

Annual Review 2017

Welcome to the Friends' Annual Review for 2017

From completing the Heritage Lottery Funded activity to reviewing the charity's governance, from growing our membership to launching an appeal to restore the Wood Centre, it has been another busy year for the charity. FOWA continues to work closely with the Forestry Commission to secure the sustainable future of Westonbirt, the National Arboretum.



Membership

With more members than ever before, our membership team has really stepped up to ensure that we consistently deliver a high quality scheme to all our members, and that we continue to be seen to offer good value for money.

We worked hard to respond to the findings of the comprehensive membership survey (carried out in 2016), working alongside the Forestry Commission to improve members' experience when they visit the arboretum, and we added additional benefits to the membership package, such as discounts with off and on site retailers. We ended the year with almost 32,000 members, all of whom help to support the arboretum's future.



The Westonbirt Project

The Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £1.9m, awarded in 2012, has fundamentally changed the Westonbirt landscape: the construction of the Welcome Building allowed the restoration of the Grade I listed Downs area and heritage features, such as the ha ha and original Cotswold stone walls.

A BioBlitz event held in July 2017 showed that the restoration of the historic downs has allowed a vast array of flora and fauna to flourish. Perhaps the most gratifying element of the grant has been the Community Programme. Staff and volunteers enabled 4,600 people from community organisations to benefit from the wonders of Westonbirt during the project. Five hundred and twenty-six sessions have been run involving over 133 community organisations, encouraging under-represented groups to visit and experience Westonbirt.

We're delighted to report that the Friends have enabled this important work to continue by providing funding for a permanent Community Officer.



Fundraising

Our fundraising team were also busy securing additional, much-needed funds to support the arboretum. 100 charity runners raised over £10,000 between them, easily beating previous years' achievements.

The tree and bench sponsorship scheme continued to be very popular, raising over £30,000 as well as providing donors with a way of celebrating an occasion or remembering a loved one.

Planning permission for the works to restore the Wood Centre was granted in August 2017 and we began fundraising for this project shortly after, engaging with potential donors in a series of information events. The response from individual donors was humbling, with around 15 per cent of the £150,000 total being secured.



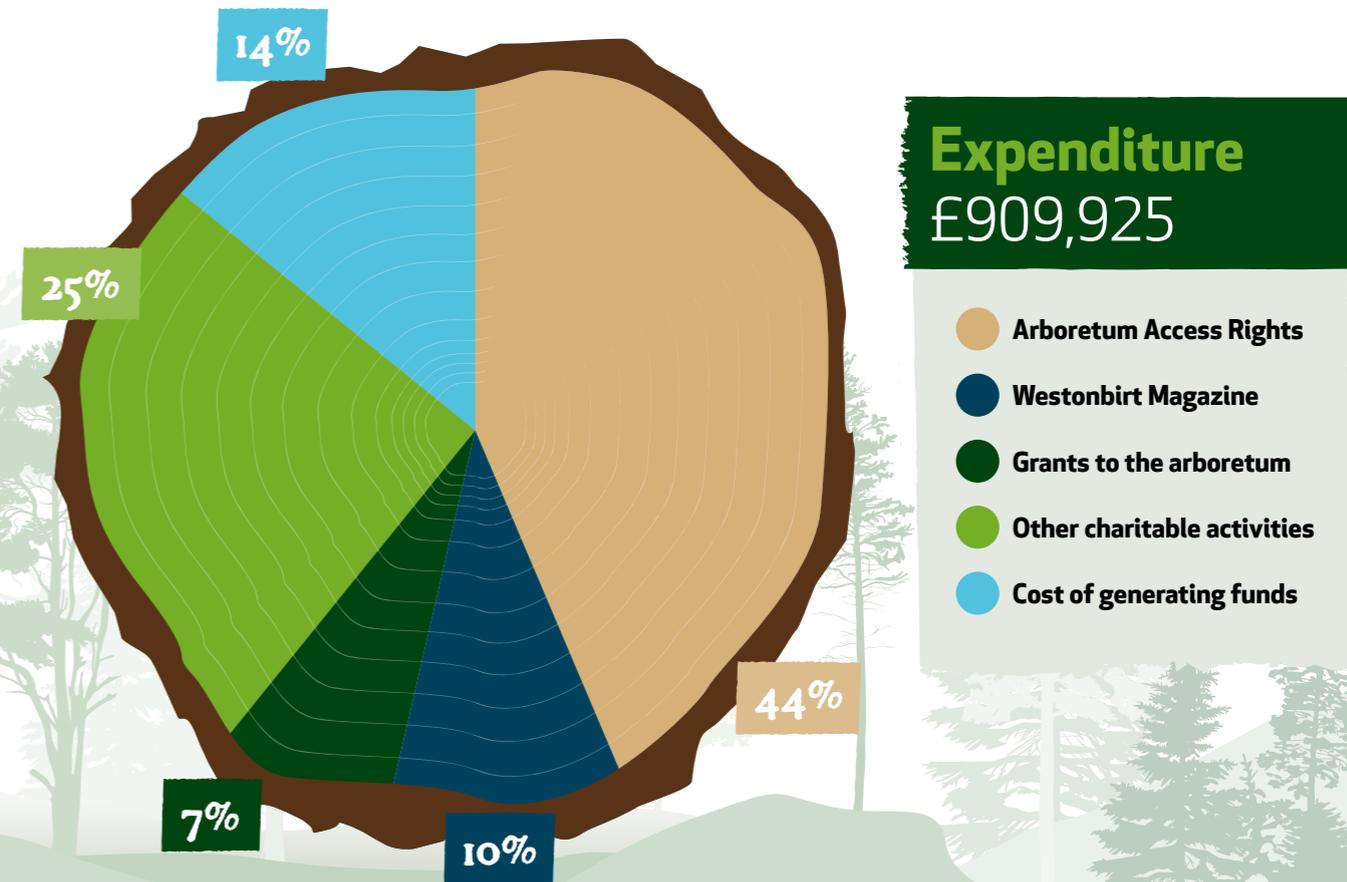
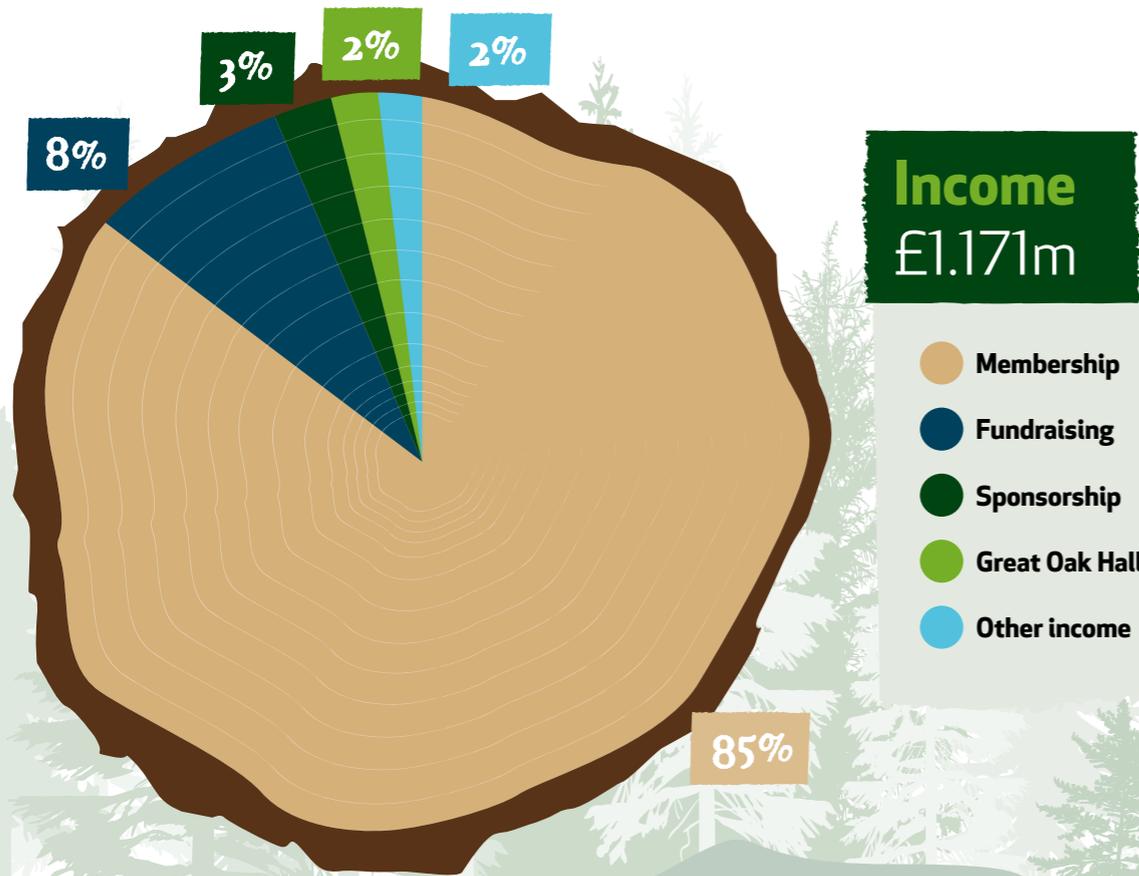
Governance

Towards the end of the year the charity conducted a review of its governance structures and processes, re-organising Board sub-committees to ensure that the charity can benefit from the Board's skills and expertise in the best ways.

Trustee succession planning saw new trustees being recruited to the Board, and we revised our Articles to ensure they are legally compliant and reflect sector best practice.

Financial overview

These income and expenditure figures were extracted from the full audited and unqualified accounts for the year ended 31 December 2017. Copies can be obtained from fowa.org.uk or by applying to the charity's office at Westonbirt, The National Arboretum. The annual accounts have been submitted to the Charity Commission and Companies House.



Membership

The charity ended the year with nearly 32,000 members.

Fundraising

We secured income from a variety of sources including generous individuals and charitable trusts.

Great Oak Hall

We secured income through hosting exhibitions and sales, as well as offering the hall as a venue for hire.

Sponsorship

We recognise £31,250 from STIHL in respect of their sponsorship of the STIHL Treetop Walkway.

Other income

Other income includes investments, advertising revenue and income from events.

Thank you to everyone who ticks the Gift Aid box for their membership subscription or donation - this enables us to claim an additional 25p for every £1 and makes a huge difference!

Arboretum Access Rights

This is the funding we provide to the arboretum in return for allowing our members year-round access to Westonbirt.

Grants to the arboretum

This is funding we have provided to support vital activities on and off site (e.g. seed collecting trips abroad, essential site maintenance etc.)

Westonbirt Magazine

The costs of producing our regular members' magazine, to engage our members and inform them about the arboretum, its history, current projects and future plans.

Other charitable activities

Funding we spent achieving our charitable aims of "furthering public enjoyment and knowledge of this world renowned tree collection and securing its sustainable future by engaging, informing and increasing our membership, and also by giving financial and practical assistance to the management and development of Westonbirt Arboretum."

Cost of generating funds

The costs associated with generating income from all sources other than from undertaking charitable activities.

Future plans

Having completed the Westonbirt Project, which was the primary focus of the 2013–2017 Arboretum Strategy, the priority for Westonbirt will be to define its vision for the future and set a new strategy which builds on the successes of recent years.

Membership

In order to support the arboretum's sustainable future, we plan to continue to grow our membership so that we can engage more people in the work of the arboretum and provide increased support to the arboretum's management. The increase in annual payment to the Forestry Commission has enabled an additional three staff to be employed to support the ongoing management of the arboretum, including a Collections Manager to support the Curator.

Fundraising

The Forestry Commission has a number of projects planned over the next few years, which will require funding. We are committed to helping make these plans a reality through our fundraising efforts from a variety of sources. Projects will include: the restoration of the Wood Centre, a new shelter for the Community Programme, additional staff resource for the Community Programme, upgrades to the bio-security facilities in the Propagation Unit and new 'wild play' features to replace old equipment.

Succession planning

Planned changes to the charity's Articles mean that Trustee tenure will be limited to nine years, in line with best practice guidance. This means that a number of Trustees will be stepping down in 2018 and 2019. It is important that we undertake careful succession planning to ensure the charity can continue to benefit from the necessary skills and experience that an effective Board brings.

A Trustee recruitment process was undertaken at the end of 2017, and three new Trustees have joined the Board. We will look to add to the range of skills and experience they bring, so that the Board can support the charity to achieve its objectives.

And finally...

We are so very grateful to the following funders for their support for the arboretum: The Finnis Scott Foundation, The HDH Wills 1965 Charitable Trust and The Violet Flanagan Charitable Trust.

We were humbled by the incredible support shown by individual donors in response to our appeal for support for the restoration of the Wood Centre, almost £20,000 had been raised towards the £140,000 target by the end of the year. With fundraising only starting in September, this was a great achievement and we are enormously grateful to everyone who has supported the project so far.

Lastly, we recognise that none of the support we provide to the arboretum would be possible without our members. By becoming a Friend of Westonbirt Arboretum, and renewing your membership each year, you help us to ensure the sustainable future of this remarkable place.

Thank you!