

WALBERSWICK COMMON LANDS CHARITY
Founded 1901 – Registered Charity No. 206095
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2015

The context in which the Charity operates became increasingly challenging during 2015, a trend which has continued into 2016. In the wider context there is the ongoing scrutiny of Walberswick Parish Council by a group of individuals within the Village who are prepared to spend significant amounts of time and money to ensure that the Council complies with its obligations to the letter. The Trustees are mindful of this scrutiny and work hard to ensure that the Charity is not vulnerable to similar accusations. However during 2015 the Charity itself became a target for the first time. This began with an anonymous campaign which encouraged residents to speak out over concerns on property related matters. Followed later by a complaint being made to the Charity Commission, which while unsettling, was answered to the complete satisfaction of the Commission.

The result of this local context has been to put considerable pressure on the Trustees to ensure that they meet their legal obligations by acting solely in the best interests of the Charity and that they adhere strictly to the requirements of the Charity's Scheme and the Charities Act. This pressure to stick to the rules has highlighted a degree of ambiguity when it comes to the way in which the Charity has traditionally offered favourable terms for licences, wayleaves and easements to Walberswick residents. A practice which is potentially in conflict with the obligation on the Trustees to obtain best value. In addition there is potentially a conflict between the long held view within our community that the Charity exists to support the Village as a whole and the requirement of the Charities Act that expenditure should solely be for charitable purposes.

It is the unanimous desire of the Trustees to maintain the status-quo if at all possible and it would be an unfortunate by-product of the pressure being put on the Charity if these traditional practices were to end. Accordingly the Charity has engaged professional advisors and also written to the Charity Commission seeking guidance. The extent to which it will be possible to maintain the status-quo will be determined by the response of the Commission. It is sincerely hoped that these issues can be clarified during 2016, thereby providing a clear set of guidelines for the Trustees going forward.

Despite their current challenges, the Trustees have always welcomed questions as to their policies and decision making. Such questions continue to be dealt with fully and professionally, provided that individual privacy is maintained where appropriate. The Trustees also remain committed to increasing transparency. Our most recent open morning was the best attended so far and the year-end report given to a meeting of parish groups on 21 April 2016 our most comprehensive to date.

Conservation work on Walberswick Common can only take place during the winter season to avoid damaging the habitat of nesting birds and other wildlife. This past winter has been one of considerable change on the Common. Working under the supervision of Natural England we engaged contractors to clear large portions of gorse and birch in order to encourage the re-growth of heather. The immediate impact of this clearing is to create a

somewhat desolate landscape, however the longer term benefit can be seen in areas that were cleared some years ago where mature heather has now firmly re-established itself.

The Trustees would like to record their thanks to Miss Barbara Priestman, a former chairman of the Charity, who retired as Volunteer Warden on the Common at the end of this working season. The much improved condition of the Common is a fitting legacy to her dedication and commitment.

During 2015 the Charity awarded grants totalling £33,610 to support individuals in need, plus groups and charities that provide support or have the potential to provide support to inhabitants of Walberswick. Our largest charitable donation was once again to Sole Bay Carers, an excellent charity that provides in-home assistance to a number of village residents.

The total un-restricted income of the Charity was £61,514 with expenses and grants of £52,224 leading to a surplus of £9,290 being added to un-restricted reserves. Of that income 47% came from property rents and 33% from the covenant received from Walberswick Car Parks Limited. During the year the Charity received restricted income of £28,880 against expenditure of £18,774 with a surplus of £10,106 being added to restricted reserves. Restricted income is that which we receive for defined purposes, such as the Track and Manor Field agreement.

At the year-end restricted reserves stood at £147,796 plus un-restricted reserves of £125,654. While the un-restricted reserves may appear high, they are small compared to the potential expense of dealing with flood damage to the Charity's land. During 2015 it was anticipated that the Environment Agency would raise and strengthen the banks adjoining the River Blyth, thereby protecting the Charity's grazing marshes and potentially reducing the need for reserves. Sadly this project has been abandoned by the Agency part-finished. This was principally because the Agency's costs increased about four-fold from its original estimate to around £1.3 million. In this context the Trustees consider their current reserves to be insufficient to deal with all but the most modest flood damage.

Aside from the considerable day to day work required to manage the Charity's land and property, examples of other projects and initiatives during 2015 were:

- Creation of a well-used communal beach hut, which received 61 bookings.
- Commencement of a project to provide access to Walberswick beach for those with limited mobility. This project is in conjunction with the Walberswick Parish Plan group and Waveney District Council.
- Investigation of conservation work on the sand dunes behind Walberswick beach, again in conjunction with Waveney District Council. These dunes are suffering critical erosion from pedestrian traffic to the detriment of their effectiveness as a sea defence for the Charity's land and the Village as a whole.

- A contribution of 50% in conjunction with Southwold Harbour to the cost of restoring the Walberswick slipway, an important recreational facility for the Village.
- Investigation of creating a bird-hide on the Charity's marshes.
- Committing to a one-third contribution to establish a 20 mph speed limit throughout Walberswick in conjunction with Walberswick Parish Council and Suffolk County Council. The Trustees consider this an important initiative that will improve the safety of residents and visitors alike.

In some respects 2015 was a challenging year for the Trustees and our hard working Clerk. However those challenges have to be put in the context of the excellent work that the Charity does in conserving and enhancing the natural environment around our Village. Plus the many charitable projects that have been completed or commenced, all of which add up to the Charity continuing to be a force for good in our Village.

James Darkins
Chairman

16 May 2016

WALBERSWICK COMMON LANDS CHARITY

Summary of Income & Expenditure – 2015

Income

Rents	29,096
Marshes & Common	1,599
Interest	1,271
Car park covenant	20,350
Other	9,198
Restricted income	
Grants & donations	6,006
Donations Sea Defence Fund	50
Track & Manor Fields	22,585
Interest received	239
Total income	90,394

Expenses & Allocations

1. Expenses of management

Administration	8,169
Maintenance & Insurance	10,445
Restricted expenditure (grants)	7,274
Track & Manor Fields	11,500
Total expenses of management	37,388

2. Relief in need

Grants for relief in need	5,106
Educational grants	108

3. Benefit of inhabitants

Grants see list	28,396
Total grants	33,610

Total expenses & allocations	70,998
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Movement in reserves.

Year ending December 31 st 2015	Opening balance	Closing balance
Unrestricted reserves	115,437	125,654
Restricted reserves (restated)	137,690	147,796
	253,127	273,450

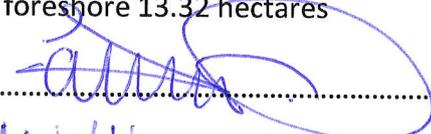
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Assets at 31 December 2015

	2015	2014
	£	£
Cash Funds		
Bank account number one	7,374	9,134
Bank account number two	6,970	7,787
Sea Defence account	1,280	1,229
Track & Manor Fields account	<u>11,142</u>	<u>60,057</u>
	<u>26,766</u>	<u>78,207</u>
Investment assets		
COIF accumulation shares	14,463	13,752
COIF income shares	17,624	17,408
COIF deposit accounts 1 & 2	142,942	132,344
COIF Sea Defence deposit a/c	11,468	11,416
COIF Track & Manor Fields deposit a/c	<u>60,187</u>	<u>0</u>
	<u>246,684</u>	<u>174,920</u>
Total cash & investments	<u><u>273,450</u></u>	<u><u>253,127</u></u>
Prior to 2006 no distinction was made between restricted & unrestricted funds, since 2006 the above figures contain restricted funds of: -		
	147,796	137,690 (restated)
And therefore unrestricted funds of: -	125,654	115,437
Total funds	<u><u>273,450</u></u>	<u><u>253,127</u></u>
Restricted funds consist of: -		
Track & Manor Fields	71,329	60,057
Natural England ESA	63,719	64,987
Sea Defence	<u>12,748</u>	<u>12,646</u>
	<u>147,796</u>	<u>137,690</u>
Property at insurance values		
Potter's Wheel	52,609	51,628
Print Room	59,975	58,856
Bennett's Drift	<u>16,138</u>	<u>15,837</u>
	<u>128,722</u>	<u>126,321</u>

Land (not valued)

The Charity holds the following land:	Old Town Marshes 11.88 hectares
Town Marshes 14.60 hectares	Common 33.34 hectares
Car Parks & foreshore 13.32 hectares	Bennett's Copse & Bennett's Drift

Signed.....  Chairman of the Trustees

Signed.....  Clerk to the Trustees

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Grants for general benefit of Walberswick - 2015

	2015	2014
	£	£
Sole Bay Carers	10,000	10,000
Free Minibus	5,640	5,160
Village Hall Annual Subsidy	3,000	3,000
Voluntary Help Centre	1,000	1,000
St Barnabus Residential Care Home	1,000	0
Yoxford Primary School	1,000	1,000
Wenhaston Primary School	1,000	0
Pantomine (hall hire)	1,000	0
Childrens Sports Days (net cost)	949	889
Post Office Out-reach Service (hall hire)	750	1,125
Ashley School Academy Trust	750	0
St.Andrews Churchyard Maintenance	750	750
Marie Curie Cancer Care	500	500
Macmillan Care	500	500
Childrens Christmas Party	400	350
Easter Egg Hunt (net cost)	117	26
Queen's Birthday Celebrations	40	0
Alde Valley High School	0	750
	<u>28,396</u>	<u>25,050</u>