



# Annual Trustees Report 2022



## TVTA 2022 Annual Report Index

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## S.1 Chairman's report

Our last AGM was actually only 6 months ago, but given that even we as a board were confused about how we were or were not reporting things that had happened, we've brought it closer to our financial year end so that we can report on donations and projects in a more timely manner, and say thanks to funders and partners in an official capacity closer to the time they have supported us.

Our last AGM was actually on November 13th. At that point, TVTA had a lot to be grateful for, a lot to look forward to, and had built a great platform to grow and develop as an organisation. Little did we know that a mere 2 weeks later Storm Arwen would hit the UK, and not only change those plans, but totally alter the local and national map of wild trails for years to come. TVTA's response to Arwen, and the longer term consequences it has brought about, will be covered later in the AGM, but I think we can all be grateful for the hard work of many people and many parties over the last few months. Whilst the official trail network has been coming back to life, I think we have to recognise that without the key efforts of FLS harvesters quickly opening the forest roads up, and then trail builders and volunteers, both in and out of TVTA, putting in an amazing amount of hours at the start of the year, the wild trail network in the area could never have bounced back the way it has. This perhaps shows, more now than ever, the fragile nature of this amazing resource that has brought so much opportunity to the Tweed Valley, and the need to ensure a long term and sustainable management plan for the trails that lie beyond the official, waymarked, managed network.

To give an idea of the running order of the meeting, the key areas we will be covering are as follows;

- Financial accounts presented by Treasurer Ed Shoote, which will show how sometimes a disaster can actually be a catalyst for change in terms of how people responded to the loss of something they perhaps took for granted previously!
- TVTA Board and structure - a work in progress, for reasons that we'll cover, but with a nod towards increasing our board representation in the near future.
- 10/15 minute talk and discussion by Paul Cathrow from Tweed Valley Mountain Rescue Team
- Supporters scheme update covered by Secretary Fred Bell - a steady stream of new supporters followed by a flood of people joining up...who knew that a Sean Bean meme would be the thing that galvanised riders into supporting their local Trail Association!
- PayDirt funding - entering Year 3 of Santa Cruz's amazing support, but we find ourselves in an odd position currently in that we're searching for a suitable and achievable project to develop and work towards.
- Dig Days overview - Marc and Neil will chat in more detail, but fair to say 2020 was ruined by Covid, 2021 was affected again by Covid as well as our own capacity issues, and the first quarter of 2022 got sideswiped by Arwen, insofar as that we couldn't really run a lot of digs until the forests were in a safer and more friendly situation.
- Post Arwen recovery work - an overview of how TVTA responded to the issues Arwen brought to the trails in the area, as well as lessons learnt and opportunities presented.
- Forestry and Land Scotland Liaison - the ins and outs of the last six months, the position that we are in today, and the longer term outlook.
- DMBinS/TVTA Tweed Valley Trail Co-ordinator role - Marc has now been in post for 3 months, and will provide an update as to the role outline/ key focus /achievements to date/where the role could go in the future.

## S.2 Financial Report and annual accounts

The TVTA financial year reported here runs from 1st March 2021 to 28th February 2022. This financial year saw a huge uplift in financial activity of the charity, despite the still reduced public dig activity due to COVID19 restrictions. We were delighted to still receive so many generous donations from individuals via the new supporters scheme launched in 2021. This was through the website using card card donations and Gocardless for direct debits, we continued to get some donations via Paypal/Trail Forks, Amazon Smile and the Kiltwalk. In 2021 **Santa Cruz bikes** contributed a further £9,816 of Pay Dirt funds, ring-fenced for volunteer training and trail upgrades.

This financial year we received an amazing £16,511 (£803 FY20/21) in direct donations. This included generous donations from the **Enduro World Series** event which generated a donation of £1,303 (along with an in kind donation to build the FTP exit trail), post storm Arwen we received generous donations from **Chris Fewsters** (£1,000), and **Cotic Bikes** (£1,000). All donations over £100 are listed below and we thank all other supporters and donors.

Expenses incurred directly related to our charitable activities totalled £21,138, the main items within this total being the new Reservoir Climb (£19,908), new tools purchased (£358) plus first aid training (£850). Costs related to fundraising include the website, card transaction fees and promo items like stickers etc at a cost of £1,303, We renegotiated our insurance due to COVID reducing dig days so no premium was due this year.

Our surplus for the year 2021/22 was £3,487 (total receipts £25,928 less total expenses £22,441). Including the year-end Paypal and bank balances, the Tweed Valley Trails Association has funds of £31,665, up from £28,178 in the previous financial year.

The TVTA also secured public grant funding in partnership with DMBinS/Scottish Cycling during 2021/22. This was from Scottish Borders Council as part of the Community Renewal Fund. A total of £19,178.68 towards project costs. This funding remains with Scottish Cycling but will be spent on TVTA support projects. The funding also recruited a Trail Coordinator as discussed elsewhere in the report.

### *Donations and Grants Over £100 between 1st March 2021 and 28th February 2022*

<b>Donor</b>	<b>Donation</b>	<b>Notes if Applicable</b>
Santa Cruz Bikes	<b>9,417</b>	<i>Ring fenced for volunteer training and new trails</i>
EWS Event Donation	<b>1,304</b>	<i>Additional £9,500 was donated in kind as EWS funded a new exit to Feed the Pony for TVTA to adopt</i>
Chris @ Fewsters Services ltd	<b>1,000</b>	<i>Donated to support post Storm Arwen</i>
Cotic Bikes	<b>1,000</b>	<i>Donated to support post Storm Arwen</i>
6Seven.	<b>232</b>	
Glentress Hotel.	<b>200</b>	
MTB Beds.	<b>180</b>	
Tweedlove/Tempest Brewing	<b>150</b>	
Inner Haven.	<b>150</b>	

Glede Knowe.Guest House	150	
N.Gregory	120	
P.Oakley	120	
Cleikum Mill Lodge.	120	
S.Ramsay	120	

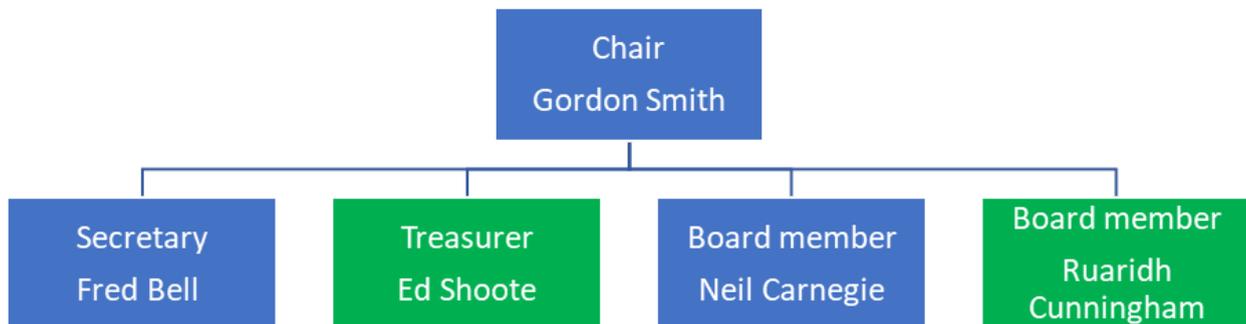
Post year end donations (March/April 2022) include very generous donations from **Tempest Brewing Company** of £3,000 and **Baillie Gifford** for £1,000.

TVTA submitted their first gift aid reclaim in May 2022, this included a total of 255 individuals who opted in for gift aid and included valid address details. This, if successful, will raise an additional £2700 in income.

### S.3 Organisational Structure & Governance

#### Structure chart

The TVTA Board comprises five members and is currently set up as shown in the following structure chart:



Of the five Board members, three are formal charity trustees (per blue shading). While the Board does have sufficient members to meet its formal constitutional and quorum based requirements, we are seeking to increase Board numbers to widen the skill base we believe is needed to develop the organisation. The Board comprises 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. All Board members are volunteers and no personal expenses or attendance allowances have been paid during the year.

#### Board meetings

The Board has continued to meet monthly during 2021 and 2022. Meetings have covered a wide range of topics including the resumption of Dig Days, our partnership with Forestry and Land Scotland, our Santa Cruz/PayDirt funding support, updates on the Supporters Scheme and the introduction of the new DMBinS/TVTA Trail Co-ordinator role. All meetings are formally minuted.

## Board membership

Under the TVTA Constitution, all Board members and Trustees retire from their Board duties at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) but can, if they wish, stand for re-election.

We were delighted to welcome Ruaridh Cuningham onto the Board following the 2021 AGM. As well as having a great range of contacts across the sport, both locally and internationally, Ruaridh brings great insight to the TVTA on the professional mtb racing circuit.

Marc Crowley stepped down from the Board and as a Trustee following his success in being appointed to the DMBinS/TVTA Trail Co-ordinator role as our constitution prohibits employees sitting on the Board. Marc is now invited to attend specific Board slots to provide regular progress and discuss relevant matters

Board elections will be held at the AGM.

## **S.4 Review of the year:**

### Supporters' scheme update/ overview

Since its launch, our new scheme has proved to be very popular with 309 supporters having signed up from its introduction in April 2021 to the end of our financial year. We have a mix of adult, family and junior (under18) supporters, the majority of whom are paying on an annual basis. Supporters rallied round following Storm Arwen and we saw a significant uplift in new subscriptions in late 2021 and early 2022. We are committed to using the funds to build and maintain trails and help develop mountain biking in the Tweed Valley. Annual subscriptions are valued at c£9000 per annum and at present all our supporters are UK based. We also receive donations, for which we are also very appreciative of. Donors and subscribers can increase the value of their TVTA funding using Gift Aid, given our charitable status.

### PayDirt / SC funding

Back in 2019 when we first applied for PayDirt funding from Santa Cruz, we had a fairly defined plan of what we would do if we were awarded either a 1yr or a 3yr block of support. When we were awarded the 3yr support, we were over the moon and started working on the key areas of our funding project. Unfortunately, that went sideways pretty quickly thanks to Covid, but through discussion and intercontinental Zoom meets, we have been grateful for their support and flexibility in allowing us to adapt our plans, and utilise their funding as we needed to, to help grow and develop both TVTA as well as the trails in the area. This year, we find ourselves in the enviable position of already having managed to meet our original Year 3 aim of having a funded role within TVTA, and as such are in the process of developing a new direction for the 2022 PayDirt grant. Needless to say, we'll be sharing the details around this when it's confirmed, but it will always be aimed at growing or sustaining the amazing trail network we have in the area.

### Dig Days

Post Storm Arwen, there were well over 100 Trails Inspected, covering the valley from Cademuir down to Yair - no lone-working was conducted due to the conditions, so double the normal man hours involved to conduct inspections.

As we were concluding the inspections and starting to make plans on recovery work, Storm Malik hit, and then Storm Corrie, sending us back to the start. We zeroed our inspection count

and statuses and, once again, coordinated teams up and down the valley to repeat all the inspections. Again, no lone working was permitted with the increased risk from hung up trees and snapped tops.

Nearly 50 trails required anything from clearing an odd fallen tree right up to identifying and digging in reroutes to avoid areas of unstable windblow. Most of this was conducted by TVTA qualified Trail Inspection and Maintenance leaders, but some of those digs enabled us to get public digs into the likes of Thornielee and Repeat Offender.

14 Public Dig Days, resulting in nearly 600 volunteer hours being put into the trail network just through the public digs alone.

Inspections are conducted to inform dig day plans, keeping ahead of the scheduled public digs so we can ensure the digs are appropriate to the number of volunteers signed up on a specific date or are able to be redirected if weather conditions dictate. It's not just a case of grabbing tools and heading up the hill with volunteers.

### Post storms recovery work

26th November 2021. In the space of a few hours, the South and East of Scotland would have its forest landscape changed for a generation. In our own local patch, with our own local interest, it quickly became apparent that almost every trail in the area had at least some issues. Early track walks suggested issues ranging from small branches needing cleared through to 100's of trees completely blown over. When this initial, localised survey showed just how much damage there was, we were asked by FLS to hang fire until they could assess the situation. By Christmas, when FLS had been able to safely open up a lot of the forest road network and allow for emergency vehicle access, we worked with them to establish a plan for TVTA to inspect and categorise the trails at Cabertson, Thornielee, Yair, Cademuir, and parts of Traquair Forest. This quickly led to plans to clear trails where possible, divert sections as needed, and flag up the very worst issues that would require chainsaw or harvester clearance to enable safe opening of a trail. In the rush to establish inspection criteria and get out on the ground we actually forgot to measure just how many hours were spent checking trails and clearing debris, but it's safe to say our core dig team put in 100's of hours over the festive period and into January, to make the trails safe enough to start running official dig days. It also meant we were able to officially work at other forests and on other trails under the auspices of safety related work, which went a long way to helping us get new volunteers and dig leaders involved with the organisation.

The very visible impact that the storm had on tourism in the area, when trails and forests were closed, was quickly reversed at Cabertson when TVTA were able to announce several open trails by mid January. When the likes of 3G, Repeat Offender and NYNY were opened up, it's fair to say that most of us had never seen the Golfy as busy outside of a race weekend. This precipitated a bit of discussion on social media, and the end result was the single biggest increase in supporter subscriptions we have seen. We hit the socials fairly hard to help people understand the picture around exactly how and why these trails were being opened up, and what it would take to open more. Hopefully the conversation around who has responsibility for the wild trails continues to grow and develop.

### FLS engagement

The opportunities presented by Arwen, where FLS permitted TVTA to operate across the area, on trails and in forests that we have not had a presence in previously, was a great test for TVTA to see if we could increase and improve our footprint on the wider Tweed Valley. The physical results from this, and the number of trails we were able to reopen, suggested that an expansion in what we could do was not only feasible, but well within the capability and aspiration of TVTA and our supporters.

Unsurprisingly, much of the conversation between the two organisations this year has been dominated or influenced by the ongoing effects of Arwen, in that the clean-up operation continues to force FLS to divert significant time and resources to it, rather than other areas of forest estate management. Additionally, we are in the middle of addressing and refreshing our Memorandum of Understanding with FLS, and whilst we'd love to wrap this up soon, these kinds of conversations invariably take time. Additionally, once agreed, the results of a new MOU and way of working will also take time to bed in.

Whilst the FLS are keen to work with the TVTA they are unable to support the pace of growth we aspire to. The upshot from this, and confirmed through conversations with FLS, is that the adoption of any additional trails is unlikely to happen this year. Whilst we will continue to seek opportunities to work with FLS on new projects, such as the recently announced work on the Kirnie Law vehicle access track, it is unlikely we will be able to develop work plans for new machine build projects, such as the Reservoir Climb, this year.

Unlike many other Trail Associations, who may have agreements with private estates and landowners, the only land manager we currently have an agreement with is FLS. To this end, we are somewhat constrained by the speed at which a large organisation moves, and the issues that the local team face in dealing with Arwen recovery, as well as wider staffing or project management issues, is likely to impact on our ability to increase our presence on FLS land for the near future. To this end, TVTA is actively seeking opportunities to work with other land managers in the area, and identify other projects and possibilities where we can grow and develop the trail network in the Tweed Valley.

### Our new Trail Coordinator Role

'DMBinS/TVTA Scottish Borders Trail Development Co-ordinator' role, filled by Marc Crowley, is to deliver a partnership project to develop and improve mountain biking trails in the Tweed Valley and across the Scottish Borders. The role will support the objectives of the TVTA while being managed and employed by Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland (DMBinS).

This role is funded by the UK Community Renewal Fund from the UK Government.



### Activities delivered/underway:

DIRTT Training (Developing Inter-European Resources for Trail Teams) - Constructing the course material (Online and In-Person) and delivering the pilot Mountain Bike Volunteer Trail Dig Leader course. The aim of the course is to increase competency, not only in trail build and maintenance techniques, but also in group leadership and to reassure land managers that trail associations are suitably competent to manage trails. Enabling Trail Teams and Trail Associations throughout Scotland to be established to support the maintenance and development of trails across the country.

Following on from DIRTT, and the previous Cycling UK course, taking qualified candidates from these courses and training through TVTA specific processes and record keeping, shadowing at digs and being mentored leading digs. The objective is to increase the number of Dig Leaders who can lead out public digs on behalf of the TVTA as signed off by the Board. 4 qualified leaders are progressing through this process currently. To support this, some of the processes

are being refined, templates refined or tools developed to ensure an efficient but consistent and robust way of working is achieved.

We have increased the Tool and PPE pool and added 4 more Leader Packs to support more digs being run by the TVTA.

Increasing the amount of trail network being maintained - I'm working with 3 different land managers to discuss improvement and new build projects. News on one should be available soon. Achieving this through increased TVTA adoptions of trails FLS land is not going to be possible due to their resource constraints and the additional work placed upon them from winter storms. I am therefore investigating the opportunity to conduct specific projects we can execute to target specific issues faced by the land managers.

Engagement with underrepresented groups - Increase engagement and education of the younger riders through collaborative projects with PHS MTB Club, BASE and kids cycle clubs. Scheduling a FNY Collective dig is in progress.

Funding for this role runs out in August 2022! What happens next? We are currently identifying funding streams, such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to enable this role to continue into the future.

### **S.5 A massive shout out to all who support / volunteer/ help the TVTA**

We really appreciate the huge efforts made by a wide range of people who have helped the TVTA in so many ways over the last year; the challenges of the 2021/22 storms created huge challenges for us all and the re-opening of the trails has been a massive undertaking for both the FLS and all our trail builders, diggers and volunteers - we so appreciate all you've done over the period. Equally, to all those who've supported us financially - we simply couldn't have achieved what we have without your generous contributions, thanks.

We look forward to more digging, more riding and extending our great community over coming months.

### **S.6 The year in pictures**

