

# Annual Trustees Report 2023



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## S.1 Introduction

At our last AGM in May 2022 our Chair pointed out that we were looking forward to increasing our Board membership in coming months; little did we realise that we would shortly lose two of our longest standing Board members; Gordon Smith, our Chair, and Neil Carnegie, trail builder extraordinaire. While we have been fortunate that Paul Lindsay has joined us, we remain very light and bringing in new Board members is a key priority for us. This lack of Board members has inevitably constrained our progress somewhat despite the very best efforts of Marc Crowley, our Trail Coordinator, as later sections in this report will outline.

Equally, our partners at Forestry & Land Scotland (FLS) have had to continue their focus on post Arwen clearance activity and their resources remain stretched. WE have made some progress with them on the development of a Memorandum of Understanding which should provide a sound template for our long-term working relationship.

Inevitably therefore this has been a year where we had to focus on trail maintenance rather than starting any major strategic projects, although we're still committed to working with FLS and local landowners, where willing, to extend the number and range of trails under our management. Similarly, we are engaging with Fred Olsen Renewables representatives on the proposed Scawd Law Windfarm development to better understand the implications and opportunities arising from that.

Looking more widely it's great to see the progress being made with the MTB Innovation Centre at Innerleithen and we're excited about the ways it should contribute to a long term, sustainable focus for mountain biking activity in the Tweed Valley and beyond.

We still believe that the TVTA has much to offer, much to look forward to and much to contribute to the development of mountain biking across the Tweed Valley and we look forward to working with stakeholders across the various interested communities to achieve this.

Finally, we want to recognise and celebrate the hard work, enthusiasm and contribution from all our trail builders, volunteers, personal and business supporters.

Our short AGM will focus on the following key areas:

- Our Treasurer, Ed Shoote, will present our Financial Report and Accounts, outlining the very stable base from which we operate from. During these challenging times we really appreciate the financial support from both our riding and business community.
- Fred Bell, our Secretary will provide an update on the TVTA Board and structure - this is an area we're looking to build up following the departure of our Chair, Gordon Smith, in December last year. Gordon was one of our original TVTA Board and we owe him a big thank you for helping to create and drive forward the TVTA over the last five plus years.
- Fred will summarise our Supporters scheme position.
- DMBinS/TVTA Tweed Valley Trail Co-ordinator role - Marc Crowley has now completed over a year in the role and he'll update us on how the position has evolved, his key areas of focus and how our relationship with Forestry & Land Services Scotland has been working.
- Dig Days overview - Marc and Paul Lindsay will talk through the progress in this area which has really built up more momentum after the trials and traumas caused by Covid and Storm Arwen.

## S.2 Financial Report and annual accounts

The TVTA financial year reported here runs from 1st March 2022 to 28th February 2023. This financial year was about saving funds and consolidating the finances for the next big building project. We were delighted to still receive so many generous donations from individuals via the supporters scheme. This was through the website using credit card donations and those with direct debits, we continued to get some donations via Paypal/Trail Forks, Amazon Smile (until ended), Benevity and the Kiltwalk. The spending via DMBinS and the Trail Coordinator role took pressure off the TVTA funds this year with all training and most materials and equipment purchased by Scottish Cycling by the UK Government community renewal funding secured. This meant less donations were spent and we saw an increase of the charity funds for projects.

This financial year we received an amazing £28,884 (£16,511 FY20/21) in direct donations. This included generous donations from the **Enduro World Series** event which donated a huge £7,071. Not only do **Tempest Brewing Co.** make great beer but they donated a very generous £3,000 in 2022/23. Finally we wanted to note the generous corporate donation from **Baillie Gifford** via a riding employee! All donations over £100 are listed below and we also thank all other supporters and donors.

Expenses incurred directly related to our charitable activities totalled £3,441, the main items within this total being PPE, digging tools and insurance. Costs related to fundraising include the website and supporter hosting, card transaction fees at a cost of £1,875.

Our surplus for the year 2022/23 was £24,852 (total receipts £30,168 less total expenses £5,316). Including the year-end Paypal and bank balances, the Tweed Valley Trails Association has funds of £56,517 up from £31,665 in the previous financial year. It should be noted that within this the TVTA holds £748 of restricted funds for use for the Thinking Box group, towards buying an adaptive bike.

The TVTA also benefited from UK Government grant funding in partnership with DMBinS/Scottish Cycling during 2022/23. This funding was spent by Scottish Cycling but was partly utilised on TVTA work and for training and materials. The Trail Coordinator is discussed elsewhere in the report. The role's funding ended in December 2022 with further funding applied for and expected in 2023, however the TVTA board has committed to cover the cost of the coordinators specific TVTA work if subsequent funding is not received by June 2023.

### *Donations and Grants Over £100 between 1st March 2022 and 28th February 2023*

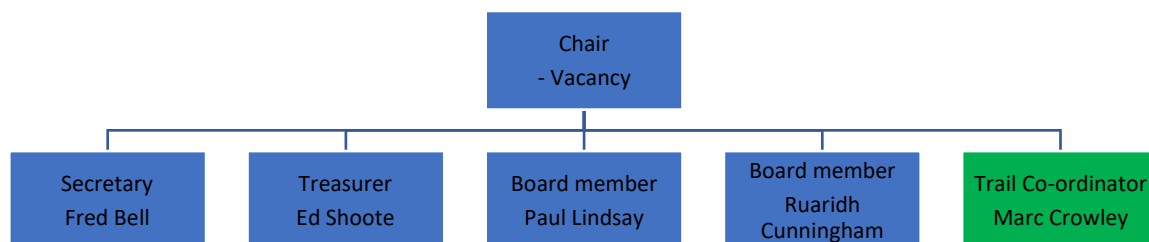
	<b>Unrestricted donation</b>	<b>Restricted donation</b>
	<b>to nearest £</b>	<b>to nearest £</b>
Tempest Brewery Co	<b>3,000</b>	
N.Gregory	<b>100</b>	
The Thinking Box Funds		<b>748</b>
P.Oakley	<b>140</b>	
Glentress Hotel/Riders Retreat	<b>240</b>	
C.Urie	<b>120</b>	

The Trail House Glentress	<b>500</b>	
N. Wilson	<b>120</b>	
G. Nevison	<b>120</b>	
J. Buchanan	<b>120</b>	
J. Shanks	<b>110</b>	
L. Allen	<b>120</b>	
N Burrows	<b>156</b>	
Baillie Gifford	<b>1,000</b>	
ESO - EWS Event Donation	<b>7,071</b>	
Miranda Miller/Kona Bikes	<b>450</b>	
Hope Tech	<b>100</b>	
Donations from individuals (mainly via website inc. gift aid payment)	<b>15,417</b>	

### S.3 Organisational Structure & Governance

#### Structure chart

The TVTA Board currently comprises four members and is set up as shown in the following structure chart:



In addition to the four full Board members, Marc Crowley (our DMBinS / TVTA Trail Co-ordinator) attends the Board with a standing invite. The Board currently has a vacancy for the Chair position and we are just able to meet constitutional quorum-based requirements. However, we remain short of trustees and recognise that we must increase Board numbers to widen the skill base we believe is needed to develop the organisation. We are actively seeking to fill those vacancies. The Board comprises trail builders, cycling industry figures, governance and accounting experts spanning a range of age and experience, representing the mountain bike riding community of the Tweed Valley. All Board members are volunteers and no personal expenses or attendance allowances have been paid during the year.

In early 2023 we formally agreed to the establishment of a new Trail Committee with the aim of developing a forward looking, planned approach to trail maintenance. We believe this body will be key to us developing a more strategic approach to trail development and maintenance; it also gives us the opportunity to bring in a wider constituency of trail builders and riders. This committee will be a sub-group of the Board.

### Board meetings

The Board met monthly during 2022 and 2023. Meetings have covered a wide range of topics including progress on Dig Days, our partnership with Forestry and Land Scotland, our Santa Cruz/PayDirt funding support, updates on the Supporters Scheme and the progress being made by our DMBinS/TVTA Trail Co-ordinator role. All meetings are formally minuted.

### Board membership

Under the TVTA Constitution, all Board members and Trustees retire from their Board duties at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) but can, if they wish, stand for re-election.

We were delighted to welcome Paul Lindsay onto the Board following the 2022 AGM. Paul brings great insight and industry knowledge to the Board.

In late 2022, our Chair, Gordon Smith resigned from all his TVTA roles. As one of longest standing Board members his experience and commitment to the TVTA has been greatly appreciated and we thank him for all his years of support to the TVTA and to mountain biking in the Tweed Valley.

Marc Crowley continues to sit on the Board in his DMBinS/TVTA Trail Co-ordinator role.

Board elections will be held at the AGM.

## **S.4 Review of the year**

### Supporters' scheme update/ overview

Our Supporters scheme continues to be popular with 309 supporters having signed up as at our year end. We have a mix of adult, family and junior (under18) supporters, the majority of whom are paying on an annual basis. Annual subscriptions were running at approximately £9000 per annum as at year end and we remain committed to using the funds to build and maintain trails and help develop mountain biking in the Tweed Valley. We also receive donations, for which we are also very appreciative of. Donors and subscribers can increase the value of their TVTA funding using Gift Aid, given our charitable status.

### Dig Days

Between 1st March 2022 and 28th Feb 2023, 29 Inspections and 66 Digs were undertaken, mainly focused on our adopted trails (3G, Big Baw, Community Service, Feed the Pony, Final Fling, Flat White, New/Loan/Loam Wolf & New York New York)

Other projects were undertaken covering Gypsy Glen, Pirn Woods, Kirnie Law Climb, 2nd BASE, Jerry Can, Penfold and the Innerleithen XC loop.

## FLS engagement

Work continued for some months on developing an updated Memorandum of Understanding between the TVTA and FLS Scotland. A revised version, acceptable to both parties was agreed in late 2022 however this is held for a national level sign-off.

Meetings were held with the British Horse Society to discuss concerns around access for horse riding in certain areas and incidents. This highlights the value of the Tweed Valley zoning by FLS (a more strategic approach to assessing suitability of trails and their location than on a case by case basis - more to come on this in 2023) and also the need to address trail exits and junctions which is underway.

Innerleithen Community woodland approached FLS to discuss the issues they were experiencing with mountain bike riders accessing the Pirn Woods from Caberston. Two primary Issues identified that TVTA could help with were: 1. Children had cut in trails that crossed the paths in the woodland creating erosion issues and safety issues, and 2. Riders were cutting a corner to access the Cuddy Bridge. TVTA put out communication to riders with regard to responsible behaviour when using the shared paths. TVTA also ran a total of 4 dig sessions to close off and rewild the entrances to the troublesome trails and to reopen the direct route over the Cuddy Bridge.

In a Joint Venture with FLS and PHS MTB club, students and riders were introduced to the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC), Trail Inspection and Maintenance techniques focusing on the trails at Cademuir. Approximately 20 different students and leaders were engaged in the 6 week long activity which saw Jerry Can and the exit of Penfold improved.

Authorisation was given to improve the junction of the Kirnie Law climb to create more reliable mountain rescue vehicle access.

FLS and TVTA have been working together on digs to prepare the Innerleithen XC route for reopening.

Authorisation was also received to revise the start of Middle 3G.

After a long gap we have restarted frequent Liaison Meetings in February 2023 with good progress being made in plans going forward. The fruit of this partnership will be seen in 2023 and onward.

## Other Land Managers

### - Pirn Wood

Innerleithen Community Trust representatives discussed issues with us regarding path use and wear. Shared messaging was issued to our followers around acceptable and respectful use of the woods. Further details are noted in the 'FLS Engagement' section above.

### - Hayston Estate, Gypsy Glen

We approached the land manager regarding bringing in a volunteer team to address a section of the Cross Borders Drove Road which crosses a bog. Discussions were held and proposals submitted for review. All parties agreed upon a diversion using a geo mesh-reinforced, raft build technique. It took six Digs to complete and a subsequent maintenance dig to improve water management of a section.

### - Whitehaugh Farm, Peebles

Discussions were held with the Land Manager to discuss viability of a new singletrack trail through a recently clear-felled corridor of land. They were receptive to the idea of a flow trail

being constructed in coordination of a planting mixed broadleaf. TVTA inspection and maintenance to minimise the burden and liability placed upon the land manager. Three different options for routes were planned and a proposal containing these submitted to the land manager to consider. The Land manager subsequently consulted with their solicitor who highlighted issues around occupier liability, notwithstanding that the TVTA would be ensuring that the trail would be subject to inspection and maintenance regime by a trained team. This matter remains open.

- Scald Law Windfarm (Fred Olsen Renewables)

Discussions continue with F Olsen re possible Multi-use trails in this development and recurring funding to support trail maintenance across the Tweed Valley.

### Trail Development Coordinator Role

The purpose of the 'DMBinS/TVTA Scottish Borders Trail Development Co-ordinator' role is to deliver a partnership project developing and improving mountain biking trails in the Tweed Valley and across the Scottish Borders. The role supports the objectives of the TVTA while being managed and employed by Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland (DMBinS).

This role ran from February-December 2022 and was funded by the UK Community Renewal Fund from the UK Government. Marc Crowley, formerly a member of the TVTA Board took on this role.

Activities delivered:

DIRTT Training (Developing Inter-European Resources for Trail Teams) - Constructing the course material (Online and In-Person) and delivering the pilot Mountain Bike Volunteer Trail Dig Leader course. The aim of the course is to increase competency, not only in trail build and maintenance techniques, but also in group leadership and to reassure land managers that trail associations are suitably competent to manage trails. Enabling Trail Teams and Trail Associations throughout Scotland to be established to support the maintenance and development of trails across the country. Marc ran 3 DIRTT Volunteer Dig Leader Training Courses in the Tweed Valley with a total of 32 candidates being certified. He also ran a course in Perth for the Tayside Trails Association.

Following on from DIRTT, and the previous Cycling UK course, Marc took qualified candidates from these courses and training through TVTA specific processes and record keeping, shadowing at digs and being mentored leading digs. The objective is to increase the number of Dig Leaders who can lead out public digs on behalf of the TVTA as signed off by the Board. Having completed this for 2 Dig Leaders we are refining some processes & templates to ensure an efficient but consistent and robust way of working is achieved. Congratulations are due to Paul and Johnny for being successfully signed off to lead public digs for TVTA.

Outdoor First Aid training has been delivered for 4 of the Qualified Dig Leaders.

Our TVTA equipment stock has been built up and there is now a decent sized pool of tools and equipment, including a wacker plate plus PPE (see Appendix for details). PPE pool. Four more Leader Packs have been pulled together to support more digs being run by the TVTA. In terms of materials, Geomesh and pipes have been delivered to Caberston to support ongoing trail maintenance and future trail development.

During the year we have increased the amount of trail network being maintained working with 3 different land managers, including Gypsy Glen, Pirn Wood and Cademuir - more details on the first two of these are provided in the 'Other Land Managers' section above.

Engagement with underrepresented groups - Increase engagement and education of the younger riders through collaborative projects with PHS MTB Club, BASE and kids cycle clubs.



FNY Collective dig and volunteer days for various organisations (Sustrans, Baillie Gifford, Balfour Beattie and Trail Wild MTB Club held with Scottish Water scheduled for April 2023)

In addition to his direct contributions to the TVTA, Marc has also supported local businesses and organisations in the DMBinS aspect of his role. He sourced a pool of high-performance lights and arranged the training of Night Leaders for the 4 local kids cycle clubs. Additionally, he administered a matched funding scheme for secure bike storage in the Tweed Valley.

Funding for the role expired in Dec 2022. DMBinS are currently identifying funding streams, such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to enable this role to continue into the future. To keep up the momentum TVTA and DMBinS have agreed to fund this role in the short term; Marc has also agreed to work reduced hours during this period to minimise the financial burden on DMBinS and TVTA, though it is likely that funding will be back-dated to cover this period.

#### PayDirt / SC funding

We have continued to receive great backing through the Santa Cruz PayDirt scheme and we really appreciate Santa Cruz' ongoing support and commitment to our work. Having completed our first tranche of work under the 3-year support scheme we started to discuss how we would build on that, using our 2022 grant. For various reasons though we have made limited progress on that front. Most recently, this was compounded by the resignation of our Chair. We are looking to get this work back on track and appreciate the patience and flexibility shown by Santa Cruz as we undertake a reset in this area.

#### Community engagement & events

Organised by our outgoing chair, Gordon, we had an opportunity to do joint training with Tweed Valley Mountain Rescue Team (TVMRT). Unfortunately, on that morning, most of the TVMRT were called away for a shout, however we were able to proceed with assistance from 3 of their crew. Thanks to Robbie for being our casualty and TVMRT, our 4 dig leaders appreciated the opportunity to practise our emergency procedures and aid in a physical extraction of a casualty.

We worked with Peebles High School MTB Club and FLS on a block of trail inspection and maintenance sessions at Cademuir.

Work continues with the Innerleithen Community Trust in Pirn Woods to address multi-use paths.

During the year we also started an initiative on the Gypsy Glen Cross Borders Drove Road. This saw us working with new volunteers and getting valuable support from some of the local members of the Ramblers.

### **S.5 A massive shout out to all who support / volunteer/ help the TVTA**

We really appreciate the massive efforts made by a wide range of people who have helped the TVTA in so many ways over this last year; re-opening the trails has continued and has been a significant undertaking for both the FLS and all our trail builders, diggers and volunteers - so to all our volunteers, be you 'Regulars, 'Occasionals' or 'On-offs' we say a huge thanks; without you we'd only be able to maintain a very limited trail network.

Equally, to all those who've supported us financially - we simply couldn't have achieved what we have without your generous contributions, thanks.

Over the coming months we look forward to signing off more Dig Leaders, extending our trail maintenance and development work, and where possible extending the trails under our stewardship. We hope you'll join us on the journey!

## **S.6 The year in pictures**

No photos in this version

## Appendix - Tool & Equipment Register

Category	Tool	Quantity
PPE	Gloves	23
	Glasses	19
	High Vis	24
	Ear Defenders	4
	Helmets	3
Saws	Cheap Folding Saw	16
	Cheap Pruning Saw	9
	Cheap Pole Saw	2
	Quality Folding Saw	3
	Quality Pruning Saw	4
	Quality Pole Saw	1
	Katanaboy	1
	Reciprocating Saw	1
	Reciprocating Saw Battery	1
	Reciprocating Saw Charger	0
Loppers	Telescopic Ratchet Anvil Loppers	2
	Cam Bypass Loppers	4
Buckets	Flexi Buckets	13
Hoes & McLeods	Trail Hoes	12
	McLeods	8
Rakes	Rakes	3
Mattocks and Picks	Mattocks	11
	Pick	1 Head Only
	Pinch Pole	1
Spades & Shovels	Long Handle Pointed Shovel	2
	Long Handle Square Shovel	2
	Square Shovel	2
	Spade	4
Wheelbarrows	Wheelbarrows	2
Winching	Winch	1

	Lifting straps	4
	Shackles	4
	Snatch Block	1
	Rock Slings	3
Wacker Plate	Wacker Plate	1
	Fuel Can	1
	Spill Kit	1
	Loading Ramp	1
Leader Packs	Leader Packs	6
Staple Gun	Staple Gun	1
Pipes and Geomesh	450mm x 6m Twinwall Pipe	15
	2m x 50m Geomesh	3.5