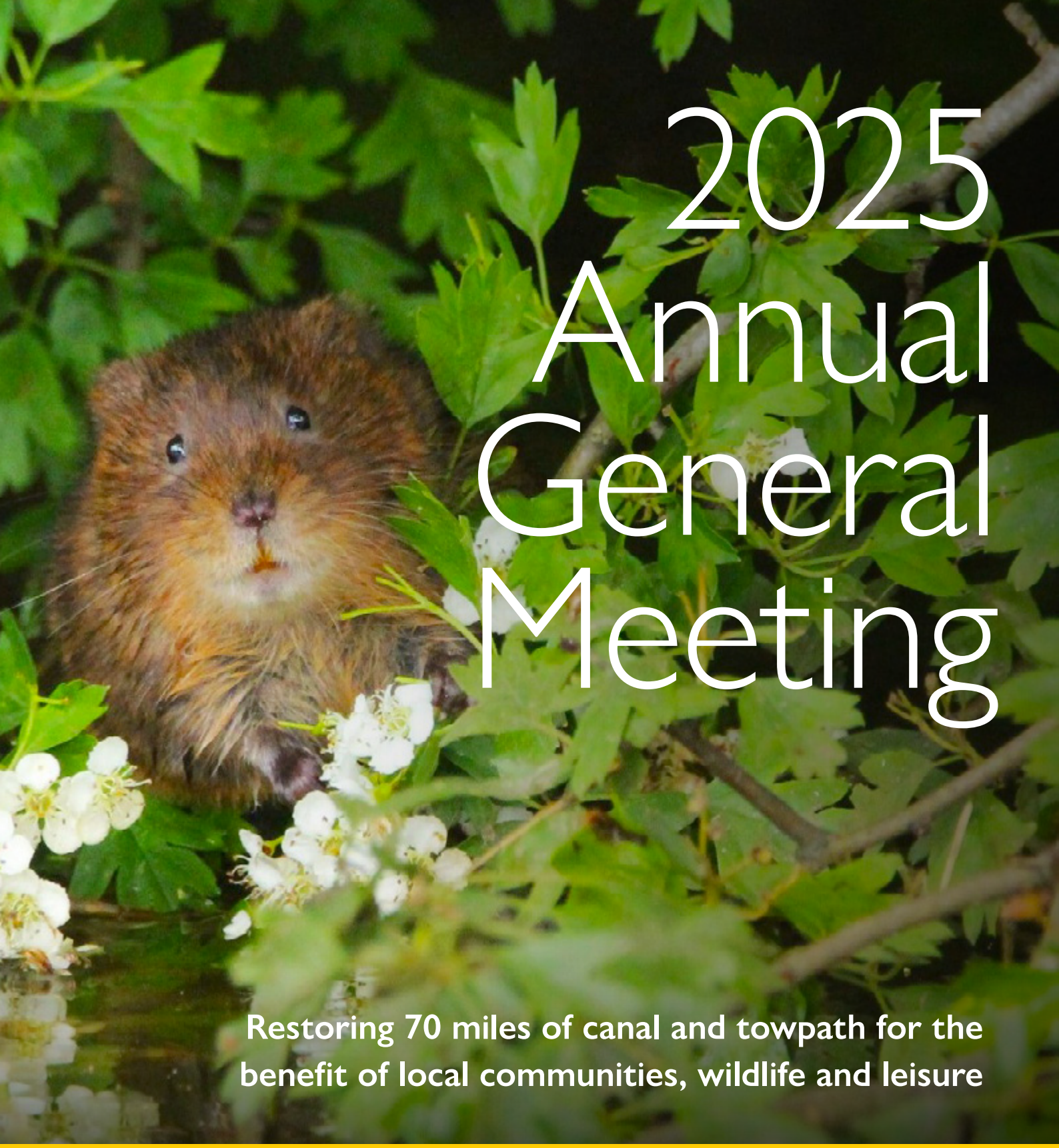


2025 Annual General Meeting

Restoring 70 miles of canal and towpath for the benefit of local communities, wildlife and leisure

wbct.org.uk

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

Patron: Her Majesty the Queen

WILTS & BERKS CANAL TRUST

AGM 2025

This booklet contains the paperwork for the **2025 Annual General Meeting** of the **Wilts & Berks Canal Trust**.
The contents are included in the order they are addressed in the meeting.

A summary of the accounts is included. The full accounts will be available on our website https://www.wbct.org.uk/agm2025.
Members requesting a hard copy by post should contact the Trust by phone on 0845 625 1977 or by letter to Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, DLCCC, Dauntsey Lock, Chippenham SN15 4HD or email info@wbct.org.uk.

If you are not attending the meeting but wish to vote, please complete the voting form on Page 15. This form can be photographed or scanned and emailed to info@wbct.org.uk or sent by post to the Trust as above.

If you wish to submit an Open Forum question please complete the form on Page 16 and send it to us using the same method as the voting form.

If you would like to support the Trust by being a member of the **200 Club** you will find the application form here.

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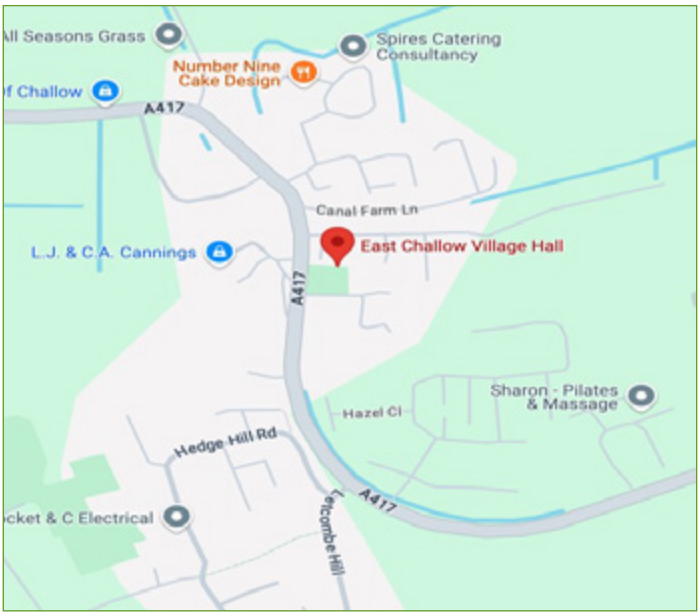
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COVER IMAGE: WATER VOLE – CREDIT: PENNY BIRCH.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING SATURDAY 18TH OCTOBER 2025

10.30am Displays and Guided Walks, 1.30pm AGM starts.

East Vale Branch is hosting this year's AGM of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, at **East Challow Village Hall, Main Street, East Challow, Wantage OX12 9SR**. Everyone is welcome to come and hear about all the exciting developments concerning the restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal.



PICTURE COURTESY OF GOOGLE MAPS.



PICTURE COURTESY OF GOOGLE MAPS.

If you can arrange to 'car share' with other members, it would be very helpful as parking is limited.

PROGRAMME

10:30am	Arrivals and refreshments. Displays will be presented during the morning
10:45am	First walk departs in the minibus to the local canal site Please let us know if you will need wheelchair access to the minibus
11.00–11.30am	Presentation on Arup Report on how to cross the A417 in the Committee Room
11.10am	Second walk departs in the minibus
11.35am	Third walk departs in the minibus
12.00 noon	The fourth walk departs in the minibus. Walkers return by 12.50pm
LUNCH – Caterers will not be providing lunch. If you are arriving in the morning, do bring your own lunch.	
1:30pm	**AGM commences in the Hall**, followed by the Open Forum
3:30pm	Close

WILTS & BERKS CANAL TRUST

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting 2025 of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust (company number 2267719) will take place at East Challow Village Hall, Main Street, East Challow, Wantage OX12 9SR **Saturday, 18th October 2025 at 1.30 pm.**

AGENDA

ORDINARY BUSINESS

1. To receive any apologies for absence.
2. **Resolution to approve the Minutes of the AGM 2024 held on 19th October** and to consider any matters arising. **A show of hands will be taken.**
3. **Resolution to approve the Directors' Annual Report for the year ended 31st March 2025. A show of hands will be taken.**
4. **Resolution to approve the Trust's accounts for the year ended 31st March 2025. A show of hands will be taken.**
5. Members to the Trust Council (formerly known as the Board):
   a. In accordance with Articles 41 and 42 of the Articles of Association one third of the Trustees retire from the Board in rotation and may offer themselves for re-election, and will be deemed to have been re-elected unless the resolution below is lost. The Trustee elected by Members for a three year term will not be required to retire in rotation in accordance with Articles 41 and 42, but will retire at the end of the three year term.

      Resolution to approve the re-election of retiring Trustees as members of the Board. A show of hands will be taken.

   b. In accordance with Article 36 of the Articles of Association if the Board appointed a Trustee during the year as an ordinary member of the Board until this AGM, they offer themselves for re-election.

      Resolution to approve the re-election of appointed members of the Board. A show of hands will be taken.

   c. In accordance with Article 44 the Inland Waterways Association has given notice of its intention to appoint a nominated representative as a member of the Board.

      Resolution to note the appointment by the Inland Waterways Association of a nominated Representative as a member of the Board. A show of hands will be taken.

   d. We are keen to attract new Trustees with specific expertise/backgrounds (including canal restoration and law). As of today, we have no immediate candidates. Thus in accordance with Article 44 of the Articles of Association the Trust Council recommends no person for election as a new trustee (other than those offering themselves for re-election).

      Resolution to approve the reappointment of Messrs Morris Owen as accountants of the Trust at remuneration to be determined by the Board. A show of hands will be taken.

6. **Resolution to approve the reappointment of Messrs Morris Owen as accountants of the Trust at remuneration to be determined by the Board. A show of hands will be taken.**

SPECIAL BUSINESS

7. There is no Special Business proposed.
8. Any Other Business.

By order of the Board

Steve Bacon
Company Secretary

NOTES

1. As a member of the Trust you are invited to attend the AGM.

   A member entitled to be present and vote at the AGM may appoint a proxy to attend, speak and vote on his or her behalf in the event of a poll being demanded on a resolution or a ballot being held for the elections to the Board. A proxy **MUST** be a member of the Trust. An instrument of proxy may be obtained from the Company Secretary, to whom it must be returned not later than forty-eight hours before the start of the meeting.

2. A Member may propose a resolution to be considered at the meeting. Such a resolution will be Special Business, requiring a majority of 75% of the votes cast at the meeting. To assist in the orderly conduct of the meeting it would be helpful if members (or their duly appointed proxy) wishing to propose a resolution would indicate their intention to do so by informing the Company Secretary in advance of the meeting.

   Please contact the Company Secretary by emailing to info@wbct.org.uk or by writing to: Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre, Dauntsey Lock, Chippenham Wilts SN15 4HD

3. After the formal business of the AGM there will be an Open Forum Session at which members may put questions from the floor to the Trustees on any matter relating to the canal or the Trust's activities.

MINUTES OF 2024 AGM

Wilts & Berks Canal Trust
Annual General Meeting on 19th October 2024
held at Abbeyfield School, Stanley Lane, Chippenham SN15 3XB at 1.00pm

Minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust (Company number 226779)

Martin Holliss – Chair of the Trustees

At the 2024 Annual General Meeting of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, Martin opened by welcoming members, noting apologies, and formally approving the minutes of the 2023 AGM. He expressed heartfelt thanks to Dave Maloney, the MCC branch, and all volunteers for organising the day and contributing across construction, conservation, boats, administration, finance and communications. Particular appreciation went to those taking on leadership roles, the Senior Leadership Team, Trustees, staff, and donors whose support makes the Trust's work possible.

He acknowledged the impact of the 2016 Pewsham accident and prosecution, offering condolences to Peter Konitzer's family. With fines and costs now being repaid, strengthened safety systems in place, and Her Majesty the Queen continuing as Patron, the Trust is able to move forward.

Martin highlighted the canal's potential to generate massive benefit (close to £200m) annually in economic, community, health and wellbeing benefits once fully restored, stressing the need for significantly greater income beyond current £300,000 levels. Local political and planning support remains strong, with new opportunities for volunteer involvement.

He closed by affirming that the Trust is stable, well-run, and facing a positive future, before handing over to CEO Mike Gibbin to report on achievements and plans..

Mike Gibbin – CEO

Mike presented a comprehensive overview of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust's activities, achievements, and future priorities. He began by highlighting the Trust's deep community engagement and the enthusiasm and dedication of its volunteers. Over the past year, the Trust recorded a 26% increase in "muddy boot" volunteer hours, amounting to over 6,000 days, which translates to a substantial societal contribution through social value. Additional contributions come from corporate volunteers and the Swindon visitor centre, further underscoring the Trust's impact on local communities.

Safety remains the Trust's foremost priority. Significant work has been undertaken on risk assessments, training, and provision of PPE to ensure volunteer safety, a commitment reinforced following previous incidents. Mike emphasised the importance of growing the organisation to handle larger projects, requiring more staff and structured volunteer coordination. Currently, approximately 2,500 volunteer days are dedicated to branch organisation alone, supported by around 30 directors, trustees, and senior leadership team members.

Community engagement extends beyond volunteering, with around 230,000 towpath users and 4,000 boat passengers annually. Social media reach has grown, with Facebook followers rising from 5,600 to 8,300, and YouTube engagement steadily increasing.

Environmental stewardship is a core objective. The Trust has implemented a sustainability policy, created a "green team," and appointed a Director of Biodiversity to strengthen conservation efforts. Advocacy campaigns are ongoing to protect canal routes, prevent encroachment, and influence local development decisions, including major projects such as the SESRO reservoir scheme.

Project delivery remains central to the Trust's work, exemplified by initiatives like flood mitigation at The Peterborough Arms and towpath maintenance. Mike concluded by recognising volunteers, branch leaders, and staff for their contributions, underlining that the Trust's future lies in growing capacity, expanding projects, engaging communities, and balancing environmental and societal benefits.

Treasurer's Report – Brian Stovold

Brian opened by welcoming attendees to the 2024 AGM and expressing gratitude to the finance team—Jonathan, Steve, Nancy, Viv—and to former Head of Accounts, Peter Wilkinson, for his transformative work on management information. He also thanked the fundraising team and colleagues involved in managing the HSE situation.

He explained that the presentation of the accounts had been revised to better reflect community activities, with costs now divided into community engagement (events, publicity, merchandise), community operations (boats, visitor centre), and general costs. Income from donations, grants, legacies, and subscriptions remained broadly stable, with grants at £119,000 and legacies around £15,500.

Subscriptions remain vital, and growing membership is a priority.

On the cost side, provisions for the HSE court case and fines formed the largest figure, with other costs stable. Net income for the year was approximately £40,000. The balance sheet showed total funds of £936,698, including fixed assets like the Peterborough Arms, with remaining loans significantly reduced. The HSE case has now been accounted for with a sustainable long-term plan, providing financial stability and enabling future fundraising with greater certainty.

Brian concluded by announcing his intention to step down as treasurer within the next six months and thanked everyone for their contributions to the Trust's success.

Resolutions

Resolution to approve the Director's Annual Report, Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31st March 2025.

Proposed by Chloe Ford and seconded by Peter Scatchard and approved by a show of hands.

Resolution to approve the Trust's accounts for the year ended 31st March 2025.

Approval of the Council's Annual Report was proposed by Brian Stovold and seconded by Keith Price and approved by a show of hands.

Resolution to reappoint or to appoint and reappoint trustees as members of the trust council.

In accordance with Articles 41 and 42 of the Articles of Association, the following members offer themselves for election or re-election as trustees as members of the Trust Council: John Henn, Ron Crook and Lawrence Davis.

Proposed by Chloe Ford and seconded by Rod Hacker and approved for election or re-election by a show of hands.

Resolution to approve the reappointment of Messrs Morris Owen as accountants of the trust remuneration determined by the board.

Proposed by Richard Shackleton and seconded by Justin Lewis and approved by a show of hands.

Other Business

Q. Peter Kinsman
Has the option for voting for the new directors and trustees to do it by post been taken away?

A. Martin Holliss
No, it hasn't. We had one return from two people and some returns putting the vote with the Chair.

In the past the AGM pack was sent out to two thousand three hundred members. Aligned with what many other charities we now send this where we have e-mails for current members of the trust. There are approximately three hundred or thereabouts for whom we do not have e-mails addresses and these members are sent hard copies of the AGM documents. This effectively was to save the trust two thousand hard copies and spending funds on two thousand postages. In a difficult financial situation for reasons explained previously that was judged to be the correct thing to do.

Peter Kinsman: It was always in the Articles of Association. We had to vote by separate ballot.

Martin Holliss: I don't believe it is. But thank you for that and I will double check and if it is, my apologies.

I'll check on it. But if that proves to be necessary my apologies to the meeting.

If it is necessary to hold votes by separate ballot, I propose that next year I propose that next year we amend the Articles of Association and make legal what we have already very sensibly done. We'll study that and we'll have a conversation too.

Q. Ray Canter
I was up in Pewsham as you probably were aware today. I felt one o'clock the start of the AGM was quite tight for anybody up there. Even the last bus must have been really tight to get back here. Could we consider perhaps half past one for the next AGM?

A. Martin Holliss
Point noted Ray, thank you.

We had thought, I know I had conversations, that the timing of the of the last outward and the back would dovetail for one o'clock. This hasn't, clearly it hasn't worked today, so we'll take a look and see how that can be improved. Thank you.

Juanita Poulton

Hello everybody, I'm Juanita and I'm the person who keeps the records of volunteer hours and enters them on the master log. It's a great pleasure that I can announce that the volunteer hours and values for 2023 to 2024 have increased considerably on previous years.

The grand total for the period was 39,055 volunteer hours, submitted with… I really need a drum-roll here; there we go; thank you…a value of £1,204,318.

To have exceeded £1 million worth of volunteer hours is a phenomenal achievement. My congratulations and thanks to all who have contributed so much time and effort to the progress of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust. Let's see if we're able to improve it.

In particular, I'd like to thank those people who've actually worked on the workparty hours. It's a huge undertaking and thank you for making it so easy for me. I donated the awards to the Trust in memory of my late husband, Tony Davy, who was the chairman from 1996 until he died in 2004 and to encourage people to submit their volunteer hours.

The master log is kept up to date to supply statistics to anyone making applications for grants and other fundraising activities on behalf of the Trust. In addition, the volunteer hours are submitted to Wiltshire Council every month to support the role of Canal and Project Officer within the Council. It is my pleasure to make the presentation of the awards.

The Tony Davy Memorial Cup is awarded to the individual who submitted the most volunteer hours during the year. The winner is Martin Holliss. As Chair of Trustees, he submitted 1,071 hours with a value of 58,905.

The first Tony Davy Crystal Award is awarded in recognition of the branch that submitted the most volunteer hours and the winning branch is MCC. David, Ray, are you going to come and collect it? The second Tony Davy award has not arrived. It doesn't matter because I'll explain in a moment. It's awarded to the branch that most significantly increased the hours from the previous year. This goes to West Vale Branch who submitted 6,557 hours with a value of £126,983. This is an increase of 1,952 hours over the previous year. It's quite remarkable as they won the award last year as well. So, they've already got the award. I'll put a little article in the next issue of the *Dragonfly* magazine.

Now, this one is the "Pick of the Branches", and this is for the branch who attained the most new memberships in the year. It goes to Swindon Branch.

The 2024 Annual General Meeting was formally closed at 14:50.

WILTS & BERKS CANAL TRUST

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 March 2025

The Trustees who are also Directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2025. The trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019).

OBJECTIVES AND AIMS

The aim of the Trust is to protect, conserve and improve the route of the Wilts & Berks and North Wilts Canals, and branches, for the benefit of the community and environment.

The Trust's first value and most important priority is 'Safety First'. The Trust is determined to do everything possible to ensure the safety of all volunteers, employees and visitors.

The Trust's key goal is to restore a continuous navigable waterway linking the Kennet and Avon Canal near Melksham, Wiltshire, the River Thames near Abingdon, Oxfordshire and the Thames and Severn Canal near Cricklade, Wiltshire. While most of the restored canal will follow its historic line, in some instances (e.g. at Melksham and Swindon) new canal lines are required due to development having occurred on top of the historic line.

The Trust is involved in the promotion of the benefits of restoration through increasingly active links with local communities and local councils. It also works closely with the Wiltshire, Swindon and Oxfordshire Canal Partnership to further restoration.

The Trust carries out physical restoration such as restoring bridges and locks, dredging of the canal, and construction of the towpath of the canal as a walkway and nature corridor. The Trust is actively engaged in the development of restoration projects, including the preparation of plans and drawings, ecological and environmental studies, and applications for planning permission.

Currently, the majority of projects are carried out by Trust volunteers, while some are carried out by contractors. When the Trust has larger and more complex projects, this balance will change.

The Trust encourages community engagement with the adjacent communities along the canal restoration route, promoting health and wellbeing and raising awareness of the work of the Trust e.g., via work-parties, talks and guided walks and via various methods of communication including email updates, social media, and the Trust website.

The Trust also seeks to maximise the public benefits of canal restoration in a wider context such as water management, open access for public leisure, conserving our industrial legacy, promoting wildlife diversity and improving economic opportunities along the line of the canal route.

ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

ROYAL PATRONAGE

We are honoured and deeply grateful that Her Majesty the Queen has chosen to continue supporting us as our Patron. We are hoping that Her Majesty will grace us with a visit during 2026 or 2027 (e.g. during the 50th anniversary celebrations of the founding of the Wilts & Berks Canal Amenity Group, predecessor to the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust).

CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

While the Trust's charitable aims are intentionally broad (to enable a wide range of activity), a substantial amount of activity is being focused into five areas, all delivering substantial public benefit:

- **Restoration of our canal, towpath and its structures** recreating our National Heritage;
- **Delivering substantial economic benefit** through new boat-related businesses such as hire boats, marinas, chandleries etc; other new canalside businesses – pubs, restaurants, café; increased canalside housing development;
- **Delivering community benefit** especially related to education, volunteering, health and wellbeing;
- **Delivering strong environmental/biodiversity benefit** through careful management of the canal, hedging, neighbouring wildflower meadows etc.
- **Reducing local flooding** by enabling excess local rainwater (e.g. downpipe and street runoff) to feed into the canal line, enabling it to dissipate over a wide geographical area rather than flooding the local area, draining farmland in the process and making it more productive.

The range of Trust activity is too large to highlight specific projects, but Trustees wish to highlight that there is significant and growing activity right along the canal line.

This activity is being focused by our CEO towards 8 priority Objectives…

1. **Continuing to strengthen governance and safety:** Ensuring that all our policies and procedures are in line with legal obligations, and growing/deepening a safety culture to ensure that they are being followed;
2. **Developing our organisation to increase capacity:** Increasing the number of volunteers with specific expertise, and building teams to manage a function rather than relying on one or two very hard-working individuals;
3. **More active Engagement with our communities:** Growing programme of community awareness and enthusiasm towards, and engagement with, our canal restoration project;
4. **Starting a major push with external stakeholders:** Building a team of senior-level champions/advocates who will convince influential and national decision-makers to support our canal restoration project;

Charitable activities (continued)

5. **Restoration Projects:** Increasing activity in the preparation stages and actual delivery of live projects;
6. **Restarting Towpath Challenge:** Obtaining agreement to the route and opening of a towpath/footpath/cycleway along our canal line even before the canal is restored.
7. **Significantly increasing membership.**
8. **2050 vision and 5-year business plan:** Ensuring long-term focus and laying the foundations for large-scale grant funding.

Embedded across and within all our activity is an absolute commitment to **'Safety First'**. Our Health & Safety policy and procedures have been reviewed and significantly updated, and our Chief Operating Officer is responsible for ensuring that our Health & Safety policy and procedures are followed. The Trustees wish to highlight the work that Peter Thomas, Chief Operating Officer, has done during the last year to embed the "Safety First" message, alongside all Branch Chairs, Branch Health & Safety Officers and Laurence Davis, Trustee with the Health & Safety Portfolio.

The Trust recognises that physical restoration of our historic canal is not enough in itself. Support for this, the UK's largest canal restoration project, will deepen only if significant local benefits are delivered. Our aim is to ensure that a growing proportion of our local communities become actively engaged with our heritage project, whether by volunteering or by experiencing our canal/towpath environment as a visitor. During the year, our monthly records show an increase of 50% in volunteer hours driven by a desire to see improvements in their local stretch of canal, the environment and for the social side of volunteering.

MPs and Councils (whether Unitary, County, District, Town, and Parish) are increasingly recognising that our volunteer organisation is bringing significant benefit and deserves support. We are most grateful for their growing support.

In line with our charitable aims, there is little point in canal/towpath restoration unless it brings substantial benefit to each and every local community along its route, with large numbers of people of all ages, ethnicities and walks of life visiting the canal/towpath, especially where this is for the first time in their life.

To achieve this, our aim is to significantly increase our community engagement activities. Examples of the type of activity we aim to encourage are educational and training visits from school/college/university pupils, youth clubs and history/heritage groups, focusing on nature/biodiversity, history/heritage and engineering. This is in addition to feedback from a large number of people that a restored canal/towpath provides a new, unique and most welcome leisure and wellbeing resource.

The Trust now has 9,000 social media followers and, during 2024/25, reached over 400,000 people, largely due to growing activity on Facebook and YouTube. Trustees would like to thank the Trust's Comms Team, led by Chloe Ford, for this hugely positive result.

When completed, the Wilts & Berks canal, comprising 750 acres of linear blue-green country park, will bring…

1. **huge wellbeing benefit** due to our canal and its towpath being used for leisure activities (estimated to be £100m per annum);
2. **significant economic benefit** (estimated to be £54m per annum when completed);
3. **savings to the NHS** (estimated to be £38m per annum) due to our local populations taking more exercise and
4. **enormous biodiversity benefit** within the 1900 habitats of principal importance that our canal and towpath pass through.

The Trust now runs four trip boats (*The Mary Archard*, *Damselfly*, *Nonsuch* and *Dragonfly*), covering Pewsham, Chippenham, Melksham, Royal Wootton Bassett and Swindon. During the year, a 2km stretch at Royal Wootton Bassett was reopened for boating and the trip boat *Nonsuch* was purchased using money from the Vic Miller fund. Boat trips are an excellent means of communicating the benefits of having a live waterway and are an important community engagement activity. An increasing amount of boat maintenance activity is taking place, including painting on both *Nonsuch* and *Dragonfly*. Trustees would like to thank Martin Palmer, Head of Boats, and all boat teams for another successful year.

The Peterborough Arms, the Trust's public house at Dauntsey Lock, has had a difficult year. Not only was the B4069 (the pub's main connection to Lyneham and Royal Wootton Bassett) closed in 2024 due to a landslip at Lyneham Banks but significant flooding occurred due to blocked road drains. We now have new tenants, led by landlord Tom Khole, and it's a delight to see renewed energy and enthusiasm. Trustees would also like to thank the Trust's team of volunteers (led by Dave Maloney) who have found solutions to each issue in turn. The B4069 landslip repair has now been completed and the road reopened, and we are hopeful that 2025/6 will prove to be a good year for the pub.

FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

Fundraising through the year is crucial both to cover our core operating costs but also to provide funding for our restoration activities. By its very nature there can be a time lag from application to receipt and particular expertise in finding the right source of funds is important.

The Trust's contract with Marsha Miles Consultancy (an external grant funding consultant) ended during 2024/25 and an in-house funding team is being built. Trustees wish to extend especial thanks to Ali Arnold, Ian Mitchell, Pam Canter and Patricia Clements for their active fundraising efforts throughout the year.

We would like to remember Robin Clark of the Underwood Trust who died during 2024. Robin was a long-standing supporter, contributing core funds and project specific funds over an incredible 40 years.

Our Branch Chairs are encouraged to conduct fundraising activity within each branch and to engage with our funding team when seeking funds for particular projects.

Fundraising activities (continued)

Sources of income during 2024/25 were, in order of importance:

1. Grants (largest source by a long way)
2. Donations
3. Community operations
4. Subscriptions
5. Gift Aid
6. Rent received
7. Interest received
8. Legacies

The Trustees would like to thank all our donors and all those who have supported our income generation activities in whatever way. In addition to a large number of individual donors, we extend special thanks to:

- Barratt Homes
- Bartlett Taylor
- Chippenham Area Board
- Chippenham Town Council
- Delafield Charitable Trust
- Entrust – C F Hills
- Garfield Weston Foundation
- Inland Waterways Association (IWA)
- Neighbourly
- Nineveh Charitable Trust
- Reekie Charitable Trust
- Rotary Club
- Swindon Borough Council
- The Weinstock Fund
- TOE (Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment) with funding from Grundon Waste Management Ltd
- Vale of White Horse District Council
- Waterways Recovery Group (WRG)
- Wiltshire Community Foundation

Looking to the future, our 5-year Business Plan outlines several million pounds of restoration activity and our aim is to scale up our fundraising team, to start applying for large grants and to increase the pace of canal and towpath restoration.

PETER KONITZER

As advised previously, a valued volunteer, Peter Konitzer, died in a tragic accident in August 2016 at one of our worksites. Once again we wish to express our heartfelt condolences to his family and partner.

In June 2024, after nearly 8 years, the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) brought Court proceedings for a breach of Health & Safety legislation. The Trust pleaded guilty, was ordered to pay a £30k fine and funeral expenses and is also liable for £72k HSE investigation costs. Once again, Trustees can assure Members, Grant Funders and Donors that no membership subscriptions or grants will be used to pay the Court fine or HSE investigation costs. These will be paid from the Trust's operational activities.

An Inquest was held in March 2025 and the Conclusion was "Unlawful Killing".

Having reviewed the evidence again, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has now confirmed that no further legal action will be taken. The case is now closed.

Since the tragic accident, the Trust has completely overhauled and improved every aspect of its organisation, particularly with regard to Health & Safety and temporary works measures, extensive work that was acknowledged by the Judge, the HSE and the Coroner. With the Trust's first value being 'Safety First', nothing is more important to us than the continued safety of our volunteers, employees and visitors.

As outlined above, the Trust is now being managed in a highly professional manner, in line with all Health & Safety, legal and charitable requirements.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

FINANCIAL POSITION

Total income for the year to 31 March 2025 was £346,705 (up from £301,945 in 2023/24), and total expenditure was £218,600 (up from £191,189 in 2023/24). The Accounts show a surplus of £97,559.

Donations, grants and legacies increased slightly to £276,586 (from £246,348 in 2023/24). Subscriptions in the year were stable at £42,919 and remain a significant element of our income mix.

With Court and Inquest proceedings relating to the tragic accident in 2016 having now been concluded, the **provision for future liabilities** made in our 2023/24 accounts is no longer required. The **actual liability** now being known, the total sum has been moved to other creditors.

The Trustees wish to thank all those who contribute to generating income for the Trust, whether by fundraising, grant finding/giving, boating, events, donations or subscriptions.

The Trustees recognise and thank the whole finance team for their work and attention to detail over the financial year. The team comprises Brian Stovold (Trustee Treasurer), Peter Wilkinson (Finance Director, who stood down during the year), Jon Gregory (Head of Accounts), Nancy Collingborn and Viv Dipper. The Finance Management Group met throughout the year, providing regular financial and cashflow updates, assessing new and ongoing financial issues, and consistently delivering sound advice to the Trustees via the CEO and Treasurer. The Trustees wish to welcome Chris Coyle back to volunteering with the Trust, as Finance Director.

INVESTMENT POLICY AND OBJECTIVES

Within the context of the Trust's reserves policy, we have no current need for long term invested funds. Instead, we use the interest-bearing COIF Charities Deposit Fund to hold restricted funds for the short term. In determining where to hold short term funds the principle of immediate access to funds is important alongside a cautious approach to risk taking and ethical investment.

Mindful of the need to spread risk, the Trust also holds a separate interest-bearing account at NatWest alongside the existing current account, to hold part of our restricted funds, and will open other accounts as needed to ensure that our charitable funds are secure.

RESERVES POLICY

As part of prudent active financial management, the Trust's reserves policy defines a minimum level of reserves that is appropriate to the needs of the Trust and is reviewed periodically. The policy provides for good stewardship and ensures a stable financial background as the Trust delivers on its charitable objectives. It also helps to ensure job security to our employees.

GOING CONCERN

The Trust ensures that its restricted funds are clearly separated from other monies and, in line with Charity Law, that these funds are used only for the purpose for which they have been provided. Expenditure commitments are managed in a way that

Going concern (continued)

ensures that we always have funds to meet them. The Trust aims to develop a range of revenue streams to support the funding of the Trust's activities, including being able to ensure that the Trust can repay the outstanding loans taken out to finance the purchase of the Peterborough Arms public house when they become due in 2034.

CONTRACTUAL COMMITMENTS

The Trust has no ongoing commercial contractual commitments that require disclosure. With c.200 landowners along our 70 mile canal line, the Trust has a variety of land-related contractual commitments, mostly leases. These are often with minimal/peppercorn rent, on the basis that we actively manage their land and its nature/biodiversity. The Trust is very grateful to those landowners for offering such generous terms.

FUTURE PLANS

Over the next 5 years, the Trust's strategy for restoration will be focused on the delivery of four strategic stretches of canal, namely…

1. **The Melksham Link** from the Kennet and Avon Canal to Melksham
2. **Pewsham Waterside** with 3 locks, Carpenter's Workshop, Dry Dock and a significant stretch of in-water canal;
3. **From Royal Wootton Bassett to Swindon** which includes the crucial M4 Crossing;
4. **Bringing Boats Back to Wantage** reinstating the canal from the existing junction on the River Thames south of Abingdon, under the A34 and back to Grove and Wantage.

This will require a significant amount of planning, fundraising and restoration as well as a sustainable core funding strategy.

The Trust is also aiming to bring significant stretches of towpath into use as a public footpath/cycleway even before restoration of the canal itself is undertaken. We are encouraged that every council along our canal/towpath line supports this **"Towpath Challenge"** initiative, the key benefit being to provide local communities with a leisure resource that showcases the proposed canal line and raises local interest and engagement with our heritage restoration project. There are clear common interests between this initiative and active travel cycleways being proposed both by Sustrans and Western Gateway.

The Trust is deepening its relationships with MPs and Councils along our canal line, and are pleased to report that we enjoy near-unanimous support. Where appropriate, we develop Memoranda of Understanding with Councils, highlighting how our activity supports each Council's policies and strategic priorities.

We are also developing active links with commercial developers, the aim being for canal restoration to be included as an integral part of developer plans (as is happening at Wichelstowe, south Swindon), delivering significant additional benefit to local communities.

The Trust has active relationships with several other canal restoration societies, the aim being to learn from others, to openly share our own experience, and to pool knowledge for the common good.

We aim to increase the size of the Trust's membership from its current baseline of 2300 members to beyond 3000, and to increase the number of people that actively contribute to the restoration by volunteering their time.

As the Trust increases its activity, a key challenge is to attract significantly more volunteers, bringing a wide range of skills. Several volunteering opportunities exist, both for "muddy boots" and "clean shoes" roles, and the Trust is especially keen for volunteers to become actively involved in subjects/skills/areas about which they are deeply enthused and for which they have experience/expertise.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

GOVERNING DOCUMENT

The charity is controlled by its governing document, a deed of trust, and constitutes a Limited Company, limited by guarantee, as defined by the Companies Act 2006.

TRUSTEES

As at 31 March 2025, the Trust had 7 Trustees, all of whom have specific areas of responsibility, as listed below.

To encourage independence and a challenging-but-positive mindset, Trustees are encouraged to ask for any information and clarifications they feel would be helpful.

During the year and as part of a refocusing of Trustee activity, Jo Douty, Jenny Stratton, Ron Crook and John Henn stood down as Trustees. All four brought substantial value during their times as Trustees, for which we extend sincere thanks. Jenny, Ron and John continue to volunteer actively for the Trust.

We currently have vacancies for up to 2 new Trustees, especially for people with canal restoration experience who live along our canal line. New trustees are co-opted by the current Trustees and subsequently confirmed through election by members at a General Meeting. Induction of new trustees is managed by the Chair. They are given documentation mandated by the Charity Commission along with other important documents and access to the WBCT information management system. All Trustees (new and existing) are required to complete and sign a Declaration of Interests form each year.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Overall responsibility for the management of the Trust lies with the Trust Council, whose members are confirmed at the next general meeting following co-option/ appointment and then re-elected in rotation. Officers of the Trust Council include a Chair, Vice-Chair (position currently vacant), Company Secretary and Treasurer.

Generally meeting bi-monthly (or more often as required), the **Trust Council** has specific responsibility in 2 areas, namely Strategic Advice, Governance (especially regarding the Charity Commission, Companies House, Finance, Health & Safety, Risk and transparent decision-making). Trustees also contribute actively into Public Advocacy amongst national/regional bodies.

Reporting to the Trust Council is our **Executive Board**. Led by Mike Gibbin as CEO, supported by Ron Crook as Deputy CEO, this group has classic functional/ departmental responsibilities (e.g. CEO, COO, Finance, Engineering, Development, Marketing, Funding, Nature & Biodiversity, Admin & Governance). Formed during early 2023, the key aim being to separate governance from operational matters, the Executive Board is collectively charged with making the Trust's operational decisions.

Organisational structure (continued)

We also have a senior-level knowledge-share forum, our **Senior Leadership Team**, a group of 20-25 people from right across our organisation and canal line that meets monthly, and which is chaired by our CEO.

The Trustees wish to thank all members of the Executive Board and Senior Leadership Team for their enthusiasm, commitment and wide-ranging contributions. The Trustees wish especially to thank Mike Gibbin, our CEO, for his energy and determination. Under Mike's leadership, the Trust is increasingly focused on addressing the most important issues and challenges.

Where need arises, subgroups are formed comprising members from the Trust Council, Executive Board and Senior Leadership Team to tackle specific issues. During the last year, 2 Working Groups have been active:

Strategy Working Group: A high-level review is being conducted to understand and document the focus and interests of large-scale grant funders. This will enable the Trust to focus future fundraising efforts towards grant funders who are most likely to support our activities. Trustees are also starting to consider the scale of income and likely expenditure that will be needed once the canal has been restored. This will feed into the development of a Commercial Strategy that, over the next 20+ years, will assure the financial and operational viability of the canal.

Advocacy Steering Group: The Trust now has an active public advocacy programme, the aim being to increase awareness, knowledge and support of the Trust and its activity. The Advocacy Steering Group focuses on a wide range of people and bodies with activity at national (e.g. MPs, national charities, national media), regional (e.g. county/district/town councils) and local (parish councils, local media).

A third Working Group **(Policy Working Group)** is being set up to develop and review policies.

Three organisations namely: **The Inland Waterways Association** (IWA), **Canal & River Trust** (CRT) and the **Wiltshire, Swindon & Oxfordshire Canal Partnership** (WSOCP) have the right under the Trust's Articles of Association to nominate a person to become a Trustee. During this year a senior member of the IWA (Verna Lewis) sat on Trust Council, providing an important interface with the IWA. The Trust Chair, Chief Executive and IWA representative also sit on the WSOCP. The Trust Chair has regular Director-level discussions with CRT.

The WSOCP is a political and local authority forum to promote the restoration of local abandoned canals. The core role of the WSOCP is to deepen links between the Trust, Councils and other partners, and to stimulate canal and towpath restoration activity right along our canal line. Following local council elections, a review of WSOCP activity is planned.

In addition to the central management of the Trust there are five local branches situated along the canal route, each with a Chair and Treasurer, and a Boat Team (with a Head of Boats) that runs the Trust's boats.

All activities of the Trust are organised and largely managed by volunteers. The Trust has three part-time employees covering a range of administration roles. Their work is invaluable and the Trustees extend sincere thanks for everything they do.

The Trust is affiliated with, and is a Member of, the **Inland Waterways Association**. The Trust has also joined the IWA's **"Fund Britain's Waterways"** campaign, to lobby Government and other public bodies to increase (not cut) funding of maintenance and restoration of the canal network.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The Trust Council conducts its own reviews of the major risks to which the charity is exposed, and systems have been established to mitigate those risks. Written Risk Assessments are prepared for all our activities, in line with our clearly-defined Health & Safety policy. The Trust Council reviews and agrees the Risk Register periodically. A thorough review of the Risk Register is currently being undertaken by Mike Gibbin (CEO), Nahom Russom (Risk Manager), and Oliver Mackie (Trustee). Both Nahom Russom and Oliver Mackie are risk professionals.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER

02267719 (England and Wales)

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER

299595

REGISTERED OFFICE

Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre
Dauntsey Lock
CHIPPENHAM
Wiltshire
SN15 4HD

TRUSTEES

CURRENT AND APPOINTED IN THE PERIOD

Steve Bacon	Company Secretary
Laurence Davis	Health & Safety
Johnnie Graham	Safeguarding & Policy development
Martin Holliss	Chair
Justin Lewis	Strategy
Oliver Mackie	Risk
Brian Stovold	Treasurer

COMPANY SECRETARY

Steve Bacon

BANKERS

Lloyds Bank Plc
5 High Street
Swindon SNI 3EN

Nat West Plc
45/49 Broadmead
Bristol BSI 3EU

CCLA Investment Managers
Senator House
85 Queen Victoria Street
London EC4V 4LT

Extract from 2024/25 Accounts (1 of 2):

Wilts & Berks Canal Trust

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st March 2025

	Unrestricted funds £	*Restricted funds £*	*2025 Total funds £*	*2024 Total funds £*
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM				
Donations, Grants and legacies	**142,195**	**148,508**	**290,703**	246,348
Community Operations	**35,165**	**12,853**	**48,018**	48,480
Investment income	**7,984**	**–**	**7,984**	7,117
Total	**185,344**	**161,361**	**346,705**	301,945
EXPENDITURE ON				
Raising funds	**9,428**	**–**	**9,428**	28,217
Charitable activities				
Restoration & Maintenance of Canals	**31,089**	**52,330**	**83,419**	61,784
Community Engagement	**4,809**	**20**	**4,829**	3,570
Community Operations	**8,939**	**411**	**9,350**	19,553
General	**48,786**	**26,840**	**75,626**	54,107
Staff and Volunteer Costs	**34,050**	**–**	**34,050**	34,278
Depreciation and Asset Related Costs	**12,418**	**15,531**	**27,949**	17,123
Provisions	**4,495**	**–**	**4,495**	43,597
Total	**154,014**	**95,132**	**249,149**	262,229
NET INCOME	**31,330**	**66,229**	**97,559**	39,716
Transfers between funds	**28,691**	**(28,691)**	**–**	–
Net movement in funds	**60,021**	**37,538**	**97,559**	39,716
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS				
Total funds brought forward	**521,681**	**415,017**	**936,698**	896,982
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	**581,702**	**452,555**	**1,034,257**	936,698

Extract from 2024/25 Accounts (2 of 2):

Wilts & Berks Canal Trust

Statement of Financial Position 31st March 2025

	Unrestricted funds £	*Restricted funds £*	*2025 Total funds £*	*2024 Total funds £*
FIXED ASSETS				
Tangible assets	**633,234**	**242,154**	**875,388**	830,226
CURRENT ASSETS				
Stocks	**1,937**	**–**	**1,937**	1,937
Debtors	**47,109**	**–**	**47,109**	23,706
Investments	**105,318**	**106,295**	**211,613**	106,295
Cash at bank	**34,158**	**104,106**	**138,264**	207,774
	188,522	**210,401**	**398,923**	339,712
CREDITORS				
Amounts falling due within one year	**(61,438)**	**–**	**(61,438)**	(35,740)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	**127,084**	**210,401**	**337,485**	303,972
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	**760,318**	**452,555**	**1,212,873**	1,134,198
CREDITORS				
Amounts falling due after more than one year	**(178,616)**	**–**	**(178,616)**	(82,500)
PROVISIONS FOR LIABILITIES	**–**	**–**	**–**	(115,000)
NET ASSETS	**581,702**	**452,555**	**1,034,257**	936,698
FUNDS				
Unrestricted funds:				
General fund			**410,692**	379,362
Designated fund			**28,691**	–
Revaluation			**142,319**	142,319
			581,702	521,681
Restricted funds			**452,555**	415,017
TOTAL FUNDS			**1,034,257**	936,698

WBCT TRUSTEES

Trustees who are seeking re-election or election after co-option during the year

Martin Holliss



Flexible action-focused "glass half full" thinker; quick learner; high standards of quality, ethics and professionalism; strong belief in teamwork, training and sharing/pooling of experience.

Now retired after a wide-ranging career; marketing and management roles in a range of industries, including international market research (30 years, 23 years of which running own consultancy), travel (seven years running own wine tour operator), wine retailing, advertising, precision plastic mouldings, retail (Sainsburys departmental manager).

Hobbies include Skipper on *Barbara McLellan* canal trip boat (65' wide beam; 40 passenger capacity), music (trumpet and Trustee Treasurer of Trowbridge Symphony Orchestra), playing tennis and digging/tending our allotment.

Lives in Bradford on Avon (on the doorstep of the Melksham Link); married to Liz (local Lead Volunteer for Canal & River Trust); Maritime & Coastguard Agency Boatmaster Licence.

Lastly, lifelong interest in canals and positive track record as active WBCT Trustee and latterly as Chair.

Steve Bacon



Born in 1950 in Hounslow, I spent most of my adult life in Arborfield, Berks. I met my future wife Heather at a National Trust volunteer camp in 1973, and a few months later we took part in WRG's Droitwich Dig. Before family intervened, we attended work parties in Berkshire and Hampshire.

On my retirement in 2015, we moved to Royal Wootton Bassett so that we could be involved in the Wilts & Berks Canal's restoration. In 2016 I was elected by the membership as a Trustee at a crucial period in the Canal Trust's history, and in 2019, I stepped into the breach as Health & Safety Advisor, later also becoming Company Secretary. My Health & Safety role has now been passed on to another Trustee.

I was elected to chair the Royal Wootton Bassett branch in May 2022. I am keen to see the canal restored between our town and Swindon as a top priority. With my accumulated knowledge both in the canal's history and its plans for the future, I offer myself for re-election as a Trustee.

WILTS & BERKS CANAL TRUST

A non profit-distributing company limited by guarantee, Company Number 2267719

Voting Form for 2025 Annual General Meeting to be Held on Saturday 18 October 2025

To: **The Company Secretary, Wilts & Berks Canal Trust**
Dauntsey Lock Canal Centre, Chippenham SN15 4HD

To be valid the form must arrive by 4:00pm on Wednesday 15th October 2025

I/We _____ Your name

of _____ and address

_____

Proxy Nomination Details – Optional

As a voting member you may appoint the Chair of the meeting or another member to act as your proxy at the 2025 AGM. Please select either the Chair of the meeting or provide details of another member. **If you don't wish to allocate a proxy please don't tick either item below.**

Chair of the meeting ☐

Member name to act as your proxy ..... ☐

Instructions for Voting

*Please mark one box only for each resolution to indicate '**For**' or '**Against**' or '**Abstain**' as required. Note that an abstention is not a vote in law and will not be included in any calculation of the proportion of votes 'For' and 'Against' a resolution.*

ORDINARY RESOLUTIONS	For	Against	Abstain
To approve the Minutes of the thirty sixth AGM held on **19 October 2024**	☐	☐	☐
To approve the Directors' Annual Report for the year ended **31 March 2025**	☐	☐	☐
To approve the Trust's Accounts for the year ended **31 March 2025**	☐	☐	☐
To re-appoint Messrs Morris Owen as the Trust's Accountants for the year to **31 March 2026**	☐	☐	☐

ELECTIONS TO THE "TRUST COUNCIL" (formerly "Board of Trustees")

You may vote For or Against in respect of as many candidates as you wish. You may appoint a proxy to vote on your behalf.

Directors retiring by rotation or seeking election after co-option during this year.

	For	Against	Abstain
Martin Holliss (retiring by rotation and seeking re-election)	☐	☐	☐
Stephen Bacon (retiring by rotation and seeking re-election)	☐	☐	☐

Signed:..... Date: .....

Signed:..... Date: .....

Joint members having two votes should both sign unless they wish to vote independently, in which case this form should be photocopied or an additional copy requested.

Please initial any alterations you make to this form.

This form can be photographed or scanned and emailed to info@wbct.org.uk or sent by post to the Trust's ad-dress below.

The full Directors' Report and Accounts will be on our website https://www.wbct.org.uk/agm2025 from Saturday 4th October 2025 (being 14 days before the 2025 AGM). Members requesting a hard copy by post should contact the Trust by phone on 0845 625 1977, by letter to Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, DLCCC, Dauntsey Lock, Chippenham SN15 4HD or email info@wbct.org.uk.

WILTS & BERKS CANAL TRUST

A non profit-distributing company limited by guarantee, Company Number 2267719

Form to submit Open Forum questions

Members may submit one question to the Board. Joint members may submit one question each to the Board.
This slip should be returned, at the latest, by post on Wednesday 15th October 2025 or by email to: info@wbct.org.uk by Wednesday 15th October 2025.

Full Name:.....

OPEN FORUM QUESTION:

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Joint Memberships may submit a second question below:

Full Name:.....

OPEN FORUM QUESTION:

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