

**Lavell's Wetland Trust**

**Charity Number: 1176960**

**LWT c/o Dinton Pastures Country Park, Davis Street, Hurst, Reading, RG10 0TH**

**Trustees Annual Report for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023**

**Summary of the objects of the charity set out in its governing document**

Lavell's Wetland Trust's (LWT) aims and objectives are to enhance, protect and preserve the natural habitats, fauna and flora in the Loddon Valley for the benefit of the public and to advance public education and interest in the conservation of the countryside and wildlife

**Type of governing document**

Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) association model constitution filed with the Charity Commission.

**How the charity is constituted**

CIO consisting of approximately 480 members.

**Trustees and Committee Members for the period covered by this report**

**Chair:** Jane Campbell

**Secretary:** Angela Gunn

**Treasurer:** Phil Kinch

**Membership Secretary:** Les Blundell (January 2023), Araba McMillan (from March 2023)

**Chief Visionary Officer:** Fraser Cottington

**Additional Trustees:** Ron Bryant

**Committee Members:** Keith Boseley, Peter Scudamore

**Trustee selection methods**

Volunteer trustees with appropriate skills are sought from the membership and nominated by the management committee or by individual members

**Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit in relation to these objects**

We undertake volunteer work parties attended by members of the CIO, members of the public, and those in programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. These take place monthly at weekends and fortnightly on weekdays with the aim of maintaining and improving the Lea Farm Lake reserve and the conservation areas within Dinton Pastures Country Park.

Further "one-off" work parties are arranged for local schools, scout groups, corporate bodies and others to encourage a wider understanding of nature and introduce more people to conservation and a healthy lifestyle.

We undertake monthly guided walks, open to the public, to identify the birdlife and other fauna that can be seen at Lavell's Lake local nature reserve, Dinton Pastures Country Park, and Lea Farm Lake.

We provide a website to inform the public about Lavell's Lake & Lea Farm Lake, its wildlife and facilities and our work and events. This includes a history of bird recordings at the site that is publicly available for conservation, research or other purposes. The website includes photographs and sightings of other wildlife: flora, butterflies & moths, dragonflies & damselflies, and mammals.

Larger improvement projects are undertaken using either the funds of the charity, external resources, or a combination of the two.

We wish to recognise the great contribution that members of the CIO, members of the public and members of other organisations make through their efforts during the year. We could not achieve our objectives without their financial and practical support. The help and support of Dinton Pastures Countryside Service (DPCS) is invaluable.

### **Summary of the main achievements of the charity during the year**

#### ***Lea Farm Lake and Lavell's Lake***

We have erected fencing and planted shrubs to prevent members and visitors, on their way to the new viewing points, from disturbing the birds on the lake. Stock fencing has also been erected along the public footpath to prevent dogs from entering and disturbing birds on the reserve.

We are extending our reedbed but recent plantings have been unsuccessful due to grazing by geese. Two compounds have now been built to protect future plantings. We were able to build one of these with a grant from Berkshire Ornithological Club.

The path to the old hide has been refurbished, the old wheelchair ramp has been removed and will be replaced with a portable ramp. The old ramp area has been fenced off to create a garden area which has been planted with fruit & berry trees to attract birds.

We have been given a bench, to go next to the new viewing screen, as a memorial to two of our former trustees. Fritillaria and orchids have also been planted in this area.

#### ***Membership database***

Our membership records have, for several years, been kept on a database supplemented by a spreadsheet as the database was difficult to manage. This year we made the move to a new system, Membermojo, which can store all membership records, gives members easier access to update their details and allows us greater flexibility in communicating with members. We have also reverted to a fixed membership year to ensure that only current members have automatic access to restricted access hides and viewing areas.

#### ***Volunteer work parties***

Once again, a number of both week-end and weekday work parties were cancelled due to flooding or heavy rain. Fencing was erected and shrubs planted to minimise disturbance to birds on the site. Plantings to provide cover and fruit include mountain ash, apple trees, gorse, and guelder rose and, a bug hotel was erected near the new fruit trees garden. Work has also continued with coppicing

willow and felling some trees to provide shaded areas which allow Loddon Lillies to flourish. A new gate had been installed to provide easier access for to the site for work part volunteers.

#### Publicity and engagement with the public

We offer membership of various WhatsApp groups related to bird sightings and other wildlife chat. We have been able to maintain interest in the Trust through news items on our website and social media as well as talks with the headmasters of local secondary schools.

We have received several enquiries about possible corporate volunteer days and were able to host a session for a team from Mondelez . Unfortunately, most offers are for work during the breeding season when we limit work on the reserve. We were able to hold a Dawn Chorus walk this year as well as the monthly bird walks.

#### Planned work

The Hurst Village Society have given us a grant to build a new viewing bench adjacent to the reserve.

We have been awarded a grant from Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE), with funding provided by Network Rail. This will enable us to 1) make new islands to create habitats for breeding waders and Shelduck, 2) reshape and raise the old shingle island by 16"to above summer flash flooding levels, 3) create a significant shallow water and march area.

Planning is underway for a new hide at Lea Farm Lake. Provided we receive all the required permissions in time, this will be built at the end of the 2024 breeding season.

#### Brief statement of the charity's policy on reserves

The charity maintains a reserve of €9,000 for emergency work and unforeseen events. Taking on Lea Farm Lake has meant a significant increase in the assets LWT has to maintain and replace. In 2021, the trustees decided to build up an asset management fund by setting aside funds each year. In December 2023, this fund contains €4,000 and will be used to cover the costs of planned replacements and repairs to our major assets.

#### Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above, Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature: 

Name: JANE CAMPBELL

Position: CHAIR

Date: 16/7/24