



**The Otter Valley Association  
TRUSTEES' REPORT  
for the year ended 31 March 2024**

# Aims

The Otter Valley Association was established in 1979 as a civic amenity society covering the civil parishes and environs of Budleigh Salterton, East Budleigh with Bicton, Otterton, Colaton Raleigh, Newton Poppleford and Harpford with Venn Ottery.

Its principal aims for the benefit of the public are (*in summary*):

- 1) To promote sustainable development for the benefit of the public by:
  - (a) the preservation, conservation and the protection of the environment and the prudent use of resources;
  - (b) the promotion of sustainable means of achieving economic growth and regeneration.
- 2) To advance the education of the public in subjects relating to sustainable development and the protection, enhancement and rehabilitation of the environment and to promote study and research in such subjects provided that the useful results of such study are disseminated to the public at large.

*Sustainable development means “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*

## Organisation

The OVA’s activities are governed by a written Constitution, which sets out its objects and regulations. It is registered with the Charity Commission, and is subject to the legislation applicable to charities, in particular The Charities Act 2011.

A copy of the Constitution is always available on request and can be downloaded from our website **[www.ova.org.uk](http://www.ova.org.uk)**.

## Management

The management and administration of the OVA is carried out by the Executive Committee (EC), which during the year met ten times. This Committee normally consists of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, and up to twelve other members of the Association. Members of the Executive Committee, all of whom are Charity Trustees, *listed on page 11*, are elected annually at the Annual General Meeting.

# Trustees Report of Activities for 2023~2024

## Chairman's Introduction

A year of consolidation and reinvigoration. Some local projects, like the Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP) have reached completion, only to be replaced by the OVA's encouragement to all to get out and enjoy the National Nature Reserve as it develops into mature salt marsh with all the flora and fauna that entails. Some would say the birds got there first!

The scheme was driven by both loss of habitat elsewhere and rising sea levels; a salutary reminder that the climate emergency is serious – extreme weather, floods, heatwaves and drought will have an impact on this wonderful corner of Devon which we are mandated to cherish, conserve and protect. The other major earth-wide threats of mass species extinction, threats from antibiotic resistance, pandemic, food security all have local impacts which we are working to address, with a range of activities from provision of bird boxes to schools to monitoring of water quality in the River Otter.

The OVA has no shortage of members or money, but we are short of activists – not in the negative sense used by most of the media – but those willing to do something or speak up for care for our world. Not just fit people, who can plant trees or wade into the river with a sample bottle, we can all change habits and assumptions. Most of us burn fossil fuels to heat our homes, drive our cars or power the delivery trucks to drop our goods.

That's a long-winded way of saying Active Volunteers Needed!

We would welcome new blood either on the Committee or in an organisational role. Please have a chat with any of the committee members if you feel moved to help and of the vital roles needed to fulfil our aims (as summarised on the previous page).

I am pleased to welcome Chris Boorman, who stepped up to edit the newsletter and has rejuvenated our communications with Facebook.

I would like to pay tribute to Chris Hodgson, who is standing down from his Natural Environment role on the Executive Committee. He has wide knowledge which he has used wisely to support the Association, and we will miss him. Replacements welcome!

Haylor Lass, *chairman*

# Natural Environment

This has been a busy year for the members of the Natural Environment Group on several fronts:

**1. Water quality issues.** The OVA is funding monthly water testing on the River Otter and local brooks: the Otter at Colaton Raleigh and Otterton, and Otterton Brook, Colaton and Bicton Brooks. These tests look at phosphate levels, water course flow rate, width and level of water course, temperature, turbidity (the level of solids in the water), and the riverside flora and fauna. These tests are being undertaken by multiple Citizen Scientists on water courses across the Southwest and are sent to the Westcountry Rivers Trust who look at the long-term trends. The tests by the OVA have shown that water quality in the Otter and its tributaries is a major issue. The OVA has formed a subgroup focusing on how best to draw attention to this problem. In addition, the OVA has been instrumental in setting up the River Otter Improvement Group. This includes two OVA members and others with extensive knowledge of farming and human pollution, and the impact of pollution on fish and river life. It also analyses pollution data - especially relating to Southwest Water

**2. Heaths to Sea Landscape Recovery Project – Stakeholder Communications Group.** This project aims to shape and improve the lower Otter natural environment. The OVA is one of the stakeholders and Haylor Lass and Geoff Porter are involved in the meetings.

**3. The Clump, Otterton.** Over recent years, the OVA has been planting and tending Scots Pines seedlings to replace the three iconic aging trees that are a landmark feature of the estuary. Unfortunately, the Clump is an inhospitable environment as it is very exposed and has very little soil, making it difficult for young trees to become established. However, after much effort, several have survived, and it is hoped that these new trees will become visible from the valley in the next few years.

**4. Nest boxes etc. for Primary Schools.**

In an effort to stimulate interest in wildlife in the next generation and to generally help local wildlife, the OVA has given each of the Primary Schools in the area nest boxes for blue tits, great tits, robins and house sparrows. In addition, each school has been given a hedgehog box and a bug hotel.

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**5. Nest boxes for the Lower Otter and Budleigh Salterton.** The Lower Otter Restoration Project has transformed the estuary into a wildlife sanctuary. To assist in these changes, the OVA has given the Ranger eight nest boxes to be dotted around the estuary. In addition, we have placed five boxes for swifts on the Public Hall in Budleigh. Swift populations in the UK are in steep decline at the present time and we hope that these nest boxes, with the help of a swift caller, will bring some back to the town.

**6. Leaflets.** To go with the nest boxes and bug hotels, we have also produced leaflets which describe the different types of nest box and bug hotel, and where to place them and look after them. These are available to any OVA member.

Geoff Porter and Chris Hodgson

## **Built Environment**

Over the past year we have been monitoring the weekly lists of planning applications and decisions within our town, villages and valley. Where appropriate the Executive Committee has commented on those that are considered to be contrary to national, local and neighbourhood planning policies, especially when they would be harmful to the character of the East Devon National Landscape (previously called AONB).

There have been a fair number of applications to build new houses or large replacement houses in the open countryside, and outside the ‘Built Up Area Boundaries’. So far, none of these have been approved by EDDC, as they are contrary to national and local planning policies.

We have also looked at various proposed and actual changes to government planning policy, such as revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework, and changes to some permitted development requirements.

Our members have raised several local planning issues which have been considered by the Executive Committee. We are always pleased to be notified about any contentious planning issues that arise within the valley, and are a cause for concern.

In addition, we have studied the various officer reports presented to East Devon District Council’s Strategic Planning Committee on the feedback from last year’s the public consultation on the Draft Emerging Local Plan 2020-2040.

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We are currently looking at further consultations on various issues, such as new housing, mixed use and employment site allocations, town centre retail areas, green wedges and coastal preservation areas, which have a closing date of 27 June 2024

Dee Woods

## **Walking with the OVA, 2023-2024 review**

The walk programme has had a positive year with the number of walkers returning to pre Covid levels.

For those who like statistics:

- 38 walks have taken place
- 6 were cancelled or postponed mainly due to weather and amazingly most were during the summer months
- 417 walkers have attended our walks
- 10.97 is the average number of walkers per walk during the year April 2023 – end March 2024

The visibility of the walk programme has been greatly increased by the new OVA Facebook page and each walk is now published as an ‘Event’ and walkers are subsequently posting photographs and comments which gives immediate feedback to a wider audience.

We also have a WhatsApp group which has proved useful and a quick method of communication for all involved.

It has been good to see a variety of walks both local and further afield and our most popular one was the bird watching walk around the newly opened LORP led by the Otter Estuary Ranger Rick Lockwood and Colin Randall a local resident and Devon Birds member. They were both excellent at managing a large group, Facebook clearly worked!

Our thanks go to our wonderful Walk Leaders who give so much for the enjoyment and benefit of all.

The Walk Team –Jane Connick, Jon Roseway, Penny and Paul Kurowski

## **Membership Report**

At the end of March 2024, the Otter Valley Association had a total of 469 memberships, amounting to some 736 persons. These figures are lower than last year because as we increased our membership rates some members reviewed their position and chose not to renew. New members are joining, many as a result of viewing our Facebook group, and we hope that many more will join us in the future.

## **Insurance**

As in previous years the Trustees employed the services of Marsh Commercial to procure Insurance cover for the OVA, which with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 was placed with Ansvar Insurance.

## **Treasurer's Report**

The Otter Valley Association had a satisfactory financial year, ending with a surplus of £8,561. This reflected the increase in membership fees and the fact that during the year we were fortunate to be the beneficiary of two legacies from past members of the OVA. The intention is to use these legacy funds to cover the cost of a new book of walks in the lower Otter Valley. Our walks team are in the process of walking the planned routes at the present time.

Assets at the close of the financial year stand at £32,087. Of this, £10,000 is held as a contingency for unexpected eventualities, £10,000 is allocated to fund worthwhile projects in the lower Otter Valley, £5500 is reserved for the new walks book, and the remainder is to cover our regular outgoings and expenses.

Thank you, again, to all our members who have continued to support us. If you haven't done so already, please set up a standing order for your membership fees or amend your current standing order to reflect the new rates.

Finally, I must thank David Connor for his assistance in preparing these accounts and ensuring that everything is in order.

Martin Smith  
Treasurer/Membership Secretary

**Otter Valley Association ~ Registered Charity No: 278266**  
**Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

	2024 £	2023 £
<b>Receipts</b>		
Membership	5955	4104
Donations	10	38
Talks	70	1086
Events		0
Publications	189	253
Gift Aid	741	767
AONB Community Project Fund		924
Interest	208	84
Legacies	5500	
Equipment sale	25	
	12698	7256
<b>Payments</b>		
Newsletters	1351	3517
Affiliation Fees	109	125
Insurance	394	434
Website Maintenance	504	2232
Events	230	274
Wildflower Donations	0	60
AGM 2022	0	1316
Roger Conant donation	0	50
Walk leaders First Aid course	0	468
BS Info Centre donation	0	100
Administration	188	704
First Aid stocks	50	
Royal Mail (PO Box)	330	
Group Mail (Membership emails)	30	
Bird boxes	790	
Fairlynch Museum (Jennings exhibition)	94	
Rivers Trust (Water testing kit)	52	
The Clump	15	
	4137	9280
<b>Net Surplus (Deficit) for Year</b>	8561	(2024)



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**General Fund**

Balance at Start of Year	25,526	25,550
Balance at End of Year	32,087	23,526

**Balance Sheet at 31 March 2024**

	2024	2023
	£	£
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash at Bank	<u>32,087</u>	<u>23,526</u>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<u>32,087</u>	<u>23,526</u>
<b>Represented by:</b>		
<b>General Fund (Unrestricted)</b>	<u>32,087</u>	<u>23,526</u>

**Notes:**

1. The accounts are prepared on a receipts and payments basis.
2. No remuneration has been paid to any Trustee during the year.

Approved by the Committee on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2024  
and signed on their behalf by:



Martin Smith, Treasurer

**Risk management**

The major risks to which the Association is exposed are reviewed on a regular basis. Policies and controls have been established to mitigate those risks. These include appropriate property and public liability insurance.

## Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of The Otter Valley Association

Charity No: 278266

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Otter Valley Association for the year ended 31 March 2024.

### Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Otter Valley Association, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 (the Act).

I report in respect of my examination of the accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

### Independent Examiner's Statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. Accounting records were not kept in respect of the Otter Valley Association as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. The accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. The accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the forms and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



David Conner FCA  
Chartered Accountant  
1 Wynards Close  
East Budleigh  
EX9 7ET

15 April 2024

## Reference and administrative information

Name of Charity:	Otter Valley Association
Correspondence address:	PO Box 70, Budleigh Salterton, EX9 6WN
Registered Charity No:	278266
Independent Examiner:	David Conner FCA, 1 Wynards Close East Budleigh, EX9 7ET
Bankers:	Lloyds Bank Plc, current account CAF Bank, investment accounts

## Trustees

The following people served as Trustees during the year:

Haylor Lass	Chairman
Bob Wiltshire	Vice-Chairman
Jane Kewley	Secretary
Martin Smith	Treasurer/Membership
Chris Hodgson	Natural Environment
Geoff Porter	Natural Environment
Dee Woods	Built Environment and Otterton

*There are vacancies for other Trustees.*

*Other Executive Committee member during the year*

Chris Boorman	Newsletter Editor and Communications
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This Trustees Report was approved by the Trustees  
on 28 May 2024  
for publication on request and on the website.