



Annual Review 2023

For the year ending 31st March 2023

Welcome to our 2023 annual review



I am very pleased to be introducing 2022/23 Annual Report. It has been another year of solid growth and increasing impact that also sees us with higher levels of turnover, staffing and member and supporter engagement. We have handled one of the biggest grants in our history during this period, focusing on health and wellbeing and woodland management. Consequently, the organisation grew very quickly during the year and we are now bigger and having a more measurable impact than ever before. Whilst growth can be exciting, it is also challenging, and I believe we have risen to those challenges. We thank all our members, supporters, funders, volunteers and partners, without whom, none of this would be possible.

CEO Ian Baker

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About us

As the UK association for woodland stewardship and care, Small Woods believes in 'Growing Together.' We are a thriving community with a shared passion for UK woodlands which, when well managed and used, are vital to thriving local economies, wildlife, and the wellbeing of local communities, as well as being hugely valuable in the fight against climate change.

Our vision

For the environment is to enable more sustainable woodland management by supporting networks of woodland owners and managers with our knowledge and advice.

For economic benefits is to use our community expertise to increase the number of productive woodlands and advise the best use of woodlands for their owners and/or managers.

For health and wellbeing is to encourage the use of woodlands for social forestry through community projects, helping people get healthy the woodland way.

To preserve culture is to educate to protect woodlands for the future by developing a culture for future generations that respects nature, heritage skills, and community.

Our year in figures



2,700

members received advice through articles, events and courses

8% increase on 2022



32,500 ha

UK woodland represented by members

356 people trained in woodland skills and traditional crafts

40% increase on 2022



postgraduate research project and **2** woodland skills apprenticeships



18 members' events attended by **299** members



directly managed by us

3,522

people supported across the UK as part of **29** projects, training, demonstrations, events, and member support

63 staff members

34% increase on 2022



Biodiversity boosted in up to **600ha** of woodland through our Mercian Project



34,200 social media followers interested in our work

20% increase on 2022



71% of participants of our health and wellbeing activities in Wales reported increased wellness

Our woodland management work

We are delivering on innovative projects through our current funding streams secured from the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and Severn Trent.

Our team has been working hard to support small woodland in improving biodiversity and helping train the sector in sustainable woodland management. Our projects have enabled us to explore new markets for diseased ash, acquire new equipment to convert woodfibre to biochar for sequestration, and undertake woodland management interventions for biodiversity gain. Making our woodlands more resilient has been at the heart of our work, ensuring woodland condition is assessed and woodland management plans reflect the need for species diversification, habitat restoration and sustainability.

Greater opportunities

Our projects are on track to deliver several aims to develop economic growth in the sector. Through our woodland group scheme, we envisage more small woodlands will be certified as FSC compliant, leading to greater opportunity for private investment to help woodlands sequester more carbon and increase biodiversity.

Our training programme is being rolled out to more areas in the UK enabling the sector to upskill and draw in more much-needed labour into the sector. This is being achieved by the ongoing development of new accredited and non-accredited courses, including the refreshing of our core courses on coppice management, green woodworking heritage skills and sustainable woodland management.



2 apprentices on the National
Coppice Apprenticeship Scheme



 **18 members' events**



6 woodland management
projects across the UK



Our social forestry and wellbeing work

Social forestry and wellbeing activities have grown exponentially through the demand and success of the programmes in England and Wales. This has happened through:

- Improving health and wellbeing through health services prescribing to our activities
- Increasing skills through providing a wide range of training, both online and in the woods
- Making improvements to and managing woodland sites - including building new woodland structures
- Continually seeking to improve what we do through engaging people in giving feedback and measuring impact.

Skills, knowledge and passion

Our aspirations are to see:

- a national programme of training for leading wellbeing in nature and community woodland management activities
- a national network of woodlands providing healthy activities to support the wellbeing of people and wildlife
- thriving woodland hubs with space for training and education all year round, and
- a network of activity providers with the skills, knowledge and passion to enable this to continue to grow.



2,819 participants in social forestry activities across the UK



71% of participants in Wales reported increased wellbeing

96% of participants in Wales would continue to use green spaces for wellbeing



Our funding

With so many of our projects being supported by grant funding, around **90%** of our income continues to be provided by statutory bodies and charitable trusts and foundations and we are, as ever, hugely grateful to them all.

During the year, we continued to enjoy the support of funders, such as The National Lottery Community Fund, The Forestry Commission, and Natural Resources Wales (NRW). We also welcomed new funders, such as The Swire Trust for our Apprenticeship Scheme, and The Dulverton Trust and The Garfield Weston Foundation, who are funding some of our organisational development needs. Our corporate supporters during the year have included Wesleyan, Severn Trent Water, Sprayway and Oboz Footwear.

Our memberships and training courses have contributed another **7%** of our overall income and donations to Small Woods have grown during the 12 months to contribute approximately **3%** of overall income. Memberships, training courses and donations represent key future funding streams with Small Woods engaging more in fundraising appeals, such as The Big Give Christmas Challenge and the Big Green Match Fund, improving membership benefits, and offering a wider range of courses.



- Grants from funders
- Memberships
- Donations
- Training courses
- Gift Aid
- Interest

Our recipients and supporters in their own words...

Probably one of the best courses I've ever done. A chance to network and share ideas, thoughts and experiences.

Course participant



It is a privilege to be able to support a charity who do vital work. Sustainability is crucial to the future of British design, and the educational work Small Woods do around protecting woodlands is inspiring.

Holloways of Ludlow, corporate sponsor



Trustees could see the need for Small Woods work and were particularly interested in how the management of small woods can lead to increased biodiversity

The Dulverton Trust, funder



Your publications, articles, and e-Newsletters are marvellous.

Member



After six months of my apprenticeship, I can already say I've learnt a vast amount of knowledge and skill I previously didn't have, as well as increased my quality of life.

Apprentice



It has made a huge impact on my life. I have learnt new skills and it has made me realise that I am able to achieve things.

Social forestry project participant

We'd like to thank to our funders and corporate sponsors for their support this year

THE DULVERTON TRUST



The Finnis Scott
Foundation



Garfield Weston
FOUNDATION



SWIRE
CHARITABLE
TRUST



Made possible with
**Heritage
Fund**



WESLEYAN



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