

THE WILD FLOWER SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 271694

Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31st December 2017

Reference and Administrative Details

Name: The Wild Flower Society

Charity registration number: 271694

Contact address: 32 Ashfield Road, London, N14 7JY

Membership administration: 43 Roebuck Road, Rochester, Kent, ME1 1UE

Website address: www.thewildflowersociety.com

The following were members of the Executive Committee and the charity trustees at the date of approval of this Report.

President: Professor Sir Ghillean Prance

Chairman: Mr John Swindells

General Secretary: Mrs Sheila Wynn

Treasurer: Mr Robin Blades

Editor: Mrs Anne Kell

Publicity Secretary: Dr Nichola Hawkins

Meetings Secretary: Mrs Janet John

General members of the Executive Committee: Mrs Judith Cox, Miss Nicola Dixon, Mrs Jill Oakley.

The above were trustees throughout the year ended 31 December 2017 except Mrs Jill Oakley who was appointed on 11 March 2017 and Mrs Jackie Hardy who was elected on 2 September 2017 and resigned on 10 March 2018. Mrs Jan Armishaw was a trustee until 2 September 2017.

Structure, Governance and Management

The Wild Flower Society was established in 1886 as an unincorporated association of people interested in the study and recording of wild flowers in the United Kingdom. In 1979 it was re-established as a registered charity with Aims and Rules approved by the Charity Commission. The Aims and Rules is its Governing Document.

Membership of the Society is open to all who support its aims.

The management of the affairs of the Society is in the hands of the Executive Committee consisting of up to seven officers of the Society, who are all elected or re-elected annually at the Annual General Meeting, together with four other members similarly elected, one of whom retires each year by rotation. The members of the Executive Committee are the Trustees of the charity under the Charities Act 2011.

The organisation of the affairs of the Society, supervised by the Executive Committee, is based on a network of branches distributed throughout the United Kingdom, each with a Branch Secretary, who is an experienced field botanist who can help and encourage members in that part of the country. There are also national branches for more expert members but the branch structure is being changed from 2018 so that more experienced botanists will remain longer in their local branches.

All the officers of the Society are honorary. The administration of the membership subscriptions and records is looked after by Mrs Sue Poyser, our Membership Secretary in an honorary capacity.

Financial Review

Total payments for the year ended 31 December 2017 exceeded receipts by £943 compared with an excess of payments of £6419 in 2016. The Society made charitable grants of £6750 compared with £8342 in 2016.

Investments are held in the COIF Charities Deposit, Fixed Interest and Investment Funds, Charinco Common Investment Fund and The Charibond Charities Fixed Interest Common Investment Fund. This gives the Society exposure to a mixture of cash deposits, government and corporate bonds and equities. The value of the Society's investments at 31 December 2017 was 5.96% higher than their value at 31 December 2016 after adjusting for the sale of investments for £3000.

Reserves policy. The Society has no permanent endowment funds. The Society's policy is to spend its income funds received in most years. In 2012 it received a large legacy, the balance of which it plans to spend over the period 2018-22. The Society holds other sums of up to £150,000 which are invested to provide income to be spent on its charitable purposes. It intends to spend around 2% of its investments each year on its charitable purposes. This policy is due for review by March 2023 and will be reviewed if further large legacies or donations are received.

Public Benefit

The Trustees have complied with their duty under section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to pay regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit in deciding what activities the Society should undertake. The Society has continued to benefit the public by encouraging the advancement of education and the advancement of environmental protection and improvement.

Objectives and Activities

The aims of the Society are:

- a) to promote a greater knowledge of field botany among the general public and in particular among young people;
- b) to advance education in matters relating to the conservation of wild flowers and the countryside;

c) to promote the conservation of the British flora.

The Society pursues its aims by offering membership to the public, by making grants to other organisations and by making information about British wild flowers available to all on its website. Membership is open to all who wish to learn about field botany, on payment of an annual subscription, currently £10 for adults or £3 for juniors. We are grateful to Mrs Sue Poyser for her very efficient administration of our membership records.

The grants are made particularly to assist with the running of training courses and the issue of publications relating to wild flowers. Knowledge of how to identify plants accurately is essential as a basis for their conservation. In 2012 the Society received a legacy of £24376 from our late member, Dr Eric Chicken, which has been invested for the time being. The Executive Committee, after consultation with members, increased our grant making activity in existing areas and increased support for fieldwork recording wild plants, including the Atlas 2020 project of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland.

Members of the Society are encouraged to record the plants they see each year in Field Botanist's Record Books and send details to the Branch Secretaries. The Society runs a range of botanical recording projects for members; these include a 10km study for all plants found growing wild within a 10km square of the national grid, spring and autumn hunts and records of plants flowering in winter.

A magazine is produced which records and discusses the activities in the various branches, largely based on the Record Books and reports sent in by members and summarised by the Branch Secretaries. Other items include articles on plant identification and reports of field meetings. Publication of the magazine was increased from three to four times in 2017.

Field meetings are arranged in various locations throughout the British Isles led by experienced and enthusiastic botanists. These allow participants to learn more about the identification, habitats and conservation of wild flowers and ferns. Botanists of all abilities are welcome to attend but some meetings are particularly designed for relative beginners.

Achievements and Performance

The Society continued its work and supported around 30 active branches. Total membership at 31 December 2017 was 620 (613 at 31 December 2016). Seven two-day or longer and around twenty five one-day meetings led by experienced field botanists were organised and were generally well attended by members. These meetings visited places of botanical interest in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. As usual our East Anglian and North West England groups were particularly active. We are very grateful for the efforts of Sheila Wynn organising field meetings for 2017 as well as her other work as General Secretary and to Janet John for taking over the role as Meetings Secretary.

The Society's ninth annual Members' Weekend was held at Llandudno in September. It included the Annual General Meeting, a talk about the flowers of Western Australia, our competition for botanical photographs, a plant identification competition, a discussion session for trustees and branch secretaries and field meetings. The latter included visits to see some of the rare plants on the Great Orme, ferns at an old lead mine near Llanrwst and the varied habitats of Cors Goch, Anglesey. We are grateful to all members and friends who helped ensure a successful Weekend.

During the year what is believed to be the only complete set of WFS Magazines published since 1897 was given to the Society by Mrs Rosemary Booth, the granddaughter of our founder. It has been deposited at the Linnean Society library.

Grants made to further the aims of the Society amounted to £6750 in 2017. This included a total of £3000 to twelve Wildlife Trusts to help cover the costs of providing wild flower identification days for conservation volunteers. The Society is supporting the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland's Atlas 2020 project which aims to record the distribution of flowering plants and ferns across the British Isles. In 2017 we gave a total of £2100 to assist with this work in remote areas of Scotland and Ireland. We also gave £500 to assist the publication of the worrying results of the BSBI's Threatened Plants project. £600 was used to help young people to attend Field Studies Council courses on botanical subjects and £550 to assist student projects on Himalayan balsam and bee orchids.

We are grateful to all those who have contributed to another successful year for the Society. We would also like to thank Lorna and Derek Holland and Chris Westall who retired as Branch Secretaries; we have subsequently been sorry to hear the news of Lorna's death.

Report approved by the Executive Committee on 10 March 2018 and authorised to be signed on its behalf by R. A. Blades, Hon. Treasurer.