

## Welcome from Chairperson – John Oldham



Many thanks for the support, at the recent EGM and by proxy, to change the incorporated status of the Trust from that of a Limited Company to a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). Now that we have begun the process to make

that change it is important to remember our main aims, not least because we will need to convince OSCR (the charities regulator) that they are acceptable.

### **The purpose of the Esk Valley Trust is**

“To stimulate public interest and care for the beauty, history and character of the valleys of the Rivers Esk and their surroundings in the Lothians of Scotland. In particular to promote and encourage responsible access and sustainable public amenities in the Esk rivers’ catchment areas for the benefit of local communities and others.”

For good reasons much of our current activity is concentrated on completing the North Esk Way (the ‘source to sea’ path along the North Esk river) but the other aspects aren’t forgotten.

### **Some good things have happened since the last newsletter:**

At long last we have succeeded in winning approval for a Woods In and Around Town (WIAT) grant for the Hewan Wood,

Cairnbank Road in Penicuik is now unblocked and walkable and, of course, we have your approval to change the incorporated status of the EVT.

### **Other activities which, we hope, will lead to further good things happening continue:**

We have been involved in discussion with Midlothian Council as part of their revision of the Core Paths plan, have had a further meeting with the management team at Dalkeith Country Park (seeking an effective way for our pathway to traverse the Park), have continued our actions with Penicuik Estate to establish an improved route through the Estate, are in renewed contact with landowners between Newhall and the Penicuik Estate to confirm approval for our aspirational route there, have begun a review for the refreshment of our website and are starting to crystallise ideas about creating a



documentary commentary of ‘the stories of the Esk’ with others.

### **Some things don’t change:**

We know that one of the landowners between Newhall and Penicuik Estate is very resistant to facilitating our preferred route for the North Esk Way, the unwelcoming access to the Melville High Drive is a continuing frustration (but please walk it!) and the challenge of linking our route (for the North Esk Way) between Melville Gate and Dalkeith Country Park remains problematical.

In addition to our own activities we do try to help others where we can. The Hewan Wood is a lovely natural resource and I was delighted when a team from the University of Edinburgh asked if they could use the wood for a research study on small mammals. We have also been asked if the paths through the wood can be used as part of an organised run through Roslin Glen. This obviously comes with potential problems as well as the benefits to the runners.

There is a danger that I keep returning to the same issues in these ‘Welcome’ notes but I hope that you find it useful to be kept up to date with our various activities – some of which move more quickly than others. As ever more detail on some of these activities follows.

## WIAT Grant for the Hewan Wood

For the long-term benefit of the woodlands along the Esk it is important that we play our part in managing the part of that woodland that we own, the Hewan Wood.

The EVT has held a Management Plan for the Hewan Wood since 2010 but, apart from the relatively light-touch maintenance of the paths through the woods that is the work (fun and enjoyment!) of our May and September working parties, we have not had the wherewithal to engage in any more serious management of this woodland. None of the high aspirations of the 2010 Management Plan have been addressed. So, after a rather long and drawn-out process (with much learning on our part as to how to work through the machinations of the Scottish Rural Development programme (SRDP)) it is good to



report that we have been awarded a WIAT grant under the Forestry Grant Scheme. This provides a small amount of annual recurrent funding for the sustainable management of the woodland (just over £1000 per year) up to 2023, and some capital funding (in total just over £5000) for us to pay for necessary thinning of trees, removing hazards, and improving fencing and signage. The changes to the wood won't be dramatic but will help us better to play our part in good long-term management of the woodland of the area. The SRDP is part of CAP funding from the EU, so there may yet be complications. However we hope that we will be able to carry through the current (2017) Management Plan for the Wood with the help of this grant and will keep you informed of opportunities for you to join in relevant activities.

## Membership and Directors

The current membership of the Trust is around 100. To simplify renewal of annual membership subs we hope soon to be able to offer payment by Direct Debit. If for any reason you haven't paid your membership for the current year 2018/19 (Victoria will have reminded you already!) it would be much appreciated if you would enclose it with your 2019/20 payment.

As mentioned in previous Newsletters, there is room for us to appoint another one, possibly two, Directors – effectively the membership of the organising committee. It is healthy for this group to be refreshed with new views and talent so we continue to look for enthusiastic and relevant people to join the team of Directors.

## Core Paths Review

The first Midlothian Core Paths Plan was published in 2009. The definition of a 'Core Path' is not exact but broadly applies to "routes that are free from obstruction that provide some clear use to the public, such as for recreation, commuting, and accessing facilities". Midlothian Council is now revising the plan and have involved us in the consultation process from the start. A formal consultation on the plan closed recently and EVT submitted detailed comments especially about the route we have established (or aspire to) for the North Esk Way. For example, as the plan stands there are no core paths (extant or aspirational) in Midlothian between the Penicuik Estate and Carlops. Recognition of the North Esk Way as part of the Core Paths network is important to the proper establishment of this route.



## Durty Events – HOP Run



Stewart Brewing are hosting a Trail running event organised by Durty events which will follow a route along Roslin Glen, including the Hewan Wood.

The event is on June 8th 2019 and is open to 400 runners. Money raised by runners will be donated to Bright Sparks, a local charity supported by Stewart Brewing

## Grant from CALA

We have just heard we have been awarded a grant of £1000 from the Cala Community Bursary Fund which we can use towards updating our website. Ben Miller did the work applying for this, well done Ben.

## AGM

The Annual General Meeting will be held in St David's Hall, Dalkeith at 7pm on Friday 10th May.

After the meeting Professor Roger Crofts will give a talk titled

***The Esk Valley: working with nature for a better future.***



This well illustrated talk begins with an overview of the Esk catchment, its special nature areas and the valley itself from sources to sea. The many challenges about managing the land and the river, including commercial forestry, water supply, flooding, and the implications of climate change and Brexit will be discussed. The final section will broaden the scope to address the range of solutions: new Maps for integrated spatial planning, Mechanisms for helping to achieve improvements: stewardship, education, empowerment, demonstration and science; and change in Mentalities of all stakeholders to make sure things really change.

## Midlothian Outdoor Festival

This year's Midlothian Outdoor Festival will be from Saturday 10 August to Sunday 18th.

We are organising two events -

- Peter Raine, will lead a circular walk from Carlops on Thursday 15th August
- On Friday 16th we will host a talk (in St David's Hall, Dalkeith) by Dr Joanna Soden on the artist Victoria Crowe. Joanna's talk last year, on the art of Sir William Gillies, was a real treat – so look forward to this year's event. The full programme for the Festival should be out in the next few weeks.

## News from the South Esk

### Riverside Wall at Newbattle

Newbattle Abbey College have contractors working to repair the crumbling Riverside Wall which has been collapsing into the river for some years now. This is being done with as little disturbance of wildlife and the college have consulted with Tommy McDermott from Trex Ecology. We at EVT know Tommy as he has spoken to us about his work on River ecology in the past. There will involve some restrictions to walkers along the South Esk at this point. The college is keen to keep locals informed and is arranging a meeting shortly to discuss the repairs. Details from their facebook/ twitter pages.



The Countryside Ranger at Lord Ancrum woods at Newbattle Abbey College, Laura Goble organises some interesting events.

A forthcoming one is a Riverfly Survey Training day. This will involve learning about the invertebrates living in our aquatic environments and how they can give us indication of the quality of the ecosystem in the water.

*Riverfly Survey Training Day – Sat 28th April 2019*

for more information contact [LauraGoble@newbattleabbeycollege.ac.uk](mailto:LauraGoble@newbattleabbeycollege.ac.uk) Tel: 0131 663 1921  
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## Summary of EVT Spring/ Summer 2019 Events

Friday 10th May	Annual General Meeting
Saturday 11 May	Spring Working Party at the Hewan Wood, starting at 10am at the kissing gate entry to the wood.
Thursday 15 August	Circular Walk (~7m) starting at Carlops Car park
Friday 16 August	Talk by Dr Joanna Soden on The Artist and the Shepherdess (the art of Victoria Crowe), 7.30pm at St David's Hall Dalkeith
Tuesday 3 September	Autumn Working Party at the Hewan Wood, starting at 10am at the kissing gate entry to the wood

Remember to keep an eye on the Esk Valley Trust web site (<http://www.eskvalleytrust.org/>) which is where information on all items of interest are placed. We are going to update the website in the coming months to make it easier to find information.

## Esk Valley Trust Committee

### Chairman

John Oldham Loanhead

### Company Secretary and Treasurer

Rennie Frazer Fairmilehead

### Directors

Roger Crofts Musselburgh

Pat Frankland Dalkeith

Peter Raine Carlops

Ben Miller Eskbank

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