



# The Esk Valley Trust Newsletter

*Autumn 2024*



**If you want to renew a subscription and haven't done so just go to [Esk Valley Trust](#) and follow the simple instructions.**

## **Welcome**

The last two Newsletters have been circulated a little later than previous 'spring' and 'autumn' issues. This one follows that new timetable so perhaps a new pattern has been set. If nothing else it allows a bit of reflection on the events of the year.

The outstanding event, without doubt, was our acquisition, as a generous gift from the estate of the late Professor David Baird, of the land of the Hewan Bog. That we can now hold this beautiful area of land in Trust alongside the Hewan Wood is, we hope a huge long-term benefit both for everyone who visits the area and for the life, in all its variety that can thrive there.

The weather has also had a big impact on us this year. In the spring Newsletter there was a photo of the tree that fell, in the late winter storms, across our new gate into the Hewan Wood. You will see later that that has now been restored. Then in the early spring heavy rains gave the North Esk river more flow and bite than normal – and as a consequence part of the riverbank at the start of the meander around the Maiden Castle was

'bitten off'. This has narrowed considerably the room for a path between the bank and fence.

A fallen tree and a river in spate are hardly 'extreme' but the increased intensity of our weather events seems to be becoming more noticeable. It fits at the gentler end of the range of stark changes in climate that are having major impacts in other parts of the world. The dramatic floods in southern Spain are only the latest in a sequence of significant weather-related disasters this year – a year that is expected to be the warmest on record for the planet.

This is not the place to comment on recent political events. Speculation about the consequences of those will be tested by reality soon enough. Come what may life (I fervently hope!) will go on – and we also hope that the Trust's activities, likewise, will go on. For that to happen over the long term we will rely on a continuing stream of support from Members and volunteers and of people willing to help to guide the Trust into its future – the Trustees. Some more on that follows, but for now, thank you for your continuing support of the Esk Valley Trust – and I hope it's not too early to wish you an enjoyable time over the winter and especially the Christmas and New Year period.

John Oldham

### **Thank you to Ben**

Ben Miller stepped down as a Trustee at the AGM in May. Ben spent six years as a Trustee. His involvement in environmental networks (and skill with modern technology compared with some of us!) was a big asset to the Trust. With a growing family and increasing professional workload he still found time to help to guide the Trust. Many thanks to Ben for all of your input – and for your continuing support as a member.



### **Trustees and volunteers**

#### ***Trustees***

The Trust currently has five Trustees. These are the people who take responsibility for the general control and management of the charity and

who make sure that the charity works to achieve its purposes (its Charitable Aims).

There is room for more Trustees – and all but one of the existing ones have been in place for ten years or more so some succession planning, renewal and refreshment is in order.

There are also issues of balance and geographical representation. All but one of the Trustees is a man and we have no representation from the area around Penicuik.

While we hope that the current team is doing an acceptable job (and we do enjoy doing it) we would welcome hearing from anyone who might be interested in being considered to join the Trustee team. If you are interested, or know someone who might be, do get in touch via the Trust's email address ([enquiries@eskvalleytrust.org](mailto:enquiries@eskvalleytrust.org)) or write to the address at the end of the Newsletter.

If you want more information on what being a Trustee involves we have a short summary that we would be happy to send out.

### ***Volunteers***

From time to time there are jobs to do where a team of volunteers is needed. To date many of these have related to maintenance at the Hewan Wood (path clearing and maintenance, cleaning information boards, litter picking etc). With the acquisition of the Hewan Bog we may be entering a phase of greater need for volunteer support to get things done.

You might also want to support the Trustees in some of their activities (eg organising our evening talk programme) without taking on the full role as a formal Trustee.

If you are interested in being more actively involved as a volunteer, as above, please use the email address ([enquiries@eskvalleytrust.org](mailto:enquiries@eskvalleytrust.org)) or write to the address at the end of the Newsletter.

### **Hewan Bog developments**

As mentioned in the last Newsletter an initial appraisal of the land and vegetation at the Hewan Bog was made earlier in the year. There was a follow-up visit in July and





Trustees are discussing actively what actions might be taken to enhance the nature value of this area of land.

The aspiration is for this to be a place where nature thrives, becoming rich in natural diversity and making positive contributions to the ecological health of the Esk Valley corridor (and to broader environmental goals).

Nigel Evans and Roger Crofts are bringing together a plan for a possible phased programme of activities to make progress in this direction. We hope to have a clearer view on specific practical and feasible activities in the spring. Volunteers no doubt will be needed to help and we will give more details on that as soon as we can.

### **Hewan Wood activities**

If you have visited the Wood recently you will have seen that the gate at the northern end has been reinstated after its rather damaging encounter with the fallen beech tree. Huge thanks are due to Ian Brown and to Jim Arnott for helping Nigel and John to restructure the northerly entrance to the wood. Ian and Jim had struggled mightily to fix the gateposts in the underlying gravel when the new gate was first erected a year ago. The prospect of having to do it all again was not particularly welcome but they did a great job. The fence line and gate are now a little further back from the path than previously and we trust that it will be a long time before any further remedial action is needed.



Ian and Jim also helped to place barriers across the line of the old path that led from the bottom of the stone steps to the Maiden Castle. This path was closed many years ago because the bank that it runs along is unstable and dangerous. There were further landslips there in the spring. Despite the danger and previous attempts to use signs to warn walkers not to use this route (the signs were vandalised) some people still do. The wooden barriers are, we

hope, sufficiently robust to make it clear that the path is closed and not safe to walk.

Lastly thanks are due to the Midlothian Paths Team for their summer visit to the wood to clear overgrowth from the steps and help with general maintenance of the wood.

A special mention here for Ian Brown. Ian has been helping the Esk Valley Trust for many years. Since the summer he has been seriously ill in hospital. We hope that the treatment that he is now receiving will be successful.

### **Keeping to the code**



The Outdoor Access code requires people to act responsibly in the outdoors in Scotland. Most of the visitors to the land that we own do so perfectly well but there are occasions when this is not the case. Motor bike riders made a real mess of the primrose beds in the Hewan Wood in the spring. Later in the summer campers left behind quite a lot of rubbish. We are grateful to Pete Cain for his valiant work in cleaning up behind those who should know better. The picture shows the remains of camping equipment collected by Pete in September.

### **Path river damage**

The northern part of the path through Roslin Glen runs along the edge of the Hewan Bog and so now falls within our remit. Following heavy spring rains the North Esk River undercut and washed away part of the bank near to the point where the path enters the Hewan Wood narrowing the distance between the edge of the bank and the fence that follows the line of the path and also bringing down a fine oak tree. If you are walking this section do



take special care at this point. We are reviewing what action is needed to improve this section of the path.

## **Midlothian Outdoor Festival and Mavisbank House**

This year's Festival ran from 4-7 October. The Trust led two walks – one in the Newbattle Woods and another along Roslin Glen and to Lasswade. As a preamble to the Festival James Simpson gave a talk on 'Mavisbank House and the Villas of the Esk' hosted by EVT (the recording is on the website). James has been a champion for those interested in the preservation of Mavisbank House for many years. The £5.3m grant from the National Heritage Memorial Fund to the Landmark Trust to secure the building that was announced in May is a significant step towards sustaining the fabric of the house and securing its long-term future..

## **Talks and walks**

This year's programme of evening talks was well-received and well attended. We are grateful to all of the speakers for their presentations. Several of the talks were recorded and can now be found on the website at [Stories of the Esk - Esk Valley Trust](#).

The programme for next year's evening talks is still being developed. We will let you have details later. As well as Zoom talks we hope to have a couple of 'walks and talks' and will try to arrange another 'in person' event although that won't be the AGM. On the assumption that there will be another Midlothian Outdoor Festival in 2025 we would, again, plan to help with leading some of the walks and organising an evening talk..

## **2025 AGM**

The Annual General Meeting in 2025 will be on Friday evening 16 May starting at 7pm. The meeting will be by Zoom to give easy access to the meeting for all members. As usual the Agenda, Minutes of the last meeting and a copy of the Annual Report and Accounts will be circulated to members and put onto the website well in advance of the meeting.



## Membership

The current membership of the Trust is 99. It would be lovely to break the '100 Barrier'. Seventeen new members have joined this year but a similar number have been removed from the list of members as they haven't subscribed in the last two years. In broad terms this is a fairly regular pattern with 10-20 new members each year and a similar number dropping out.

There are still a few previous subscribers who have not renewed their subscriptions this year. This could be for many reasons – but if, on reading this, you realise that you have simply overlooked a renewal it's not too late! Just visit the membermojo site ([Esk Valley Trust](http://Esk Valley Trust)) to subscribe online or visit the website.



### Esk Valley Trust Trustees

Roger Crofts (Musselburgh)  
Nigel Evans (Membership; Eskbank)  
Pat Crawford (Musselburgh)  
John Oldham (Chairman; Loanhead)  
Peter Raine (Treasurer; Carlops)

The Esk Valley Trust  
c/o ELGT  
109/11 Swanston Road  
Edinburgh  
EH10 7DS

[enquiries@eskvalleytrust.org](mailto:enquiries@eskvalleytrust.org)  
[www.eskvalleytrust.org](http://www.eskvalleytrust.org)  
[Esk Valley Trust | Facebook](#)

Subscribe via [Esk Valley Trust \(membermojo.co.uk\)](http://Esk Valley Trust (membermojo.co.uk))