

Hon. Treasurer's Report

Accounts for the year to 31 October 2023

The Accounts for the year to 31 October 2023 have been approved by the Committee and reviewed by the Hon. Examiner, Ben Lewis, whom I would like to thank for his diligent work. Ben assumed the role upon the retirement of Mike Fletcher; many will recall Ben as my predecessor as Treasurer. A copy of the signed Accounts can be found on the Commons website. They will be proposed for adoption by the Members at the Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 7 May.

These Accounts show a surplus of income over expenditure for the year of £1,843. However, once again this year, the expenditure on maintenance of the Commons was moderate, with no pond work and other maintenance beyond mowing, bracken and path cutting. (In the present year we have undertaken work at Palletts Pond which will increase our expenditure.) At the end of the year the reserves of the Society were £17,165 (2021-2022: £15,322).

We have made no further provision for tree work due to ash die-back. In the normal course Christine Stott meets arboreal costs and to date has been able to manage these at a reasonable level with the kind help of Peter Leybourne. However, the work that will be required over the next few years is exceptional and will increasingly require the use of costly equipment. The Committee considers that the Society should meet part of these costs and a provision of £2,250 has been carried forward in the Accounts. The Committee will consider further contributions, if necessary, as the extent of the work becomes clearer.

I am pleased to report an increase in members to 163 (2021/22:150) who contributed, together with Members' donations, a sum of £2,025.05 (2021/22: £1,945). Once again I do encourage all Members to 'sign up' their neighbours, especially those moving to the Hilltop villages who may know nothing of our activities. It really is amazing value! And we really do need as many members as possible.

We received £813 in other donations (2021/22 £154). This includes a very generous donation from the Good Neighbours Group of £500 towards the cost of the planting of trees to mark the coronation of King Charles. We received several smaller donations towards the tree planting and Christine Stott kindly proposed that the residual cost to the Society be met by reducing the commitment we had previously made towards tree work. As before, we received generous donations towards our general costs at the Christmas sale at the Cricket Club, the Fete and the Butterfly evening - many of these will be from members too, but I cannot guess how much!

I do want to thank Lindsay Griffin for her amazing efforts in not only maintaining the sales of calendars and cards at such a high level but also generating a further £555 from the donation of the sale proceeds of her delicious cakes (2021-22: £465). That is a lot of baking! Lindsay is by far our greatest fundraiser and I know she would appreciate help from any others with good ideas of things we can do.

We have a number of very talented photographers in the villages whose great work encourages the sales of cards by refreshing the stock. Lindsay is always pleased to receive these for use in newsletters and the calendar too, so please keep sending them to her. Photos taken on a 'phone are generally of a lesser quality and quite often unsatisfactory for printing, so do carry a camera with you when you can.

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These sources of income now exceed the subscriptions and donations from Members and are a vital part of our annual income. We would like to continue to hold the present membership subscription rates and therefore rely increasingly on these funds. I have no doubt that if more Members were to assist with new ideas we could increase our revenue.

I and other members of the Committee will be happy to answer any questions on the accounts or other matters.

Philip Prettejohn

18 January 2024