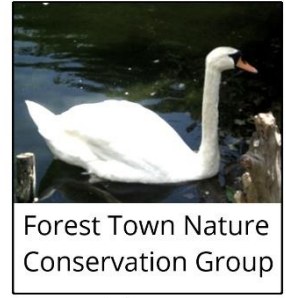


Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG)

Registered Charity Number: 1157957

Principal Address: c/o 25 The Birchlands,

Forest Town, Mansfield NG19 0ER



Forest Town Nature
Conservation Group

Registered Charity No. 1157957

Forest Town Nature Conservation Group

Annual Report and Accounts 2024

(for the period 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024)

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 **Shlomo Downen** (Chair)
and **Josh Downen** (Treasurer and Secretary)

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Contact

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Declaration

The Trustees of the Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG) declare that they have approved this Trustees' Report and Accounts for the period 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024.

Signed on behalf of the charity's Trustees by Shlomo Downen, Chair of the Forest Town Nature Conservation Group, on 12th July 2024.

Note

As FTNCG comprises 42 members, under the terms of Section 8 of FTNCG's Constitution, in accordance with Section 12 of FTNCG's Constitution, the quorum for the Annual General Meeting (AGM) is 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 issued by Thursday 18th July 2024, i.e. at least 14 clear days before the AGM, to all FTNCG Members and Trustees for the AGM to be held virtually on Friday 2nd August 2024.

1. Introduction

There is a phrase that my children use when they refer to achievements realised with the support of work colleagues, which is: “teamwork makes the dream work”. This seems to also apply to the Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG). Together, working as a team, we have achieved a great deal throughout the 13 years since FTNCG was formed, and especially in the decade since we purchased the Spa Ponds site with the generous support of the community of Forest Town.

Teamwork does indeed make the dream work, and FTNCG is proud both of our team and of our dream. FTNCG’s ‘dream’ finds expression in the vision set out in detail as part of the Spa Ponds Site Management Plan. FTNCG has remained true to our vision and our Plan, achieving wonderful things thanks to the leadership of our Trustees in cooperation with a fantastic and varied collection of volunteers and professionals working together for the betterment of our site and our community.

I want to use this opportunity to thank our dream team and to celebrate what we have done throughout the period covered by this report. As per our Site Management Plan, we successfully maintained and enhanced our woodland. We helped increase biodiversity, not least through our ongoing efforts to extend our pollinator corridor which now reaches from the Clipstone Drive entrance through to the Chestnut Wood and now into the Hazel Wood, picking up again in the space between Ponds 1 and 2.

The work that has been carried out during the year covered by this Report & Accounts has been made possible through the financial support of FTNCG members in the form of direct donations and via the Robin Hood Lottery, augmented by Gift Aid and supplemented with grant funding from a range of sources. FTNCG funders include the Severn Trent Community Fund, the Co-op, the Localgiving Foundation, Mansfield District Council via Ward Allowances from Councillors Wright and Jackson, as well as through Nottinghamshire County Council Divisional Funds from Councillors Moxon and Corden, and of course the Sherwood Landscape Partnership’s Miner2Major (M2M) scheme, which in turn was supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Equally valuable for the achievement of our aspirations are the contributions made by so very many volunteers. Some of these volunteers live in Forest Town and Mansfield Woodhouse and are frequent visitors to Spa Ponds. Others travelled from much further afield to volunteer their time, often as part of an employer’s ‘corporate volunteering’ scheme, or as part of the gang of roaming conservation volunteers managed by Natilee from the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust.

The generosity and commitment of so very many volunteers has helped FTNCG be even more ambitious when it comes to what we set out to accomplish.

And for those tasks that require professional input, FTNCG is so very fortunate to be able to rely on Andy Hollis of Sherwood Ecologic, and on the crew from EMEC headed up by Dave Sutton. This year, in addition to the tree planting and woodland management support we received from EMEC we also benefitted from the work of their expert Entomologist, Adrian Dutton, who completed a survey of the aquatic and terrestrial invertebrate (bug) species at Spa Ponds in October 2023.

I also wish to pay tribute to our water quality testing team, headed up by Sam with the support of Callum and others, who have once again tested the water quality during each season throughout the year, providing us with valuable and reassuring data that helps inform the management of the nature reserve. Thanks also go to Elliot for his very kind donation of baby oaks and for his help planting them, and to Phil for helping keep our new signs in good condition in addition to his ongoing contributions to the Sherwood Water Catchment Partnership on FTNCG's behalf.

Thanks too for Dennis, who managed to lovingly photograph so much of the beauty of the site and the glory of the volunteers' efforts, and for Alan who continues to keep a watchful eye on Spa Pond and environs, sometimes accompanied by his neighbour and unofficial site warden Sue.

Finally, I want to share my very special thanks to Lorraine and to Josh, for both their visible and less visible support. Lorraine remains the keeper of the vision, and this dedication finds practical expression each and every time we plan a work session together or apply for grant funding, etc. Josh's many and varied contributions are evidenced both on and off site. On site, Josh is a frequent conservation volunteer, developing new skills and helping pass them on to others. Off site, as FTNCG's Treasurer, the group benefits from Josh's prudent financial management and exemplary financial record keeping. And as our website administrator Josh is key to presenting FTNCG and Spa Ponds to the wider world, including through his consummate research skills as applied to his accessible accounts of the history of Spa Ponds familiar to those who follow FTNCG's Facebook pages and the 'History of Spa Ponds' section of the website that Josh has further developed over the past year.

There is so much to celebrate, so much that we have achieved over the past year, and my heart is full of gratitude to all our volunteers and supporters as I look forward to many more years realising our dreams together.

2. Structure, Governance and Management

The Forest Town Nature Conservation Group's (FTNCG's) Constitution, adopted on 22nd May 2013 and amended on 14th July 2014, is the governing document that establishes FTNCG as an association with the charitable object set out on our cover page (above).

FTNCG Membership currently stands at 42 people. FTNCG Membership, which is free of charge (although we suggest donating £5 a year), confers no financial benefit.

FTNCG Trustees throughout 2023/24 were as follows:

Name	Office / Role	Appointment Date
Shlomo Downen	Chair and Vice-Secretary	1 st February 2011
Lorraine Downen	Vice Chair	1 st February 2011
Josh Downen	Treasurer, Secretary & Website Admin.	1 st February 2011
Mark Fretwell	Trustee and Tree Officer	5 th July 2017
Phil Goodall	Trustee and Water Catchment Liaison	5 th July 2017
Dennis Platts	Trustee, Photographic Records Officer	16 th September 2020
Samantha Nicholson	Trustee and Water Testing Lead	30 th March 2021
Alan Alberry	Trustee	2 nd July 2014

Helen Johnson continued as FTNCG's Rushpool Liaison.



FTNCG's 2023 AGM at Kingsway Hall

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

- The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
- Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust
- The Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (NottsBAG)
- FreshWater Watch
- Sherwood Water Catchment Partnership
- The Rainworth-Clipstone Landowners Group

3. Review of FTNCG Activities

Throughout the period 1st April 2023 - 31st March 2024 FTNCG Trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit.

Over the year FTNCG undertook the following activities to further our charitable object:

- Holding work sessions and meetings, including our Annual General Meeting (AGM), 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, with a particular focus on Spa Ponds.
- Communicating with members and supporters, providing ongoing updates and promoting activities of potential interest via e-mail, our website and Facebook pages, and by posting printed copies of our Christmas newsletter.
- Working as a Group to deliver thousands of volunteer hours litter picking and conservation working in and around Forest Town, primarily at Spa Ponds.
- Contributing to Mansfield District Council's consultation on the 'Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document'.
- Supporting volunteer training, including in species identification and recording (including contributing to surveying the terrestrial invertebrate at Spa Ponds), hedgerow management, woodland management (dead hedging and crown raising), and in the safe use of tools.
- Recording wildlife sightings and sharing results. We record and encourage others to record sightings at Spa Ponds via the iRecord service.
- Testing water quality at all four ponds and the River Maun (quarterly), and making results public (via FTNCG's website and FreshWater Watch).
- Contributing to the ongoing work of the Sherwood Water Catchment Partnership, and the Rainworth-Clipstone Landowners Group.
- Maintaining membership of and/or affiliation with charitable and other organisations and groups with similar objects to FTNCG (see list on Page 4, above).
- Working with other like-minded public benefit organisations and agencies, including: Forest Town Community Safety Network; Forest Town Heritage Group; Nottinghamshire County Council (Public Rights of Way), and Via East Midlands; Forestry England; Environment Agency; Mansfield District Council; Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (NottsBAG); the Nottinghamshire Amphibian & Reptile Group (NARG); Sherwood Ecologic CIC; EMEC Ecology; the Woodland Trust; and Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT).

See the final page of this Report for monthly highlights of some of FTNCG's activities.

4. Financial Review (including Reserves Policy)

Estimated basic running costs

Anticipated basic running costs for FTNCG during the next year (2023/24) amount to around **£750**, as follows:

£215 for Insurance

- **£215** - Includes Public Liability and Personal Accident

£535 for Other General Running Costs

- **£200** - Volunteer travel
- **£150** - Sundry items for Spa Ponds (e.g. PPE, signs, tools, plants, seeds, etc.)
- **£100** - Education and training (including First Aid Training)
- **£ 85** - Printing, postage, etc.

This does not include AGM-related costs.

Reserves policy for 2024/25

Running Costs (Reserved £750; target £1,500):

To cover anticipated annual expenses that must be met (e.g. insurance, health & safety (PPE) equipment, training, volunteer expenses), Trustees set a reserve target equivalent to 2 years' basic running costs.

10% Fund (Match Funding) (Reserved £4,000; target £5,000):

Funds set aside for FTNCG's contribution of 10% towards a £45,000 bid for a project amounting to a total of around £50,000 for EMEC to carry out work on trees, hedgerows, and bridleway at Spa Ponds. The intention is to submit a bid in 2025, with the amount of funding requested dependent upon the amount of money we have raised by then.

Delivery of the Spa Ponds Site Management Plan (Reserved £800; target £5,000):

Trustees would like more funds to pay professionals such as EMEC and Ecologic for support implementing our Management Plans, including work to maintain our bridleway, enhance biodiversity, and improve water quality. Some of this would be used for professional on-site training and supervision.

Contingencies (Reserved £500; target £1,000):

To cover unexpected expenses, particularly those associated with maintaining public safety at Spa Ponds.

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

£10,106.97 - INCOME FOR 2023/24

£4,500.00	Severn Trent Water Grant (PPP)
£1,620.81	Co-op local cause donation
£1,508.90	M2M Grants
£500.00	LocalGiving Grant
£490.00	Donation from individuals
£400.00	MDC Ward Allowance (£200 each from Cllrs. Jackson and Wright)
£292.87	Bank interest
£282.00	Robin Hood Lottery
£200.00	Notts County Council Divisional Funds (£100 each from Cllrs. Moxon and Corden)
£154.78	HMRC Gift Aid
£81.00	AGM Sales
£51.00	AGM Raffle
£25.61	Amazon Smile

How expenditure has supported the charity's key objectives

As set out below, expenses were incurred in relation to the Forest Town Nature Conservation Group undertaking or funding 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'.

£39,299.13 - EXPENDITURE FOR 2023/24

£27,200.00	Pipes, Paths and Ponds (PPP) project (EMEC)
£7,202.88	Invert survey (EMEC)
£2,000.00	PPP administration and report
£832.27	Training and education (incl. Ecologic)
£362.37	AGM
£330.00	Project management
£313.89	Printing and postage
£300.00	Bridleway improvement work
£219.85	Tools, seeds, etc.
£213.49	Membership and insurance
£171.00	Volunteer travel
£153.38	Website

Liabilities

FTNCG has no outstanding debts to carry over into 2024/25.

5. Annual Statement of Accounts (2023/24)

Accounts for 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024

Opening balance (Total)			
	Cash	£68.20	
	Bank	£35,284.61	£35,352.81
Total income			£10,106.97
Total expenditure			(£39,299.13)
Closing balance (Total)			
	Cash	£30.20	
	Bank	£6,130.45	£6,160.65

Accounts for 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023

Opening balance (Total)			
	Cash	£78.00	
	Bank	£4,366.91	£4,444.91
Total income			£51,027.25
Total expenditure			(£20,119.35)
Closing balance (Total)			
	Cash	£68.20	
	Bank	£35,284.61	£35,352.81

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.
- (3) Money that has been fundraised is listed in the year when those funds are received by FTNCG.
- (4) FTNCG is the owner of Spa Ponds Nature Reserve, but the site is not listed as an asset because the land is owned in the public interest and the deeds are held in trust by the Official Custodian for Charities.
- (5) Planning permission granted for housing development on Land South of Clipstone Road East is attached to a Section 106 Agreement that requires the developer to provide a £25,000 (Index Linked) contribution towards enhancing Spa Ponds "prior to Completion of any more than 33% of the Residential units" (which equates to 103 completed new homes). This threshold has yet to be met.

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 MARCH 2024		
Represented by fixed and current assets	£	£
FIXED ASSETS		
Tangible assets		
Seeds retained for use in 2023/24 (Est. Value)	200.00	
Tools, Equipment, etc (Cost)	219.85	
FTNCG Mugs	0	
(Seeds used during 2023/24, Est. Value)	(175.00)	
(Tools/Equipment/etc Depreciation)	(219.85)	
(Mugs used for fundraising, etc.)	(0)	
Total fixed assets (remaining seeds)	25.00	
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash at bank and in hand		
Current Account - Coop Bank	6,130.45	
Petty Cash	30.20	
Total cash at bank and in hand	6,160.65	
Debtors (grant funding owed to FTNCG)	0	
Total current assets	6,160.65	
TOTAL ASSETS		6,185.65
LIABILITIES		
Creditors due within one year	(0.00)	
Project funding committed but not yet spent (training)		(150.00)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	6,010.65	
TOTAL ASSETS NET LIABILITIES		6,035.65
Represented by funds and other assets	£	£
UNRESTRICTED FUNDS		
General Fund	6,010.65	
RESTRICTED FUNDS		
To spend on current projects (training)	150.00	
OTHER ASSETS		
Tangible assets	25.00	
Debtors	0.00	
TOTAL ASSETS		6,185.65
LIABILITIES		
Creditors due within one year	(0.00)	
Project funding committed but not yet spent (training)		(150.00)
TOTAL ASSETS NET LIABILITIES		6,035.65

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 MARCH 2023		
Represented by fixed and current assets	£	£
FIXED ASSETS		
Tangible assets		
Seeds retained for use in 2022/23 (Est. Value)	1,000.00	
Tools, Equipment, etc (Cost)	545.41	
FTNCG Mugs	50.40	
(Seeds used during 2022/23, Est. Value)	(800.00)	
(Tools/Equipment/etc Depreciation)	(545.41)	
(Mugs used for fundraising, etc.)	(50.40)	
Total fixed assets (remaining seeds)	200.00	
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash at bank and in hand		
Current Account - Coop Bank	35,284.61	
Petty Cash	68.20	
Total cash at bank and in hand	35,352.81	
Debtors (grant funding owed to FTNCG)	5,200	
Total current assets	40,352.81	
TOTAL ASSETS		40,552.81
LIABILITIES		
Creditors due within one year	(0.00)	
Project funding committed but not yet spent (PPP)		(38,693.41)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	1,859.40	
TOTAL ASSETS NET LIABILITIES		2,059.40
Represented by funds and other assets	£	£
UNRESTRICTED FUNDS		
General Fund	1,659.40	
RESTRICTED FUNDS		
To spend on current projects (PPP)	33,493.41	
OTHER ASSETS		
Tangible assets	200.00	
Debtors (grant funding owed to FTNCG)	5,200.00	
TOTAL ASSETS		40,552.81
LIABILITIES		
Creditors due within one year	(0.00)	
Project funding committed but not yet spent (PPP)		(38,693.41)
TOTAL ASSETS NET LIABILITIES		2,059.40

6. Monthly Summary of Volunteer Hours

SUMMARY OF RECORDED VOLUNTEER HOURS (2023/24)

Month	Hours	Example of activities carried out
April 2023	135	Litter picking and administrative tasks including managing photographic records, improving the website, and producing the Easter newsletter. Raking leaves and sowing acid grass and wildflower seeds around the Chestnut Walk as part of maintain the pollinator corridor. We also set a number of bug traps as part of the invertebrate survey of Spa Ponds.
May	150	Continuing the work we started in April, including checking the bug traps.
June	263	Preparing for FTNCG's AGM, balsam pulling in and around Spa Ponds, removing sediment from the steam between Ponds 1 and 2, surveying invertebrates, and testing the water quality of the ponds and river.
July	190	Welcoming 30 people for our AGM gathering at Kingsway Hall, which included displays from both FTNCG and the Forest Town Heritage Group.
August	164	Bridleway maintenance, including supporting Andy Hollis with strimming.
September	128	Clearing the pipe between Ponds 1 and 2, litter picking and balsam pulling.
October	330	Water quality testing, litter picking, sign repair, hedgerow management.
November	339	Replacing stakes in the dead hedges, managing the Hazel Wood, and clearing a section of Pond Hill Wood for future planting. Developing the website's 'Then and Now photos' feature (including much work by Dennis and Josh) and oral history section. Delivering a Pipes, Paths and Ponds project presentation to the Sherwood Water Catchment Partnership.
December	163	More work on the website, and the annual Christmas newsletter.
January 2024	255	Special focus on Spa Ponds history, including Facebook posts and Josh's presentation to the Clipstone History Group. Planting hedgerow trees to fill gaps, straightening the stream, and clearing debris from River Maun.
February	239	Work Sessions with plenty of volunteers planting more trees along the hedgerow and on the cleared space at Pond Hill Wood, as well as planting 25 oaks donated by Elliot. Path creation in the Hazel Wood, raking in the Chestnut Wood, and learning about bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) with Margaret Crittenden (Nottinghamshire's Bryophyte Recorder).
March	71	FTNCG volunteers attended the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (NottsBAG) 'Big BAG' event at Brackenhurst where we listened to presentations about invertebrates, including those surveyed at Spa Ponds.
TOTAL 2,427		

Since May 2015 when we started recording volunteer hours FTNCG volunteers have delivered **more than 25,000 volunteer hours**.