



Trustees' Annual Report 2020



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1. Board and Trustees

Your board is made up of five trustees and three board members and includes trail builders, cycling industry figures, governance and accounting experts, spanning a wide range of age and experience, representing the mountain bike riding community of the Tweed Valley. During the year, Cat Topham, who had been instrumental in developing our social media presence, stepped down from the Board - we thank her for all she did for the Tweed Valley Trails Association (TVTA) over the last few years and wish her well in the future.

As at October 2020, the Board had met eight times this year as well as running a Strategy session in January. Meetings have covered a wide range of topics including our partnership with Forestry and Land Scotland, our successful PayDirt funding application, the impacts of COVID-19 on our trail maintenance activity and developing working practices for trail projects. We are very aware of the importance of working with all stakeholders in the area and we have aimed to engage positively with other community groups and landowners, wherever possible.

TVTA Board Trustees

Neil Carnegie (Chair)
Chris Ball
Aneela McKenna
Fred Bell (Secretary)
Rachel Hunter

TVTA Board Members

Kryisia Smith (Treasurer)
Marc Crowley
Gordon Smith (Deputy Chair)
Cat Topham (resigned July 2020)

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2. Finance and Funding - review of finances

2019-20 Filed Accounts

2019 was another year when we were fortunate to see a significant uplift in donations and grants; up to £12434 from £7773 in 2018. Individual donations in the 2019-20 financial year totalled £346 and unrestricted donations from Dirt School, Ridelines, Gowhere Scotland and Valley Girls added another £2430 (see schedule below for details). The Enduro World Series contributed a further £6,000 of restricted cash funds, ring-fenced to pay for major trail upgrades on the Caberston (Golfie) multi-use path / climb to the reservoir, ready to spend once project planning and approvals are finalised. Other fundraising activity raised £2936.

Payments directly related to our charitable activities totalled £1653, the main items being insurance premiums (£586) plus the costs of survey work related to the Reservoir Climb feasibility study (£720). General expenses directly related to fundraising activity totalled £682. Total expenses amounted to £2335.

Our Surplus for the year (total receipts £12434 less total expenses £2335) amounted to £10099; up from £5922 in 2018-19. Adding in cash and bank balances, the Tweed Valley Trails Association posted total Year-end funds of £16078; up from £5979 in the previous financial year.

Donations and Grants Over £100

<i>Donor</i>	<i>Cash Amount</i>	<i>Financial Year</i>	<i>Notes</i>
<i>Enduro World Series</i>	<i>£6,000</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>Restricted for Caberston multi-use path/climb trail upgrade</i>
<i>Scottish Cycling</i>	<i>£721</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>Start-up funding</i>
<i>Dirt School</i>	<i>£1,380</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>Unrestricted donation</i>
<i>Valley Girls Initiative</i>	<i>£400</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>Unrestricted donation</i>
<i>Ridelines</i>	<i>£500</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>Unrestricted donation</i>
<i>GoWhere Scotland</i>	<i>£150</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>Unrestricted donation</i>

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PayDirt Funding Award

We're delighted to have been awarded a £10,000 grant from Santa Cruz Bicycles as part of their PayDirt Programme in late 2020. This initiative funds recreational mountain bike trail opportunities worldwide. With an initial three-year, \$1 million pledge, PayDirt aims to create and strengthen opportunities for greater trail access and development through localized trail construction projects, economic development planning, events and related programmes. We will be using our award money to help fund two key initiatives that are fundamental to our charity aims and objectives:

i) We will employ a project manager for the redevelopment of the "Reservoir Climb" at The Golfie/Caberston Forest. This climb gives access to the majority of the Golfie trails, but has suffered greatly from erosion, with significant drainage problems and no easy fixes. The project will require specialist skills and machinery to move forward, and close liaison with Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) to ensure clarity of work and timely completion. The project manager will plan the work, liaise with FLS, oversee the contractors, and ultimately deliver the project on time and in budget. This will be a huge benefit not only to the riding community, but to walkers and horse riders who also use this shared path to gain access to the higher tops around Innerleithen. The physical aspect of the project is already 100% funded.

ii) We will fund the training of our senior Trailbuilding Team to become Tutors for the "Trail Inspector" and "Volunteer Coordinator" courses. This will allow us to train more volunteers, and ultimately, we will aim to grow our network of trained leaders as well as deliver courses to other Trail Associations. This not only makes TVTA more sustainable, but also allows increased equity of access for local volunteers and those further afield, as we will run these courses at greatly discounted costs compared to the commercial sector prices.

Finally, in this section we'd like to say a huge thank you to all of our generous donors from
2017-2020

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3. Trail Projects & Volunteer Work

2020 in numbers

4 Organised Dig Days

30+ Staff digs

35 Individual dig sessions

500+ volunteer hours contributed to the TVTA activity in 2020

Our adopted trails: New York New York, Final Fling, Community Service, Big Baw, Flat White, 3G.

Overview

Poor weather restricted our trail maintenance activity in late 2019 and early 2020. As the weather improved, the restrictions triggered by COVID-19 were introduced bringing to a halt any planned organised volunteer-based activity.

During lockdown and beyond our staff volunteers did continue to perform trail working alone rather than as organised days. 30+ days were done in this fashion on our adopted trails and the moorland access climb.

As 2020 ends we have received guidance from Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland (DMBinS) that dig-days can recommence under certain conditions as the Scottish Government has confirmed that Trail Associations are exempt from restrictions on 'gatherings' as the purpose of these gatherings is for "work, or for the provision of voluntary or charitable services". We have developed COVID-19 Guidance for our Leaders, undertaken a risk assessment and appointed a 'Covid Co-ordinator' in line with the recommendations and plan to restart trail maintenance imminently. At time of writing, we have run two dig days for local volunteers, with a regular schedule of voluntary days now back in place.

Reservoir Climb Project

We have engaged closely with Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) on this project over the year. The Memorandum of Understanding between the TVTA and FLS, originally signed off in 2019 is being reviewed to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and a Licence Agreement has been

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drafted. This latter document is key to the engagement of third parties who will deliver this key project, in particular, bringing on a Project Manager who will drive this work on towards a satisfactory conclusion. The TVTA Board remain committed to this work being completed as soon as is practicable.

The plans for the climb currently sit with Scottish Borders Council for planning permission while the employed project manager deals with pricing tenders etc.



Sections of the multi-use path proposed for upgrading at Caberston

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TVTA Golfie Trails
Water Tank Path

Map 3. Pathworks Option 1
Revision 0 25.08.2019

Option 1 comments.....

- Re-build existing track as a multi-user access path. Re-route where necc to improve drainage and to ease the gradient of steep sections.

- Section detail ...

① Re-shape banking above turning area to create new, easy gradient ramp for pathway. Fill, landscape and tidy existing ramp.
Section distance : 80m. Pathway width : 2m

② Scrape, fill & shape existing track to form a solid path base with a 3-5% outslope. Surface with imported stone mix. Fill and landscape edges.
Section distance : 225m. Pathway width : 2m

③ Fell crop to open up new links to forwarder track & open hill. Remove stumps along new path line. Scrape, fill & shape to form a solid path base with a 3-5% outslope. Surface with imported stone mix. Fill and landscape edges.
Section distance : 125m. Pathway width : 2m

④ Cut new easy gradient track from tree line to corner of water tank. Scrape, fill & shape new track to form a solid path base with a 3-5% outslope. Surface with imported stone mix. Fill and landscape edges.
Section distance : 150m. Pathway width : 2m

⑤ Scrape, fill & shape existing singletrack to form a solid path base with a 3-5% outslope. Surface with imported stone mix. Fill and landscape edges.
Section distance : 65m. Pathway width : 2m

Total length of new path : 645m

Base material : Bucket riddled as-dug from trackside scrapes or pits.

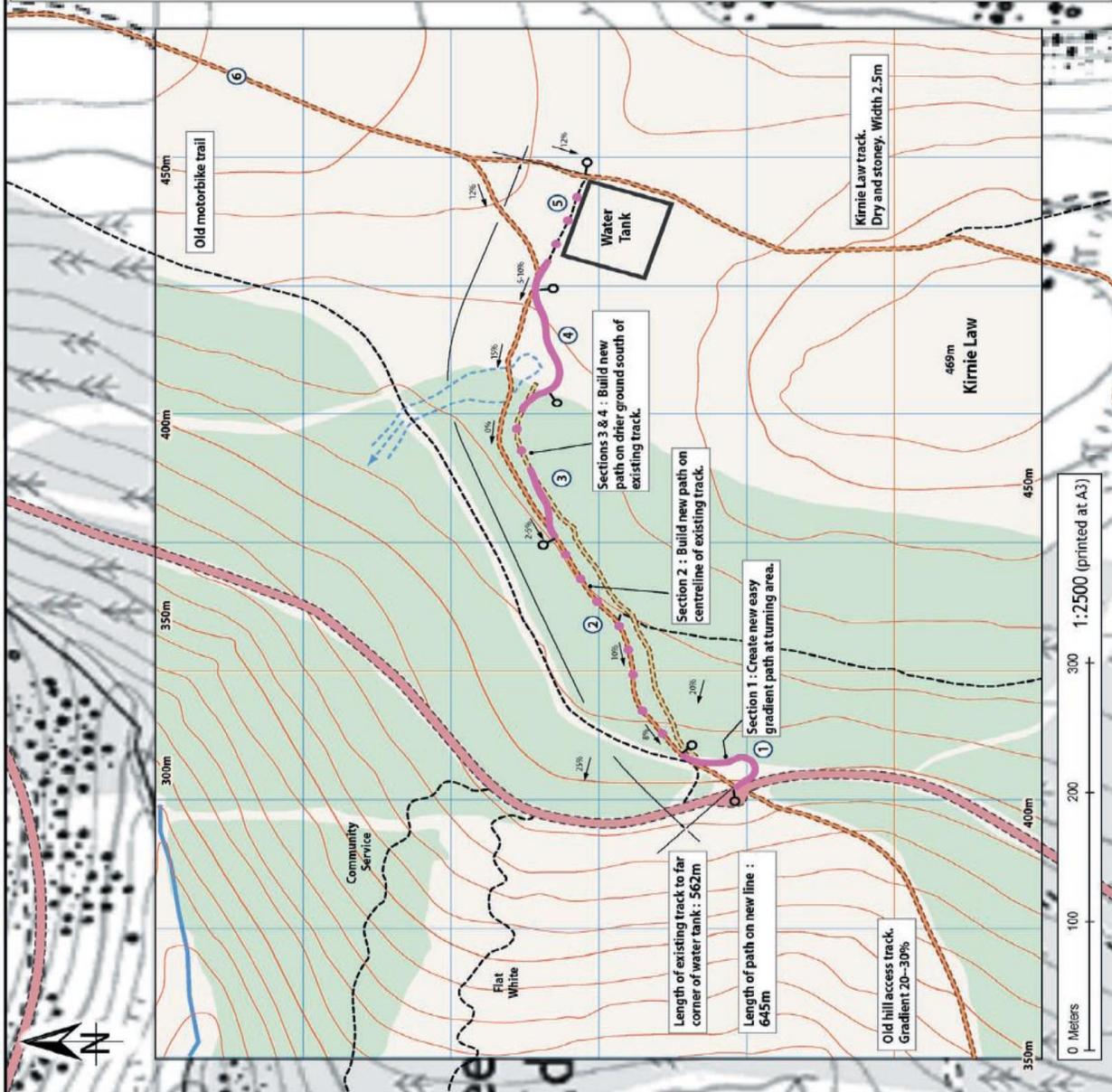
Surfacing mix : 65 tonnes (50mm deep) imported from existing forest quarry or local quarry.

⑥ Scrape & fill (with bucket riddled as-dig material) any dips or soft spots on existing ridge track. Shape to 3-5% outslope. Cut dishd run-off lines to take surface water well away from the track edges.

Mapping Key :-

- Tarmac Road
- Forest Road
- Hill Track
- Forest Ride
- Informal Trail
- Section end points
- Stream
- Drainage ditch
- Wet ground

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4. Working with Forestry



Tweed Valley Zoning

In September 2020, Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) published a usage plan for the Tweed Valley Forests. We recognise this to be the most important mountain bike related statement published by the FLS in recent times. Senior TVTA representatives were involved in the discussions that led to the final plans and as an organisation we believe that these plans represent a fair compromise that recognises the access rights that all users of the Tweed Valley forest areas have. Further, we also think that giving everyone a clear picture of where the no-go zones are is a great way to avoid future closures, user clashes, and wasted building effort, and we hope that the riding and building community sees this the same way.

The plan and accompanying zoning map is an attempt to balance the needs of the various user groups with the increased people pressure we find ourselves under as tourism in the area grows and to create a set of spaces which minimise the friction between walkers, horse riders and cyclists, hopefully for the good of all. Crucially, from a rider's point of view, the zones formally allocate space to the unofficial trail network, something which would have been unthinkable a few years ago. This development was widely reported in the press and more details can be found via this link:

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https://forestryandland.gov.scot/news-releases/tweed-valley-forest-park-zonings-aim-to-increase-everyone-s-enjoyment?fbclid=IwAR2FE1OgDzGXGVcSOU-cw64-1QiVsuc_INMwSwdXWcheog_zUINflxKz5f4

FLS Contact Group

This group has continued to meet over the year to assess progress on areas of shared interest and develop the working relationship between the FLS and TVTA.

Over recent months TVTA representatives have met with the FLS a number of times to discuss the Glentress trail network. Although we understand that there are a few areas where some limited closures might occur, we recognise the need to balance the interests of all stakeholders while maintaining a positive voice on behalf of the mountain biking community. The result of this dialogue provided input to the Zoning proposals noted above we are pleased that a sense of shared interest and compromise has prevailed.

We thank the FLS for their ongoing commitment to work with us on maintaining and developing trail access in the Tweed Valley.

Felling and recovery of clearfelled recreational areas

2020 has seen the first major clearfell on Caberston hill which directly impacted the mountain bike trail network. Four trails (New Wolf, Lone Wolf, Wall Street and Dances with Wolves) have all been affected. TVTA worked with FLS and the contractors pre - work to attempt to create safe corridors and are now in discussion with FLS as to how best repair the damage done and return the area to recreational use now that the harvesting operation in the area is concluded.

5. Support of Events

Sadly, 2020 saw most events being cancelled or deferred, including the Tweedlove Festival and our event to recognise 25 years of National Lottery funding; we still aim to run this Dig Day and Social event as soon as circumstances allow. The TVTA remains committed to supporting events as restrictions are eased and their resumption is possible.

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6. Communications

Social Media

TVTA has active accounts on Facebook and Instagram (TVTrails). We use them to promote our work, highlight other relevant activity and to portray a positive view of mountain biking in the Tweed Valley. We're particularly pleased with the high Facebook engagement levels we've seen recently at around 20%. Approximate user numbers follow:

- Instagram - 1779 (1328 - 2019) followers
- Facebook -1869 followers (1172 - 2019)

Website

Our website - <https://tweedvalleytrails.org/> is updated regularly with information and updates of our work.

Media and Industry recognition

As mentioned earlier in this Report, publication of the FLS Zoning proposals for Tweed Valley gained widespread coverage.

In recent months we've engaged with other Trail Associations across the UK to build links across the community, sharing ideas and good practice. Wherever possible, we've shared insights on our journey so far as a 'sector leader' - we remain committed to our core ethos of engaging with our stakeholders, contributing to our communities and developing the local mountain bike network for the benefit of all users.

We've seen increased interest from the mountain bike media over this last year and recently have been working with Cranked and MBR magazines on articles. We look forward to seeing them in print to further raise the profile of the Tweed Valley mountain biking scene.

We're delighted to highlight that our Board member, Aneela Mckenna, gained a Scottish Mountain Biking Local Hero award at the Scottish MTB Awards 2019. Aneela's win recognised her massive support for and tireless work to increase diversity in mountain biking in Scotland.

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7. TVTA Goal Review

Our 2020 plans were focused on practical action in developing the local trail networks. Inevitably, the wider events of the year have significantly impacted on them, yet we remain committed to driving them forward as soon as we can safely do so. Below is a brief summary of those plans and the current status:

Launch a Membership plan to increase and formalise our community support

- We are making progress on this and are developing an approach where we will strengthen our current donations-based setup as a first step in building towards a fully-fledged membership scheme.

Work with land managers to create a long-term strategy for the trails of the Tweed Valley

- We have liaised closely with the FLS and local landowners and we have actively contributed to the work that resulted in the recent publication of the Tweed Valley Zoning proposals.

Deliver our first major contracted trail development (Caberston multi-use path/climb)

- Planning and mobilisation activity is underway.

Increase the number of trails under our stewardship

- This remains our objective.

Engage with other forest user groups and trail users and open discussions on frictionless shared trail use and care

- We have sought to engage with other groups, where possible and are committed to continuing to do so as we recommence our work in the Tweed Valley.

Looking forward to 2021, we aim to progress those elements of the 2020 plan that remain open. Additionally, we plan to:

- Restart regular, COVID-19 safe trail maintenance activity using our volunteer groups.
- Engage with stakeholders in developing a new standard for trail signage, locally at first but with the broader aim of contributing to the agreement of some form of national standard.
- Provide active support to the planned Enduro World Series event planned for Innerleithen next year.

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And a Final Thank you

This has been a challenging year for us all and the impact of COVID-19 has undoubtedly impacted on our activity. However, we look forward positively to 2021 as a year when we can drive forward with our plans, engaging all who have an interest in maintaining and developing the fantastic trail network in the heart of the Tweed Valley.

We really appreciate all those who've dug or donated, provided advice or input - we aim to repay your support and belief in our aims during 2021 - thank you all.

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