

## Chairman's Introduction



**Welcome to the Autumn issue of the Newsletter!**

We can report progress over the summer.

- A fine new information board has been installed in the car park at Carlops and locals report that there has been an increase in walkers using local paths.
- With the help of Alison Chisholm at Lothians and Fife Green Network Partnership, we are highlighting walks along sections of the North Esk Way and showing their links to bus routes. There are now four walking leaflets show the sections between Penicuik, Auchendinny, Roslin, Loanhead and Lasswade. There is detail of the roads, bus stop locations, linking paths, and points of historical and natural interest along the route. The one-page walking leaflets are designed to be downloaded easily and points of interest are described in detail on the website ([www.eskvalleytrust.org](http://www.eskvalleytrust.org)). Please do comment on these as we develop further sections.
- Finally, it is worth saying that our website has been highly praised by many as being attractive, easy to use and full of information about the Esk valleys. Do spread the good news!

We thank Professor Roger Crofts for his stimulating address at the May AGM in which he encouraged us to develop our role as custodian of the Esk valleys. He pointed out that groups such as the Esk Valley Trust, representing the views of more than one community, were increasingly important in promoting local views on such matters as amenity, education, recreation, health and business. We have begun to take up the gauntlet. In this Newsletter we outline some achievements and possible priorities for the future and seek your views on this. For example, how best do we complete our longstanding aim of a continuous public footpath from source to sea along both the North and South Esk valleys?

We have identified as a priority the need to boost our membership numbers and their reach. The more people we can speak for and the more communities involved, the greater the impact we can make. We would like to attract more families with children and to interact more effectively with community groups along the valleys. We recognise two difficulties in achieving this.

One is the lack of continuity that is common to so many voluntary organisations; as officers change on a regular basis, the memory of past experience is lost.

A second is the lack of effective integration with social media such as Facebook and Twitter. So we are exploring the possibility of working with a part-time Administrator on an experimental basis to see if we can raise funds for particular projects, increase our membership, and make our website more interactive with other media. Indeed, we are delighted to say that Victoria Bullock from Roslin will start in this role later this year.

In this Newsletter we reproduce the top four photographs submitted in the photographic competition launched last autumn. Many thanks to all those who participated and reminded us of the splendour of our valleys. We will present the prizes at our next public meeting on 11th November when we hear about The lost gardens of Penicuik!

**David Sugden** (*Chair*)

## What next for The Esk Valley Trust?

It is more than thirteen years since the Esk Valley Trust began its activities. Over that time much has been achieved and there are still many things to do. For a number of reasons the Board of the Trust feels it is time to take stock, check on our future aspirations and revitalise our activities.

We want to do this with input from as many members (or indeed other interested people) as possible, so this item gives a very brief reminder of what we aimed to do, and what has been achieved since the Trust was set up in 2001. Following our most recent Board meeting

there are some suggestions as to the main activities that might guide the next stages of the Trust's activities. We welcome your views on these issues.

It would be a real help if you would take the time to give your answers to the few questions that are raised in the **Questionnaire** at the end. Your input will help to decide how the Esk Valley Trust moves on.

### **Establishment and progress**

When the The Esk Valley Trust was established its main goal was:

***'to stimulate public interest and care for the beauty, history and character of the valleys of the River Esk and their surroundings in the Lothians of Scotland. In particular, to promote and encourage responsible and sustainable public amenities in the Esk rivers' catchment area for the benefit of its local communities and others'.***

Much has been achieved in the last thirteen years including:

- Purchase of the Hewan Wood in February 2002
- Establishment of the concept and much of the reality of the North Esk Way (an ongoing project)
- Working with Midlothian Council to develop the concept of the South Esk Way
- Regular talks, walks and Newsletters
- Occasional working parties to improve paths and amenity especially in the Hewan Wood
- The development and placing of information boards in the Hewan Wood (and support for the new board in Carlops)
- A refreshed and up-to-date web site.

These are the fruits of the work of the initiators of the Trust and of many members.

### **The current state of play**

Against the background of these achievements the situation today is that total membership of the Trust appears to be falling, with few young members and only a small number really active. Attendance at meetings and events has reduced. Promotion of the Trust has generally been low key. The development of the North Esk Way, albeit still with some gaps, is a significant achievement although perhaps not as widely known as it might be. Working parties are ad hoc and not currently working to a structured plan.

The Trust holds a reasonable amount of funds for an organisation of its size, but relies almost totally on

volunteer activity. There is no continuity in administrative support to drive initiatives.

The Trust interacts with a number of other local organisations but operates independently.

### **Future aspirations**

The original object of the Trust has much to recommend it. 'Stimulating **public interest and care** for the beauty, history and character of the Esk valleys' seems to be as noble and relevant an aim now as it was in 2001. Does the membership agree? If so what does this mean that we should concentrate on over the next period of time?

Ideas for the next stages of action could be as broad in scope as, for example, instigating an Esk catchment land strategy, to the more pragmatic of making the North and South Esk Ways a reality. We might look for stronger partnerships across various organisations to use the combined strengths of different interest groups to help us, and others, to achieve our purposes (where these are complementary). We might aspire to monitoring and regularly surveying the state and condition of the natural qualities of the Esk valley as a means to engage our communities more widely and to know better where action is needed.

Whatever we aim to do we will also need to gain and use the resources that are needed. That must include meeting our responsibilities for the ownership, care, 'development' and use of the Hewan Wood.

### **Main priorities**

Having given this some thought the Board suggests that the emphases for the future should be:

- **(Continuing to) make the Esk Ways complete, well known and well used**
- **Being part of the means to enhance local community awareness of the natural amenities of the Esk valleys (and their natural and social histories)**
- **Ongoing care and 'development' of the Hewan Wood for the benefit of current and future generations**

These goals might be seen merely as a restatement of the original aims of the Trust but with a slightly better defined focus.

The key to achieving them will be to capture sufficient enthusiasm and critical mass of membership (or association) that things get done and that momentum (for ongoing activities) is achieved.

So in addition we suggest that special effort should be given:

- **To increase awareness of the Trust in local communities and its membership**
- **To link the actions of the Trust beneficially to other organisations to accelerate achievement of our goals.**

### Your views

It is important that all members contribute, if they wish, to this discussion. If you do want to offer your opinion please respond to the short questionnaire below. **Please respond to Pat Frankland (details on the Questionnaire) by the end of November 2014.**

## New EVT Administrator



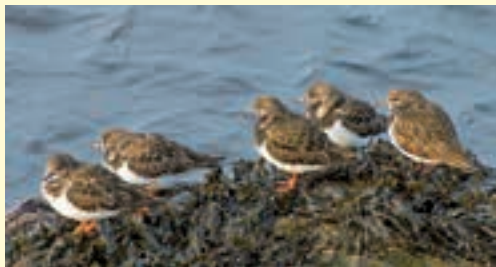
Victoria Bullock will be starting work for the Esk Valley Trust in November.

'I come from a background in administration and IT, working within the financial sector in Edinburgh for 17 years before leaving to raise my 2 little boys. I'm now in need of a new challenge and look forward to using my organisational and communication skills to help the Esk Valley Trust achieve it's priorities and goals. I live in Roslin and enjoy spending time with the family in Roslin Glen, the Pentlands, and surrounding areas covered by the Esk Valley Trust – so it will be a great opportunity to combine work and pleasure.'

## Photo Competition

The Esk Valley Trust Photo Competition closed on October 1st. The judges then deliberated and conjugated and chose four finalists from the photos entered. The winner will be announced at our Autumn talk meeting on Tuesday 11th November.

The entries were of high quality and worth having a look, via the website.



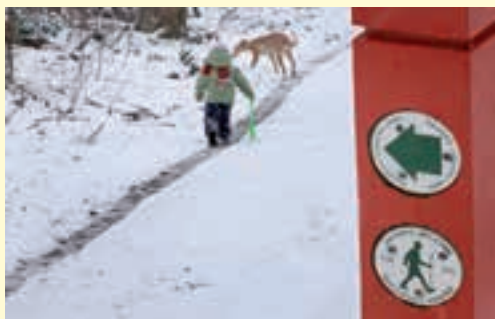
Turnstones by Jean Manson



Roslin Glen Gunpowder Mill Weir, Willie Gilbertson



Newbattle Abbey, Fiona Horne



David Meikle, Dalkeith Country Park

## Updates –

### **Steps at Iron Mills, Dalkeith**

Midlothian Council is to make repairs to the steps leading down to Iron Mills Park from Cemetery Road next to the Water Tower . These steps have been closed for some time due to a land slip on the slope. The repairs are to cost £58,000, and it is hoped to have them completed by early Summer 2015.

### **Parking at Newbattle Abbey**

If you are visiting Newbattle Abbey by car for a walk, the Forestry Commission have put in a car parking area to the left as you go in the gates from Newbattle Road. This means no more cars stuck in the grass down the main drive in wet weather.



## **Autumn Talk**

Roger Kelly is going to speak to us on

### ***'The Lost Garden of Penicuik'***

***in St. David's Church Hall, Dalkeith***

***on Tuesday 11 November 2014  
at 7.30 pm.***

The talk will let us know how the Penicuik Community Development Trust plans to restore the Penicuik Estate Walled Garden and what has been achieved so far

***All welcome***

## **Esk Valley Trust Executive Committee**

Chairman

David Sugden

Loanhead

Company Secretary and Treasurer

Rennie Frazer

Fairmilehead

Secretary

Pat Frankland

Newbattle

Shelagh Jenkins

Polton

John Oldham

Loanhead

Peter Raine

Carlops

Jan Jerome

Lasswade

### **Contact us at:**

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