

Annual Review 01 January - 31 December 2024

Reference & Administrative Details

Charity registration number 293190

Company registration number 04965522

Trustees

Trustees, who are also directors under company law, who served during the year and up to the date of this report, and the subcommittees on which they served, were as follows:

S Addadahine M Ballard	(appointed 1 May 2024) (appointed 5 February 2025)	
S Bryars, Joint Vice Chair	(appointed 1 May 2024)	1
0 Forster		1
N Frost		2
P Isherwood, Joint Vice Chair		2
N Sachdev	(resigned 2 October 2024)	1,2,3
M Smith, Treasurer and Chair	(Chair from 4 December 2024)	1,2,3
S Troupe		1
C Walker	(resigned 5 February 2025)	1,2,3
R Walker		3
A Woods	(resigned 23 February 2024)	1
Committees to the board	Chairperson	
1. Finance and risk panel	MSmith	
2. Enterprise board	NFrost	
3. Human resources	R Walker	

The Chair of Trustees has an ex-officio appointment on all committees.

Senior leadership team

The management of the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum is overseen by a senior leadership team employed by the Trust during the year. This comprised as follows:

E Griffiths H Turner

Bankers

Lloyds Bank PLC 14 Castle Street Cirencester Gloucestershire GL7 1QJ CAF Bank Ltd 25 Kings Hill Avenue West Malling Kent ME19 4JQ

Chief Executive

Finance Director

CCLA Investment Management Ltd 80 Cheapside London EC2V 6DZ

Auditors

Bristol BS1 4QD

Godfrey Wilson Limited

5th Floor Mariner House

statutory auditors

62 Prince Street

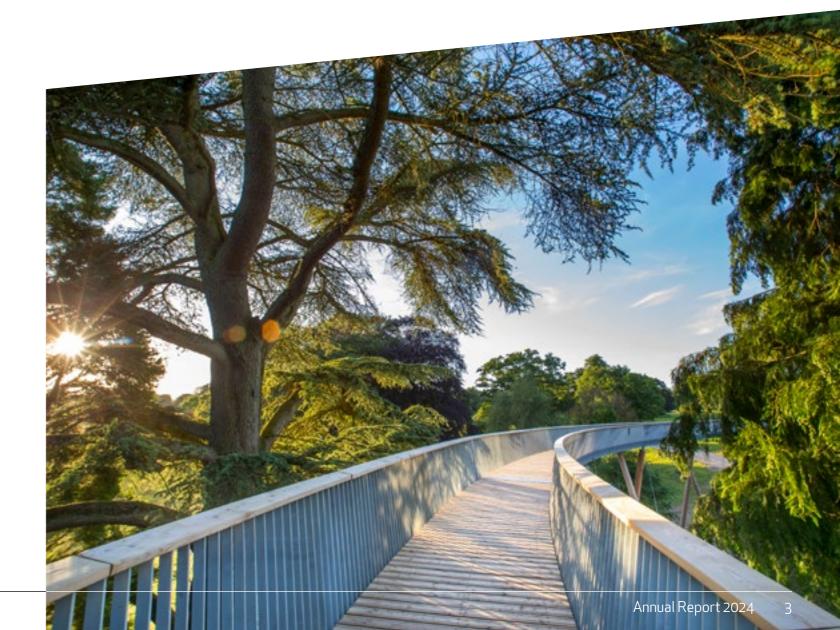
Chartered accountants and

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Registered office

The Great Oak Hall Westonbirt, The National Arboretum Tetbury Gloucestershire GL8 8QS

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Statement from the Chair

2024 was a year of growth and renewed momentum for the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum. Against a challenging backdrop for visitor attractions, we were proud to achieve an 8.3% increase in membership—ending the year with almost 38,000 members. This turnaround reflects the success of our refreshed membership strategy and our focus on re-engaging former members.

Our fundraising also gathered pace, with £265,000 secured through external grants and trusts to support key projects such as the Silk Wood Community Planting, Play, and Accessibility. In total, the Charity awarded £372,000 in new grants for Arboretum projects, with an additional £335,000 paid towards previously committed projects. We were especially pleased to see the continued impact of our Community Grant Giving Fund, helping to make Westonbirt more accessible for community groups.

A further £762,000 was paid to Forestry England for Arboretum Access Rights, directly supporting site operations and ensuring our members continue to enjoy free access to this special place.

Our trading subsidiary, the Westonbirt Arboretum Shop, had a successful year offering new, locally sourced ranges and enhancing the visitor experience, all while promoting membership and contributing valuable income to the site. Collaboration with Forestry England remains central to our work. We've strengthened partnerships at both local and national levels, working together on shared priorities in fundraising, marketing, and long-term planning. As we look ahead to our 40th anniversary in 2025, we're excited to celebrate our impact and thank all those who've contributed to the Charity's journey.

This year also saw changes to our Board of Trustees. We thank Alaana Woods, Neil Sachdev, and Christian Walker for their service and welcome new trustees Sam Addadahine and Sarah Bryars who were appointed in May 2024 and Mark Ballard who was appointed in February 2025. Following the resignation of the Interim Chair, Christian Walker, I stepped into the role of Chair, supported by Paul Isherwood and Sarah Bryars as joint Vice-Chairs.

Finally, and most importantly, thank you to our Members and Supporters. Your loyalty, generosity, and belief in the Arboretum's future continue to inspire everything we do.

Martyn Gmith

Martyn Smith Chair of the Board of Trustees





About our Charity

The Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum is a local charity with approximately 38k members. Our mission is to further the public enjoyment and knowledge of Westonbirt Arboretum and to secure its sustainable future.

Westonbirt, The National Arboretum (the Arboretum) is the location for a historic, Victorian picturesque landscape and internationally important tree and shrub collection that is managed by Forestry England with support from us, the on-site charity. The nearly 15,000 labelled specimens come from Britain, China, North America, Japan, Chile and other temperate climates.

The Arboretum covers 600 acres and consists of three main areas: the Old Arboretum is a carefully designed landscape dating from the 1850s offering beautiful vistas, stately avenues and trees from around the world; Silk Wood is an ancient, semi-natural woodland which has exotic planting throughout its landscape; and the Downs is Grade 1 registered and hosts species-rich grassland.

The Charity was established in 1985 by a small group of enthusiasts who were committed to the preservation and development of this unique landscape. The Charity works closely with Forestry England to support their aspirations for the long-term development of the Arboretum.

The Charity has a dual legal status as a registered company regulated under company law, and as a registered Charity regulated under Charity law. It is governed for public benefit by the Trustee Board according to the Charity's Articles. The strategic direction and development of the Charity is managed by the Trustee Board, alongside an established Finance and Risk Committee providing additional financial control. The day-to-day operation of the Charity is delegated to the Chief Executive and staff team.

The Charity is committed to good governance and good practice in fundraising, having voluntarily chosen to follow the Code of Fundraising Practice (as overseen by the Fundraising Regulator) and the Charity Governance Code (as endorsed by the Charity Commission).



Our Patron and Ambassador

The Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum is privileged to continue to enjoy the support of our Royal Patron HM The Queen and our Ambassador the Honourable Beth Rothschild. We are most grateful for their ongoing commitment.

Westonbirt Forestry England Volunteers supporting The Friends

The volunteers at Westonbirt are managed by Forestry England and they have a team of over 300 dedicated volunteers who provide essential contributions to the site. The Charity is extremely grateful to be able to work with Forestry England and their volunteers to promote the Charity, membership and fundraising on site. The Charity works in close partnership with the Welcome Building volunteers and Tree Guides in particular, who support the Charity by promoting membership and further giving opportunities to day visitors and Members alike and provide sign-up support for those taking up membership.

The Friends' Supporter Services Team continue to work closely with Forestry England's Visitor Services team to keep the volunteers up to date by providing regular training and eNews. This ensures they have the information needed to support The Friends' work. The Charity is grateful for everything volunteers do in support of The Friends' activities and membership sales, and for the exceptional management and training provided to volunteers by the on-site Forestry England team.



Structure, Governance & Management

Governing Document

The governing document is the Memorandum and Articles of Association incorporated on 17 November 2003, as amended by special resolutions in 2008, 2011, 2012, 2014 and 2018.

The Friends is a membership and fundraising organisation for Westonbirt, The National Arboretum and as of 31 December 2024 we had 37,904 Members. The Board is accountable to the Charity Commission as a registered Charity.

Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees

Trustees are recruited following a skills audit of Board members to ensure that the Board has the right mix of skills and experience. The services of a recruitment consultant may be used to recruit new Trustees. Trustees are required to retire from office following the completion of their term of office at 3 years, serving a maximum of three terms of office (9 years in total). There is an induction process to support new Trustees, set out in the Trustee policy, including meetings with key staff and stakeholders and offers training and development opportunities.

The Board meets at least five times during the year. There are also three subcommittees: An Enterprises Board and a Finance and Risk Panel, which meet four to five times per year and a Human Resources Panel which is convened when needed.

The Trustees have continued to keep the Charity governance needs and the diversity of the Board under review. The Trustees are responsible for staff pay, benefits and terms and conditions. Detailed oversight of finance is delegated specifically to the elected Treasurer who works closely with the Finance Director and keeps the Board informed. With the appointment of the current Treasurer to the position of Chair, an additional Trustee with finance experience will be appointed in early 2025. The Board is also planning to recruit with an aim of appointing the maximum number of 12 Trustees - specific skill sets having been identified as legal, fundraising and retail expertise.

Risk Management

Risk is managed through a risk management register and detailed policy; this is reviewed by the CEO alongside a Trustee with specialist expertise in risk management who reports to the full Board. Major risks are reviewed annually by the full Board and are kept under review on a quarterly basis by the Finance and Risk Panel. The Board monitors impact, probability, mitigations taken and identifies any additional action required. Key potential risks facing The Friends that require careful monitoring include the impact of any major changes in membership recruitment and retention which is often influenced by the current economic climate. Other risks monitored are cyber security and data protection, staff turnover and the relationship with Forestry England who run the site.

Organisational Structure

Day-to-day responsibility for operations of The Friends is delegated to the full-time employed Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and, through them, to the staff team. The Friends is also a fully paid member of the Fundraising Regulator and are committed to good practice in fundraising.

The Board works closely with the CEO to set the strategic direction of The Friends, as well as working with key stakeholders such as Forestry England. This has been demonstrated through the Forestry England Westonbirt Arboretum Director being invited to report to the Board as a guest at Board meetings on performance and developments of the Arboretum on a quarterly basis.

Related Parties

Forestry England is the site manager of the Arboretum and the major beneficiary of our grant giving. To this end, The Friends has in place a partnership agreement that is signed off by the Board of Trustees and Forestry England senior management. We have a grant policy in place with a transparent process for application and awarding of grants against our charitable objectives and criteria set in the policy. In awarding grants, the recipient (including Forestry England) are bound by the terms of those grants to provide impact reporting and we monitor the completion of projects against these terms.

Pay Policy for Key Management Staff

The Trustees consider that the Board of Trustees, the Chief Executive Officer and the Senior Management comprise the Key Management personnel of the Charity in charge of directing and controlling, running and operating on a day-to-day basis. All Trustees give their time freely and no Trustee received remuneration or other benefit from their work in the year. Details of Trustees' expenses are available in our Charity Accounts.

The pay for the Chief Executive Officer and all staff is reviewed by the Board of Trustees annually. The pay review includes a 3rd-party benchmarking against both the voluntary sector and visitor attractions.



Aims, Objectives & Activities

Objectives

The Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum aims to further public enjoyment and knowledge of the Arboretum's world-renowned tree collection and to secure its sustainable future. It does this by engaging, informing and increasing its membership and also by giving financial and practical support to the management and development of Westonbirt, The National Arboretum and, in particular, by:

- providing support to The National Arboretum at Westonbirt in promoting public understanding of the critical role of trees to the environment and society;
- providing support for the Arboretum's research and education in all fields relating to trees;
- providing support for the conservation, maintenance and development of the unique tree collection and historic landscape for future generations;
- providing funds to enhance the public's experience at the Arboretum;
- acting as an advocate for the Arboretum, promoting its values and the need for continuing funding;
- providing support to the Arboretum by cultivating the Charity's relationship with its members so as to encourage long-term relationships and fundraising opportunities;
- promoting opportunities for access and participation to a diverse range of public individuals and groups; and
- providing funds for such other charitable purposes as will further the work of the Arboretum.

Strategies

In December 2019, a new joint vision for the Arboretum as a whole was launched by Forestry England and The Friends entitled 'Our Place in a Changing World', which focusses on responding to the environmental and human challenges we face over the next 10 years as the climate and society changes. The vision is for the Arboretum to be a world leader in trees, inspiring people through conservation, education and participation.

2024 saw the Charity work on an interim 1-year strategy for development and growth, having identified some key areas to test, resolve and develop through the work completed in 2023 and in the context of having built the team and relationship with Forestry England, since the appointment of the current CEO in August 2022. The strategy has been driven by a focus on the following priorities with the overall aim of supporting the Arboretum and the shared 10-Year Vision, as detailed below:

- contributing to the Arboretum Development Masterplan and improving the collaborative culture;
- raising funds for the delivery of Arboretum Development projects;
- increasing membership and retention of members; and
- increasing stakeholder engagement and growing the charity profile.

The Board and staff have spent time revisiting the Charity purpose, organisational values and reviewing the effectiveness and impact achieved to date then setting the interim strategy for 2024. This work has been carried out in consultation with the Board of Trustees, all staff at the Friends and through stakeholder engagement, including our partners at Forestry England and drawing on feedback from Members.

The latter part of 2024 enabled us opportunity to reflect on this progress and outcomes of these tactics have informed a strategy that will run from 2025 through to the beginning of 2030.



Public Benefit

The Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum provides several public benefits, primarily focused on supporting the arboretum itself. This is made possible through fundraising and generating income through membership and retail. With this income we support, enable and facilitate the following, primarily through our strong partnership and collaboration with Forestry England who manage the site.

Conservation and Preservation: The Charity contributes to the conservation and preservation efforts of Westonbirt Arboretum, ensuring that the diverse collection of trees and plants are maintained for future generations to enjoy.

Education and Outreach: The Charity payment to Forestry England for members to access the site contributes to the running cost of the educational programs, workshops, and guided tours to schools and the public, promoting environmental awareness and appreciation for nature.

Access and Enjoyment: The Charity works to improve access to the Arboretum, making it more enjoyable and accessible for visitors of all ages and abilities.

Research and Development: Funding from the Charity supports research initiatives aimed at better understanding tree species, ecosystems, and environmental sustainability, seed collection and conservation efforts.

Community Engagement: Through grants the Charity supports the facilitation of community events, volunteer opportunities, and membership engagement, fostering a sense of belonging and stewardship among supporters of both the Charity itself and Forestry England, Westonbirt.

Overall, the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum plays a crucial role in enhancing the Arboretum's value as a public resource, both ecologically and recreationally.





Achievements & Performance

During the year, The Friends' main operations fell into the following areas:

- Membership
- Retail
- Fundraising
- Charitable Activities and Impact

Membership

As a membership organisation, The Friends relies on the lifeblood of our membership income, enabling us to raise charitable funds to meet our charitable objectives in support of Westonbirt Arboretum. Increase in membership numbers directly impacts the level of Arboretum Access Rights Payments the Friends makes to the Arboretum: greater membership numbers result in a greater level of financial support for the Arboretum through further grant giving. This has been a strong year for membership growth as a result of our pivot in marketing activity, testing incentives and improving or increasing our communication to members. We ended the year with 37,904 members, an increase of 8.3% YoY, and the Supporter Engagement and Servicing Team have worked hard to process and service the membership increase in applications.

Of our 38k members at the end of the year, 78% of those memberships were eligible for Gift Aid. This resulted in membership income of £1,528k (including Gift Aid).

Magazine

The member magazine plays a pivotal role in the promotion and education of the work that is undertaken, serving as a key channel for showcasing the Charity's impact and inspiring member engagement with the Arboretum.

Members receive comprehensive membership benefits whilst sitting inside the permissible Gift Aid threshold, such as shopping discounts with partner organisations and entry to partner gardens, newsletters and 'behind the scenes' updates. For more details please visit our website.

Our Members have played a vital role support the Arboretum since the Charity was established in 1985 and continue to be pivotal in securing the site's sustainable future for generations to come and we are truly grateful for their ongoing loyalty and support.

"Such a lovely space to bring our little one, space to roam, play outside, splash in puddles and just be outdoors!"

Member Feedback

"I love Westonbirt for the peace and calm with the trees. I have chronic health conditions and always feel better after visiting. Thank you so much."

Member Feedback

"I have been given a year's membership as a 70th birthday present. Living in the local area, I am looking forward to visiting several times during this year."

Member Feedback



Arboretum Access Rights Payment (AARP)

The AARP payment is the payment the Charity makes to Forestry England to secure access for its Members. This money contributes to the operational management of the site. This includes:

- conservation and tree management work including collection and landscape management, propagation activity, dendrology, survey and inventory work, and volunteer, student and work experience;
- of trees in general, and Westonbirt in particular, as well as widening access from underrepresented audiences;
- volunteer participation support; and
- scooters.

The 2024 AARP payment was £762,342.

Retail

The Buying and Retail Manager has worked to rationalise the staffing in the Shop to ensure efficient use of resources and affordability. An Assistant Retail Manager was appointed in January 2024 as well as one other permanent role with the remainder of the staff team employed on a casual basis. We now have a committed and enthusiastic team working well to ensure the shop remains an attractive and friendly retail experience for visitors on site. We have continued to develop the variety of products available, purchasing from artisan makers and, where possible, from local suppliers as well as increasing the amount of Westonbirt-own merchandise. During 2024 we secured a license to sell alcohol, allowing us to diversify into a new range of products which have proven to be very popular with customers. Overall, the Charity has sought to follow an ethical approach in its buying strategy, sourcing British produce and merchandise locally whenever possible.

As a result of this combination of efforts we have seen an improvement in shop performance in 2024 and we are positive that with the improved systems, more favourable lease terms, increased promotion and desirable products, we will see a further improvement in performance in 2025. With the Charity running the retail, we can provide Forestry England with an on-site shop that reflects the Arboretum well and provides the Charity with profits to then award as grants to Forestry England and others in support of the Arboretum.

Fundraising

Fundraising in 2024 has comprised a mixed income portfolio of individual donations and grants from trusts and foundations. The fundraising has been targeting areas of need in the Arboretum such as the community planting projects, development of the provision of play, tree conservation and improving accessibility. We continue to offer routes for individuals to support the Arboretum through our popular Leaves of Life memorial sculpture, Support A Square, bench sponsorship and legacy. During 2024, the income from fundraising totalled £292k, exceeding budget expectations.



education, learning and interpretation, including enabling schools to use the Arboretum to support the learning of their pupils and supporting visitors' understanding of the importance

improving accessibility to the Arboretum, including the funding and maintenance of mobility

Acknowledgement of Support

We, and the Westonbirt Forestry England team, are extremely grateful to the following funders for their support via grants in 2024:

- AMMC Charity Trust
- Bruce Wake Trust
- Cotswolds National Landscape •
- Douglas Arter Foundation
- D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust
- The Edward Charity Trust
- Ernest Klinewort Trust
- J&MBritton Trust
- John Horseman Trust
- Julia Rausing Trust
- Miller Knoll
- Summerfield Charitable Trust
- The Swire Trust

All fundraising activities are undertaken in line with the Fundraising Regulator guidelines, of which we are a paid member.

Charitable Activity and Impact

In addition to external fundraising, we have been able to contribute to the site through our own grant giving as a result of generating surplus through membership and retail income.

During the year, we continued to monitor our grants awarded and the impact of this funding through impact reports provided by beneficiaries. More details of these projects can be found on our website.

During 2024, the Charity paid £335k in respect of previously awarded grants. The Charity also awarded new grants totalling £372k in the year, however, during the year an adjustment of £115k was made in relation to underspent and early-end grant commitments made in prior years, reducing the overall grant commitments recognised in the year to £257k.

In line with the joint vision for the site, we have fundraised and awarded grants under the following categories:

Conservation

Westonbirt Tree Conservation Manager

The Charity previously funded the 3-year appointment of a Forestry England employed Tree Conservation Manager, whose appointment started in April 2023, and to contribute to the cost of associated tree research trips and seed collections. This grant came to an end in 2024 due to the Tree Conservation Manager being successfully appointed to the role of Curator at Westonbirt Arboretum. The vacant Tree Conservation Manager post is being recruited to in early 2025 and we are hoping to support this appointment by awarding a new grant in support of this role during 2025. The Charity will also fundraise externally in support of this important role and work.



Trainee Arborist

The Charity made a commitment to support a 3-year programme offering a trainee arborist a Forestry England fixed term contract, to work with the Westonbirt Arboretum Tree Team.

The Trainee Arborist not only assists the Forestry England, Westonbirt Tree Team each year with the essential conservation, maintenance and development of the living tree collection and historic landscape, but it enables new entrants into the field of arboriculture to learn key skills and adopt the highest industry standards, at a time when trees and woodlands have never been more important.



"The first six months of my year as Trainee Arborist at Westonbirt has flown by in a blur of leaves, woodchip, machines and smiling faces. Needless to say, it's been fantastic, and I've learned an enormous amount, not only about the practical skills and understanding of arboriculture in the Arboretum but also about the interlinking of the different teams and stakeholders, as well as the key role that The Friends play in facilitating the magic happening. The last month has been exciting, planting up new specimens and imagining what I might see when I come back in 30 years. I'm really looking forward to being as useful as possible over the next few months, as well as asking as many questions as I can before my time runs out. I remain incredibly grateful to The Friends for this unbelievable opportunity (and had no hesitation in renewing the family membership last month!) and I hope to see you out amongst the trees".

Jonathan Wordsworth - Trainee Arborist

The Charity is proud to be supporting the development of the workforce trained in the specialist skills required for looking after the nationally important tree collection, here at Westonbirt and we continue to fundraise for this ongoing need.

Coppice Apprentice

This grant was to provide tools and training costs/top-up to the salary of a Coppice Apprentice, over a two-year period, who has been recruited through the Small Woodlands Association Apprentice Scheme. From January 2023, she has worked on the Westonbirt Coppice Restoration Project. The Coppice Restoration Programme is virtually unique in the UK and provides an important opportunity to educate the public on the benefits of woodland management. The coppice workers frequently interact informally with members of the public and more formally with visiting groups.

"With Naomi's apprenticeship drawing to a close, we're really pleased to thank The Friends for their generous contribution to its funding. The cost of training and of tools is a considerable demand on someone setting up in the coppice business, so to have this covered has been a real boon. And now that she's set-up, she should be seen working away in Silk Wood for years to come!"



Westonbirt Interpretation Projects

A grant was awarded to Forestry England to update on-site interpretation to support the vision in strengthening the connection between visitors and trees. The funding has been used to design and purchase tree plinths to highlight 40 key specimens. The grant was completed in April 2024, and the site is now enjoying a range of updated signage across both Silk Wood and the Old Arboretum. These signs are providing education and context regarding some of our world-renowned trees.

Welcome Building Display

This is a grant to support the creation of mobile information displays as part of a package of measures to improve the use and ambience of the public area of the Welcome Building, providing educational information on the Arboretum offer.



University of the West of England PhD Student

The Charity awarded a grant of up to £25,000 across four years to part-fund a PhD research project. This is a collaboration with the University of West England (UWE) with 25% funding from The Charity, the residual 75% funded by UWE. The research builds on work carried out at the Arboretum in 2020-21 by a UWE MSc student and will provide an in- depth survey of the current and potential future threats to *Tilia* in the UK. The research aims to improve our understanding of the health of an important parkland tree species, and the partnership strengthens the link between academic institutions and Westonbirt, The National Arboretum. The grant is ongoing up to 4 years.



"Helene is coming to the end of the second year of her PhD and has met the objectives we set out in terms of the project. We sampled several sites extensively last year and extracted DNA for a community analysis of the lesions. The DNA has been sequenced and we received the raw data back last week. Helene also conducted a pilot inoculation trial with *Tilia* saplings in readiness for a larger trial in her third year. In addition, Helene has started to write up several of her chapters for her thesis."

> Dr Carrie Brady - Senior Lecturer in Genomics/PGR Tutor, University of the West of England

Participation

Community Engagement Programme

This grant was awarded to fund the appointment of a Forestry England employed Community Co-ordinator over 2 years to March 2025, having previously been funded for the preceding two years. The post holder co-curates/develops activities in response to the specific needs of the individuals and community groups they work with. Through 2024, this role has enabled a range of community groups, schools and young people to engage in education, participation and to support conservation efforts in the Arboretum. The Forestry England community team are often working with participants who have complex needs and wouldn't otherwise be able to engage in the outdoors in this way. The Charity continues to fundraise to cover this commitment and ensure the long-term sustainability of the post given the economic restraints faced by Forestry England.

"The Community Engagement Programme (CEP) was created 10 years ago to connect with local communities and develop the opportunities on offer, so they can take advantage of the park's health and wellbeing benefits. A focal point of the CEP now is engaging vulnerable and disadvantaged young people to engage with outdoor activities inspired by nature, to build confidence and resilience and improve quality of life. Through a diverse educational programme of on-site and outreach activities, we expect to see an improvement in participants' mental wellbeing and physical health".

Mandy Leivers – Forestry England Community Co-ordinator





The Friends' Community Grant Giving Fund

Designed to enable individuals, and particularly those who would otherwise struggle to access the site, to be able to afford the costs of entry, travel and refreshments, as well as engagement in Forestry England activities. We continue to fundraise towards the Community Grant Giving Fund to enable us to support further community organisations and individuals.

During 2024 we supported two community groups to access the Arboretum. The Friendship Cafe brought groups to explore the Arboretum, and we funded the screening of a film entitled 'Unreflected Reflections' which shared the story of pioneers of the Muslim community in Gloucester. Avon Needs Trees also received funding for transport costs and access which enabled them to bring a number of groups to complete outdoor education and tree planting.

"Woodland Skills participants are exploring different roles in forestry and gaining greater understanding of different types of work they can do and different organisations they can approach for employment or training. The project is still in the early stages, we are expecting participants to begin applying for jobs, apprenticeships and training in spring 2025. The days were really enjoyable, and everyone got a lot out of them, thank you for the support with transport and refreshment costs that enabled this to happen."

Debs Hoy, Green Skills Coordinator – Avon Needs Trees

Westonbirt Wilder Play

A multi-year grant to support the funding of the development of the provision of Play at Westonbirt Arboretum – Phase 1 was completed in August 2024. The Charity has been instrumental in supporting the requirement of the site to improve and update the play provision offered to visitors as we recognise the appeal of the play provision to families with young children and are also conscious of the importance of outdoor play in the development of healthy minds and bodies. We continue to fundraise externally towards this longer-term project to develop play further at Westonbirt Arboretum.



Participation

Westonbirt Sustainable Transport Feasibility Study

A project focusing on both public transport and improving access for all to nature and Westonbirt, through a jointly commissioned research piece informing strategy development. This partnership includes working with Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership, WWT, National Trust and Cotswold National Landscape. The output of which was developing a joint approach to marketing the Robin Bus service.

Picnic Benches

In response to the Access Audit completed by Inclusion Gloucestershire, Forestry England identified the need to improve and replace the picnic tables across the site - ensuring accessibility for wheelchair users and other needs of visitors and also to be in keeping with the heritage and conservation of the site. This is an ongoing programme of renewal and upgrade which will run into 2025, the Charity will continue to fundraise toward the cost of this project.



Whole Site Diversity and Inclusion Training

Our mission is to support the staff at Westonbirt to connect people with trees to improve the quality of life. Visitors need to feel welcomed and understood to be able to gain the wider benefits the site and experience has to offer. Following an Access Audit of the site completed by Inclusion Gloucestershire – it was highlighted that we could improve accessibility and engagement for visitors through the development and delivery of a site wide training on Customer & Culture. The funding helped to deliver: • Four workshops on inclusion delivered Spring 2024 to approximately 60 site-based

- staff;
- Four videos filmed in December 2024 to be available to existing Forestry England and The Friends staff, staff of business partners, volunteers and as induction material for new starters and customer facing event staff, covering the following areas:
 - Neurodiversity;
 - Customer welcome:
 - Strategic context; and
 - Case studies.

National Forestry England colleagues were also invited to the workshops and the video assets shared with them to enable wider learning and sharing of best practice for accessibility.

Wheelchairs and Mobility Scooters

Provided for free public use. The Charity continues to fundraise for this equipment which is so necessary in ensuring access to the Arboretum.

"The scooter was brilliant, saved us so much time and energy not having to push, we have seen so much more of the arboretum."

Visitor





Finance Overview

Income

£1,528,000 Membership income (including Gift Aid)

Gift Aid

37,904 members

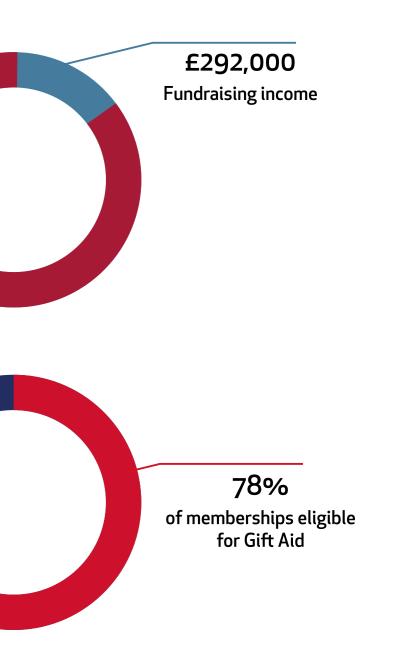
by the end of 2024

Financial support to Westonbirt

£335,000Sums paid out against previously awarded grants£257,000New grants awarded in 2024£762,342AARP - Arboretum Access Rights Payment

For full charity accounts please visit the Charity Commission website or scan the QR code:





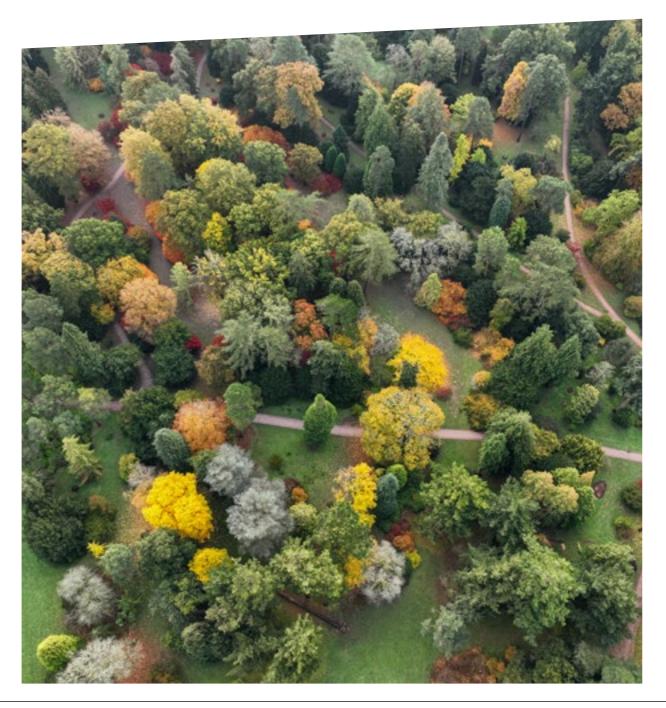


Priorities for 2025, Looking Ahead

During 2025, we plan to continue to focus on building our partnership and collaboration with Forestry England staff to deliver the best possible outcomes for the Arboretum. In addition to this we will continue to ensure we are operating as efficiently and effectively as we can as a charity. Joint planning for the future enables the Charity to target its activities on having the best possible outcomes for the site through our grant making activity and efforts through fundraising. We will also continue to focus on providing a positive visitor experience through the development of the retail offer which will not only enables us to redirect profits from retail toward the site's development but also provides an opportunity to promote the Charity and its impact and engage with Members or encourage new membership sign up.

We intend to focus our attention on the key charitable objectives of fundraising and membership growth and retention so as to achieve our primary objectives: preserve, develop and provide access to the Arboretum. We will do this by further implementation of our marketing strategy which will include new initiatives to retain Members' engagement and also to acquire new Members as well as concentrate efforts on providing a high-quality membership service that is supported by efficient IT systems. We will also continue to develop our fundraising efforts, celebrating the impact of the Charity over the last 40 years and thanking previous donors and developing major giving as a fundraising resource. In turn, this will allow us to continue to undertake grant giving (to the community and Forestry England). Supporting the exciting development projects being delivered by Forestry England presents an opportunity to grow our profile and fundraising capability, ensuring we can maximise our impact as a Charity on the sustainability and development of the beautiful site that is Westonbirt Arboretum and its globally important tree collection.

We are grateful to all those individuals and organisations that have supported our work through financial and in-kind support. These include individual donors, charitable trusts and grant-making organisations and others who offer support through their expertise or services.





We're the charity fundraising for Westonbirt Arboretum which makes amazing conservation work possible and helps more people to feel the benefit of nature.



