

Histon & Impington Green Spaces

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

higreenspaces.org
Registered Charity Number 1195616.

CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION



Histon & Impington Green Spaces (HIGS) has enjoyed a significant and successful year.

The highlight was our purchase of Croft Close Set-aside (CCSA). With Long Meadow already on a long lease to the Charity, we have achieved our original goal. Now we must continue to care for these two fantastic sites in perpetuity.

Over fifty volunteers have worked hard during the year, providing safe access, recording biodiversity and managing the habitat for wildlife. Noting the 200th flora species at CCSA demonstrates its value as a County Wildlife Site.

None of this would have been possible without the considerable efforts of our fundraising team. Our exceptional cake-makers ensured we had the "go-to" stall at the events we attended, whilst Arnold Fertig master-minded an enjoyable auction of promises at The Boot. **Raising £0.5 million** in two years is impressive and was helped enormously both by Histon & Impington Parish Council's financial support and by grants secured through the efforts of Alison Stuck and Alison Turnbull.

Another highlight was changing the Charity to a member-based organisation. With our mission to secure more wild green spaces around the Community, this ensures the Charity is well engaged with our supporters and strengthens both our voice and our ability to deliver.

Alongside the achievements at Abbey Fields, we have supported Community events and enhancements, including the Eco Fest and planting wildflowers beside The Brook. We look forward to continuing to protect and enhance the biodiversity in our Community and to helping people value and enjoy our wild green spaces.

Rob Bensted-Smith

March 2024



Trustees of the Charity:

Rob Bensted-Smith (Chair); Anthony Jenking; Daphne Fisher; David Jenkins; Katharine Holliday; Jon Pavey (Treasurer)

2023 IN NUMBERS

A sample of the many ways in which our volunteers help us take our vision forward



22 path adopters



68 work parties



47 flora survey quadrats



17 events



Innumerable cakes



1st young persons' photography competition

By Jack Brackley

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2023

Whilst the June purchase of CCSA was the year's most notable achievement, in practice with the support of the Parish Council and Jenking family, the Charity has been responsible for both CCSA and Long Meadow throughout.

Long Meadow was the scene for the planting of the Commemorative Oak by Caroline Chivers and the April Quiz. The latter had over 120 participants and some 400 people supporting.

The Wildlife Trust confirmed our grassland management regime was benefiting the wildflower population, increasing diversity and abundance. Including trees and grasses, we have recorded 146 flora species at Long Meadow.

With Histon Feast's funding we started restoring the avenue alongside Park Lane, planting two saplings. Unfortunately, another horse chestnut succumbed to fungus and was felled – it will soon be replaced.

Thirty people joined our Big Butterfly Counts. We had over 500 sightings, with 14 species at Long Meadow and 16 at CCSA. Unsurprisingly we have many more moths – 364 species at CCSA in two years.



Little owl by Tony Neal, Abbey Fields Photography Competition 2023



Common Lizard by Martin Minařík, Abbey Fields Photography Competition 2023

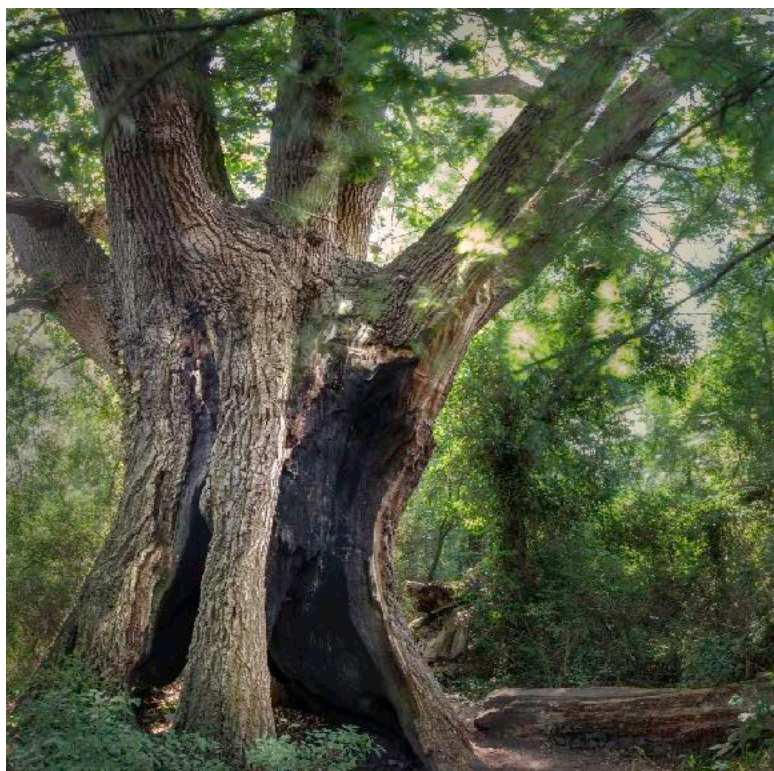
Some large, dramatically coloured moths entertained the 100 visitors to our Magical Moths and Beautiful Birds demo while seeing birds close-up enchanted many youngsters present.

The "botany team" recorded 50 species over 28 plots at Long Meadow and 48 species (19 plots) at CCSA. Students from IVC undertook botanical surveys at Long Meadow and CCSA as part of their coursework. Two students from Girton College completed studies on the invertebrates of CCSA.

Our stall at the Community's Eco Fest launch had a bird diet theme while we devised wildlife-focused ideas for the "Thirty day challenge". This was hosted on our website as were suggested activities for the Christmas holidays. One was to record mistletoe across the village: over 400 individual plants were recorded, with most occurring on lime trees.

Three excellent speakers gave talks on the wildlife of Abbey Farm and across Cambridgeshire. We also had exceptional entries in our Young Photographer and Open photography competitions. The latter's winning shots featured in our 2024 calendar – which again made a valuable fundraising contribution.

The fundraising team was out at Histon Feast, HICOP's Orchard Brunch and the HI Sustainability / HIYEC Swish event. The evening at The Boot was particularly successful; many thanks go to the generous contributors, individual and corporate, putting up raffle prizes and the fantastic auction of promises prizes. Bogusia Jenking deserves special mention for raising nearly £1,000 in donations for cakes made through her [JustGiving page](#).



Ancient oak in Croft Close Set-aside, by Penny Reeves



Common Lizard by Isaac Sanders, Young Persons' Photography Competition 2023

We participated in HI Friends' "Wellbeing Festival". The "walking-stick walks" proved popular, with the less sure-of-foot enjoying a gentle ramble around CCSA!

Habitat management work continued at Abbey Fields. Volunteers, including the CCSA Path Adopters and the Park Lane Hedge Trimmers, did most of this. This included "halo release" of the veteran oak, which will help it to thrive, and the start of rotational coppicing of the Willow Walk willows.

Volunteers also supported the Parish Council with the planning and planting of the wildflower bunds beside The Brook on Histon's Village Green.

THE FUTURE: 2024 AND BEYOND

We will continue to do what we did successfully last year. Our Path Adopters and other volunteers will continue to look after Abbey Fields, enhancing its wildlife and enabling people to enjoy nature and to learn more about it.

We will run the April Nature Quiz on Long Meadow, a wildlife demo at CCSA and an Autumn event on The Green. We will also support the Feast and HI Friends' Christmas event and be present at Open Gardens.

We will provide guided walks, led by experts who educate, inform and entertain, and will continue to run our popular winter evening talks. There will also be other online and in-person activities with which everyone can engage.

And of course, we will organise regular work parties to ensure our sites are kept in good shape.



Long Meadow Nature Quiz, by Charlie Edwards-Ainge



Longer term we have **five strategic priorities** to which we will commit time and resource. These are:

Taking care

...to manage the charity and its spaces legally, safely and sustainably, consistent with our objectives and with the consent of our stakeholders.

Doing more

...making good use of our people and existing spaces and embracing new opportunities.

Reaching out

...as active members of our community supporting others with similar aims.

Being ready

...to recognise, prioritise and respond to opportunities to add to our sites.

Securing new spaces

...in a manner appropriate to them as and when they become apparent.



FINANCE REPORT

The accounts for the year ending 31 March 2023 (available on the HIGS website) showed the Charity held a surplus, before purchasing CCSA, of £278k. At the end of 2023 the Charity had a net cash balance of £58k.

Of this £16k is restricted to certain activities at Long Meadow under the terms of the grant funding, £9k is HIGS general funds and the balance is for maintaining and enhancing Abbey Fields.

This excellent financial position arose as several fundraising streams came good immediately before CCSA was purchased and now provides security against medium term maintenance costs and support for our strategic priorities.

More than half the charity's operating budget of a little over £10k is spent on site management (57%), mostly for tree and hedge work. A portion of this is earmarked for improving areas which were neglected prior to HIGS taking over responsibility; future costs should be lower.

Fundraising costs dropped considerably in the second half of 2023 as activity was cut back to that consistent with long term needs. Further information is on the HIGS website.

THANK YOU

The Trustees expressly thank the many volunteers that have made our endeavours such a success in 2023, from those who have contributed an hour or two through to those who have given their time behind the scenes to our committees and working groups.

We also want to thank the generous support and help given by the following individuals and organisations during 2023:

Acacia Tree Surgery	HI Hub	Print-Out
Anthony & Bogusia Jenking	HI Sustainability	St Andrew's Centre
Banister Charitable Trust	HI Youth Environmental Committee	Stihl Community Fund
Bob Jarman	Histon Feast Committee	Springboard
Brookfield Contracting & Farming Limited	Histon Village Fryer	Stone King LLP
Cambridge Music	The Indian Ocean	Streets Chartered Accountants
Camel Projects	LS Plant Breeding Ltd	Tawa Lounge
Duncan Mackay	Michael Watson / Abbey Farm	Thalia WB Community Fund
Gin House Flowers	Natural England	The Boot
Histon & Impington Parish Council	Oakington Garden Centre	The Postcode Places Trust
HI Friends	Oliver Design	Thompson Webb & Corfield
	Percheron Agri Services	Topiary Tree
		UK Power Networks
		WSP

YOUR SUPPORT

HIGS depends on many volunteers. They may bring relevant skills or they may simply be willing to help.

Rhian Bond is a member of the Education & Learning working group applying skills gained as a teacher to deliver projects for our Community's children. Last year she also organised our October event on The Green.



David Berry enjoyed a career in software development. He has led the expansion of the Abbey Fields and HIGS websites. Although often found on the golf course, he is always responsive to the many requests required to keep the websites current.

Kathy Hines is a 'Path Adopter'. In this extremely valuable role, Kathy is one of a team keeping the Croft Close Set-aside free of encroaching brambles and other obstacles during the summer so that it is safe to use.



Bogusia Jenking does cakes! They are a highlight of many HIGS events and make a significant contribution to our fundraising. Bogusia also offers a personalised baking service through a Just Giving page with all contributions going to our charity.



Carron Brett is a constant source of ideas for events. She then helps to ensure they are run well, whether taking money on the cake stall or guiding youngsters at the Quiz. And like most volunteers she's able to get her partner involved when another pair of hands is needed.



Being a volunteer is fun! Some contribute just a couple of hours now and then. Others make a more regular commitment. You can sign up to be a volunteer at <https://www.higreenspaces.org/volunteering>.

Contact us: hello@higreenspaces.org

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The Parish Office, Histon & Impington Recreation Ground
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