCG members and trustees, for the AGM to be held on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2019, i.e. at least 14 clear days before the AGM and within 15 months of our previous AGM (held on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018). The notice set out the date, time and place of the meeting and the general nature of the business to be transacted at the AGM.

## **2. Structure, Governance and Management**

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The Forest Town Nature Conservation Group's (FTNCG's) Constitution, adopted on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013 and amended on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2014, is the governing document that establishes FTNCG as an association with the following charitable object: *'to promote for the benefit of the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment in and around Forest Town'*. FTNCG Membership, which is free of charge (although we suggest donating £5 a year), confers no financial benefit.

FTNCG Trustees throughout 2018/19 were as follows:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Office / Role</b>	<b>Date of Trustee Appointment</b>
Lorraine Downen	Chair	1 <sup>st</sup> February 2011
Shlomo Downen	Secretary	1 <sup>st</sup> February 2011
Josh Downen	Treasurer and Website Administrator	1 <sup>st</sup> February 2011
James Healy	Vice-Chair	4 <sup>th</sup> May 2016
Richard Smith	Trustee and Biodiversity Officer	22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2013
Alan Alberry	Trustee and Spa Ponds Warden	2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2014
John Gibson	Trustee and Landowners Group Liaison	5 <sup>th</sup> July 2017
Mark Fretwell	Trustee and Tree Officer	5 <sup>th</sup> July 2017
Phil Goodall	Trustee and Water Catchment Liaison	5 <sup>th</sup> July 2017

Additionally, Barry Housely continued as a Spa Ponds Warden, Helen Johnson continued in her role as FTNCG's Rushpool Liaison, and Matt Beresford (of MBarcheology) continued as the Archaeological Adviser for the Spa Ponds Nature Reserve.

### **FTNCG is a member (or affiliate) of the following organisations:**

- The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
- Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust
- The Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (NottsBAG)
- WatersideCare
- FreshWater Watch
- Sherwood Catchment Partnership
- The Rufford-Clipstone Landowners Group
- Council for British Archaeology (CBA)

### **3. Review of FTNCG Activities**

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#### ***Overview***

Throughout the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 - 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 FTNCG Trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit. Over the year, FTNCG undertook the following activities in relation to our charitable object:

- Holding meetings and work sessions, open to the public without charge, to consider, plan and carry out the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment in and around Forest Town.
- Maintaining both electronic and hard copy communications with members and supporters, providing ongoing updates and promoting activities of potential interest, via e-mail, our website and Facebook pages, and by sending printed copies to postal addresses.
- Working as a Group to deliver thousands of volunteer hours litter picking and conservation working in and around Forest Town, primarily at Spa Ponds. These efforts resulted in recognised improvements of the physical and natural environment in and around Forest Town.
- Carrying out regular water quality testing and sharing results with WatersideCare, the County Biodiversity Officer, and the Environment Agency, as appropriate.
- Maintaining membership of and/or affiliation with charitable and other organisations and groups with similar objects to FTNCG.
- Working with other like-minded public benefit organisations and agencies, including: Forest Town Community Council (FTCC) and FTCC's Planning Sub-Committee; Forest Town Heritage Group; Nottinghamshire County Council (Public Rights of Way), and Via East Midlands; Forestry Commission; Environment Agency; Mansfield District Council; Nottinghamshire Fungi Group; MBArchaeology; the Nottinghamshire Amphibian & Reptile Group (NARG); EMEC Ecology; the Woodland Trust; Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust; the Sherwood Catchment Partnership; the Rufford-Clipstone Landowners Group; and a variety of County Wildlife Recorders.

Throughout the period FTNCG Trustees met, both formally and informally.

### ***Water quality monitoring***

Phil, FTNCG's Water Catchment Liaison, continues to take the lead on our testing of the quality of the water at Spa Ponds and at our stretch of the River Maun. Phil even gave a demonstration of his water quality testing technique to a group that included water quality professionals as part of a recent Sherwood Catchment Partnership meeting in Pleasley Vale. Phil's skills have been extended through involvement in various training opportunities (thanks to WatersideCare), and he has been sharing his knowledge with fellow FTNCG volunteers Callum and David.

Our water quality results, are shared with WatersideCare and the Environment Agency, and now also with the whole world as part of FTNCG's involvement with FreshWater Watch (an Earthwatch research project investigating the health of global freshwater ecosystems). The data from the water quality testing helps inform the management of Spa Ponds, for example, when we became aware of the low level of oxygen in Pond 1 we introduced a range of oxygenating plants to that pond, and as a result there are now some small fish thriving in Pond 1!

### ***Wildlife monitoring***

The presence of a significant breeding toad population is one of the reasons Spa Ponds is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. According to the March 2014 Guidelines for the selection of Local Wildlife Sites in Nottinghamshire, one of the qualifying criteria is "any site where a significant population size for Nottinghamshire of...Common Toad *Bufo bufo*" on the basis that the Common Toad is "a Species of Principal Importance". The current 'significance threshold' is 100 adult toads noted on a single visit to a site. So, in addition to testing the waters we've also been counting the toads at Spa Ponds.

As can be seen from the table below, there is quite a contrast between 2018, when we arrived late to the party, and 2019 when we seem to have done a better job of coordinating with the toads.

#### **SPA PONDS TOAD COUNTS**

<u>14<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2018</u>				<u>20<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2019</u>			
	Male	Female	Total		Male	Female	Total
Path	-	-	-	Path	65	7	72
Pond 1	6	0	6	Pond 1	20	3	23
Pond 2	16	5	21	Pond 2	233	45	278
Pond 3	27	9	36	Pond 3	323	78	401
Pond 4	10	7	17	Pond 4	132	27	159
Total	59	21	80	Total	773	160	933

## ***Nature conservation and enhancement***

FTNCG held numerous work sessions where we picked litter; planted trees, seeds and other plants; maintained the bridleway; pulled balsam; cleared bramble; thinned sycamore saplings; transplanted young trees (including holly and buckthorn); and installed dead hedges.

Trees, seeds, bulbs, and plants planted between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019

### *Trees:*

- 30 Elder (*Sambucus Nigra*)
- 12 Crab Apple (*Malus Sylvestris*)
- 11 Black Poplar (Atlantic Race *Betulifolia*)

### *Seeds:*

- 3 kilograms of Woodland Meadow Grass and Flower seed mix

### *Bulbs:*

- 100 English Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides Non-scripta*)
- 100 Snowdrop (*Galanthus Nivalis*)
- 100 Star Of Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum Umbellatum*)
- 100 Wild Daffodil (*Narcissus Pseudonarcissus*)

### *Plants:*

- 50 Common Reed (*Phragmites Australis*)
- 30 Hard Rush (*Juncus Inflexus*)
- 14 Field Rose (*Rosa Arvensis*)
- 12 Brooklime (*Veronica Beccabunga*)
- 10 Common Gorse (*Ulex Europeaus*)
- 10 Common Sedge (*Carex Nigra*)
- 10 Cotton Grass (*Eriophorum Angustifolium*)
- 10 Cuckoo Flower (*Cardamine Pratensis*)
- 10 Hemp Agrimony (*Eupatorium Cannabinum*)
- 10 Meadowsweet (*Filipendula Ulmaria*)
- 10 Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum Salicaria*)
- 9 Greater Spearwort (*Ranunculus Lingua*)
- 8 Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus Flammula*)
- 4 Burnet Rose (*Rosa Spinosima*)
- 4 Dog Rose (*Rosa Canina*)
- 4 Sweet Briar Rose (*Rosa Rubiginosa*)
- 3 Water Mint (*Mentha Aquatica*)
- 3 Wild Angelica (*Angelica Sylvestris*)
- 2 Common Water Starwort (*Callitriche Palustris*)
- 2 Frogbit (*Hydrocharis Morsus-ranae*)
- 2 White Water Lily (*Nymphaea Alba*)
- 2 Yellow Water Lilly (*Nuphar Lutea*)

## ***Heritage***

In addition to Local Wildlife Site status, Spa Ponds is being put forward for recognition as a Local Green Space in Mansfield's Local Plan. Such a designation, which is broadly equivalent to green belt status, would provide Spa Ponds and environs with additional protections from the prospect of nearby development. Furthermore, with the help of our Archaeological Adviser, Matt Beresford, the site is now formally recognised as a Non-designated Heritage Asset. Such formal acknowledgements of the importance of Spa Ponds help fulfil FTNCG's objective to protect the site.

In May 2018, thanks to funding from Inspire, MBarcology's Matt Beresford delivered a series of four Heritage Management Training sessions. These enjoyable and informative sessions helped maintain the momentum of our ongoing research into the history of Spa Ponds (possibly referred to as "Peel Water" in the Belvoir Map, thought to be from the late 1300's). We are proud to have been featured in the Spring/Summer 2019 edition of the Nottinghamshire Historian magazine, copies of which are available.

## ***Partnership working***

FTNCG continues to contribute to various networks and partnerships active in the Sherwood Forest area. John and Shlomo attended meetings of the Clipstone to Rufford Landowners group, chaired by the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, where efforts to deter illegal off-road biking are coordinated alongside working in collaboration to formulate a comprehensive vision for nature conservation across the whole area.

FTNCG was also well represented by Jez and Josh at this year's Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (NottsBAG) event which had a focus on wetland habitat, and Shlomo delivered a presentation about the Forest Town Nature Conservation Group as part of WatersideCare's Regional Conference. FTNCG's ongoing involvement as part of the Water Catchment Partnership has not only supported our Wetland Habitat Recreation Project, it has also resulted in the inclusion of Spa Ponds as part of the delivery of the Lively Up the Maun project, in conjunction with Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust.

Following on from the receipt of a grant from the Woodland Trust, FTNCG hosted Woodland Trust representatives as part of our preparations for planting, and on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2018 we planted trees as part of Tree Charter Day. For more about the Tree Charter visit: <https://treecharter.uk/>

And of course, FTNCG maintains close contact with the Forest Town Community Council, who receive monthly updates about our progress.



## 4. Financial Review

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### *Estimated basic annual running costs*

Current running costs for FTNCG amount to more than £500, but if necessary these costs could be limited to around **£500**, for example, as follows:

#### £117 for Membership

- **£38** - The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) Community Network
- **£46** - Council for British Archaeology (CBA)
- **£33** - Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT)

#### £113 for Insurance

- Includes Public Liability (for up to £5m cover) and Personal Accident

#### £280 for Other General Running Costs

- **£75** - Education and training
- **£135** - Sundry items for Spa Ponds (e.g. signs, tools, plants, seeds, etc.)
- **£40** - Volunteer travel expenses
- **£30** - Printing and postage

### *Reserves policy for 2019/20*

Running Costs (Reserved £500; target £1,000): To cover basic annual expenses that must be met (e.g. insurance, health & safety equipment, training), Trustees have set the reserve target at a level equivalent to two years' running costs at £500 per year.

Contingencies (Reserved £1,000; target £1,500): To cover unexpected expenses, in particular those associated with maintaining public safety at Spa Ponds.

Match-funding (Reserved £0; target £2,000): To position FTNCG to take advantage of match-funding opportunities Trustees have set a target to ring-fence £2,000 in the event FTNCG attracts additional funding. This financial element would be used alongside volunteer hours to support the success of bids where appropriate.

Spa Ponds Site Improvement Works (Reserved: £600; target £3,000): Trustees would like to pay professionals such as EMEC and Ecologic to support us with further improvement work in accordance with our 2015 Habitat Management Plan. This includes work to maintain our bridleway and improve water quality. FTNCG are currently awaiting a decision on a funding bid for £500 that could help us move closer to our £3,000 target.

***The charity's principal sources of funds (including any fundraising)***

**INCOME FOR 2018/19**

£334.00	Robin Hood Lottery
£250.00	Ward Allowance (Cllr. M Wright)
£183.00	Donations from individuals, inc. membership
£98.60	WatersideCare (refunding travel expenses)
£50.05	HMRC Gift Aid
£20.00	Fundraising / Sales (1 book and 2 mugs)
£0.15	Bank interest
<b>£935.80</b>	<b>TOTAL INCOME FOR 2018/19</b>

***How expenditure has supported the key objectives of the charity***

Nearly £2,000 of expenses were incurred in relation to the Forest Town Nature Conservation Group undertaking activities to carry out the charity's object '*to promote for the benefit of the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment in and around Forest Town*'.

**EXPENDITURE FOR 2018/19**

£960.00	Contracted Work on Spa Ponds
£479.47	Tools, seeds, plants, etc.
£309.27	Membership & Insurance
£166.63	Training, education and research
£38.59	Printing & postage
<b>£1,953.96</b>	<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE FOR 2018/19</b>

***Liabilities***

There are no outstanding debts. We fulfilled our commitment to spend £50 on the Wetland Habitat Recreation Project noted in last year's Report and Account

## 5. Annual Statement of Accounts (2019/18)

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### Accounts for 1 April 2018 - 31 March 2019

Opening balance (Total)

Cash       £21.29

Bank   £3,110.64   £3,131.93

Total income                               £935.80

Total expenditure                               (£1,953.96)

Closing balance (Total)

Cash       £65.07

Bank   £2,048.70   £2,113.77

### Accounts for 1 April 2017 - 31 March 2018

Opening balance (Total)

Cash       £45.33

Bank   £10,643.52   £10,688.85

Total income                               £2,366.85

Total expenditure                               (£9,923.77)

Closing balance (Total)

Cash       £21.29

Bank   £3,110.64   £3,131.93

<b><u>BALANCE SHEET AT 31 MARCH 2019</u></b>	£	£
<u>Assets and Liabilities</u>		
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>		
<i>Tangible assets</i>		
Tools, Equipment, etc (Cost)	355.81	
FTNCG Mugs (£3.60 X 20)	72.00	
Roller banner & printer	0.00	
Tools, Equipment, etc (Depreciation)	(355.81)	
Roller banner & printer (Depreciation)	(0.00)	
<b>Total fixed assets</b>		72.00
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
<i>Cash at bank and in hand</i>		
Current Account - Coop Bank	2,048.70	
Petty Cash	65.07	
<b>Total cash at bank and in hand</b>	2113.77	
<b>Total current assets</b>		<b>2115.77</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
<i>Creditors due within one year</i>		0.00
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>	2115.77	
<b>Total net assets</b>		<b>2115.77</b>
<u>Represented by funds and assets</u>		
<i>Unrestricted funds</i>		
General Fund	2115.77	
<i>Other assets</i>		
Tangible assets	72.00	
<b>Total funds</b>		<b>2115.77</b>

<b><u>BALANCE SHEET AT 31 MARCH 2018</u></b>	£	£
<u>Assets and Liabilities</u>		
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>		
<i>Tangible assets</i>		
Tools, Equipment, etc (Cost)	202.13	
FTNCG Mugs (£3.60 X 22)	79.20	
Roller banner & printer	110.00	
Tools, Equipment, etc (Depreciation)	(202.13)	
Roller banner & printer (Depreciation)	(110.00)	
<b>Total fixed assets</b>		79.20
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
<i>Cash at bank and in hand</i>		
Current Account - Coop Bank	3,110.64	
Petty Cash	21.29	
<b>Total cash at bank and in hand</b>	3,131.93	
<b>Total current assets</b>		<b>3,211.13</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
<i>Creditors due within one year</i>		0.00
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>	3,211.13	
<b>Total net assets</b>		<b>3,211.13</b>
<u>Represented by funds and assets</u>		
<i>Unrestricted funds</i>		
General Fund	3,131.93	
<i>Other assets</i>		
Tangible assets	79.20	
<b>Total funds</b>		<b>3,211.13</b>

**Notes:** (1) Gift Aid income is attributed to the year in which it was paid by HMRC rather than the year of donation. (2) Unclaimed Gift Aid donations are not listed as an asset.

## 6. Monthly Summary of Volunteer Hours

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### SUMMARY OF RECORDED VOLUNTEER HOURS (2018/19)

Month	Volunteer Hours	Activity attracting the most participants
April 2018	237	14 attended the Toad Count at Spa Ponds
May	445	13 attended Matt's Heritage Management Skills Session
June	197	11 attended a 'Wetland Habitat Recreation' Work Session
July	118	7 attended 'Bridleway Maintenance' Work Session
August	219	15 attended Spa Ponds Work Session: strimming and re-seeding glade, planting hard rush, field rose, and gorse, and 400 bulbs, some balsam pulling and litter picking
September	289	17 attended Annual General Meeting and Fungi Talk
October	214	14 attended Spa Pond's work session: Thinning saplings, dead hedging, locating and clearing around roses
November	269	16 attended Spa Ponds Work Session: Clearing and ditch digging for tree planting, and planting Black Poplars (and some Elders)
December	137	19 attended Spa Ponds Work Session: Tree and bramble clearing, litter picking, dead hedging (including 8 volunteers from the Adventure Service)
January 2019	142	10 attended Spa Ponds Work Session: clearing bramble around Pond 1 and dead hedging around Ponds 0 and 1
February	227	9 attended the Spa Ponds Work Session: Shoring up dead hedge between Ponds 1 and 2, transplanting including into soil in front of dead hedge, de-silting and dead hedging near platform (Pond 2), clearing around Pond 2
March	135	15 attended the Toad Count at Spa Ponds
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,629</b>	

Over the period covered by this Report and Accounts (April 2018 - March 2019) our Spa Ponds wardens Barry and Alan have devoted more than 930 hours looking after the Spa Ponds site, including collecting more than 160 bags of rubbish.

In the four years since May 2015 when we started recording volunteer hours, FTNCG volunteers (including our Wardens) have delivered more than 12,200 volunteer hours.