

The Monday Group

Voluntary rights of way workers in Sussex

A Charity registered in England No 1197847



Annual Report for year ending 31st December 2025



Monday Group Volunteers at last year's AGM

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Introduction

2025 has yet again been a successful year for the Group. We have been very active in meeting our purpose to maintain and improve the Public Rights of Way in our area, A detailed breakdown of where and what we accomplished can be found below.

Members continue to turn out regularly, whatever the weather, so they must feel their volunteering is worthwhile. This is confirmed by the very active support received from the general public by way of reporting problems, plaudits for work done, and, of course, donations made. The more active policy to engage with other organisations is widening our perspectives and good coverage in local publications maintains our profile with the community.

The Committee and Trustees met formally only 4 times during the year to decide on the official business of the Group, although regular informal discussions support the formal activity. Routine matters have been promptly addressed, so we can maintain focus on ensuring the Group continues to meet its objectives from a sound and sustainable basis.

The role of the Team Leaders cannot be understated as they put so much work into organising the activities of their teams. Thanks to them and to the other Committee members who all participate in the effective running of the Group.

Extraordinary Occurrences

There were two extraordinary occurrences in 2025. The first was break-ins at the Ditchling Common site where our workshops (as part of a general raid on the farm premises) were broken into twice in a couple of weeks. Despite our heavy duty “secure” padlocks, all of the power tools and some other hand tools were taken. Our insurers were very prompt in settling the claim so there was very little impact on normal activities. As a result, general security in the farm buildings has been significantly stepped up and all power tools are stored in a “tool safe” within the workshop. To date there has been no further attempts, of which we are aware.

Secondly, the Group collaborated with Hassocks Parish Council on a project to lay an all-weather surface on their section of the “Roman Road” footpath between Hassocks and Ditchling. The Monday Group facilitated the project by arranging the necessary permissions from the landowner and provided part of the necessary funding including specific donations towards the work. The Trustees and Committee agreed that the project was fully in accordance with our purpose and were pleased to assist.

The financial impact of these is reflected in the accounts presented below.



Monday Group organisation in 2025

The Group's purpose has always been to preserve, maintain and protect Public Rights of Way, and other access routes in the countryside, for the benefit of walkers from the local community and visitors to the area, in order to facilitate and encourage their use by all.

Members undertake a wide range of activities including the clearance of undergrowth, the maintenance and improvement of path surfaces, the making, installing and repairing of footpath “furniture” such as stiles, gates, and seating. Way-markers are also supplied and maintained to advertise the routes of the paths.

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The initiative to facilitate access to the countryside for less mobile walkers whilst retaining control of stock, (consistent with the policies of most outdoor organisations, including the National Trust and the South Downs National Park Authority), by replacing stiles with gates (or gaps) continues. Paths suitable for the end-to-end removal of stiles, are being identified and several have been accomplished. Gates typically require significantly more maintenance than stiles during their life, so the regular surveying activities across the area incorporate inspections.



The workshop at Gt George's, Ditchling

The Group has maintained its "Teams" structure working in the core area spreading from Hurstpierpoint to Ditchling to Ringer, with occasional forays into outlying locations.

The four Construction teams, building and installing a wide variety of 'structures', each operate out of their own workshop, with the largest one being provided by The Order of St Augustine of the Mercy of Jesus at St Georges Park, Ditchling. The other two workshops are smaller, one being a domestic garage in Cooksbridge and the other, a share of a farm barn in Hurstpierpoint.

The Clearance team, with its sub-group, continues to take on tasks, large or small, across the core area. At times the undergrowth seems to turn into overgrowth so they are active all year round. They also work regularly with the Turner Dumbrell Trust in keeping the local landmark of Lodge Hill clear and accessible.

The Gates team, working on both Mondays and Tuesdays at the St George's workshop, continue to make good use of the facilities there. The research and experimentation in gate manufacture over the last couple of years enables the Group to offer a reliable and cost-effective design that retains the visual appeal of our traditional oak stiles. With changing requirements in the countryside, the installation of gates on footpaths is matching for our more traditional stiles.

It should be noted that much of the work undertaken would be inaccessible without the 4WD transport services generously, and expertly, provided by John Shill and Don Johnson. The Trustees and Committee recognise the risk to our activities should we lose this facility at any time but also the considerable outlay that might be required to invest in any alternative.

Membership

We have 52 active members and this figure has been pretty stable for the last 3 years.

The waiting list of potential new members continues to receive regular additions through the web site and at the end of 2025 stood at 29 (24 in 2024). We have only been able to take on 4 new volunteers into Oliver's Clearance team and St Georges during 2025 to replace leavers. With an ageing workforce, nature will inevitably deliver vacancies at some point in the future.

In October Alf Eagleton, a valued member of the Central Team, decided to retire from active volunteering with the Group after over 30 years. In grateful recognition of this achievement, he was presented with a commemorative plaque by members of the Central team.

A long-time stalwart of the Clearance Teams and a good friend to the Group, Les Campbell, passed away during the year. The Mid Sussex Ramblers, of whom he was a Founder Member, sponsored a Kissing Gate to replace an awkward stile at the top of the steps leading to Lodge Hill, Ditchling. (see picture below in the Gates report)



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Communications and Technology

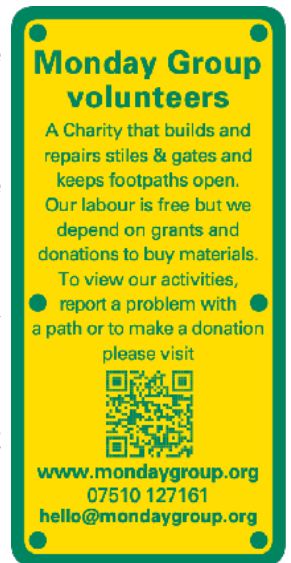
The Monday Group uses I.T. to support its operations in a variety of ways:

- The website advertises our activities and facilitates the public contacting us and donating.
- The mobile phone also assists the public to contact us.
- “Dropbox” gives secure document sharing and long-term archives for the Committee and Team Leaders.
- Various Mondaygroup.org email accounts provide external communication channels
- We now have a basic Facebook page. Search for MondayGroupSussex or see the link on the web site
- Following a successful trial, our marker plaques, attached to all structures made and maintained by the Monday Group, now offer a direct link to the website using QR Code. Existing plaques will be replaced during the course of our surveying

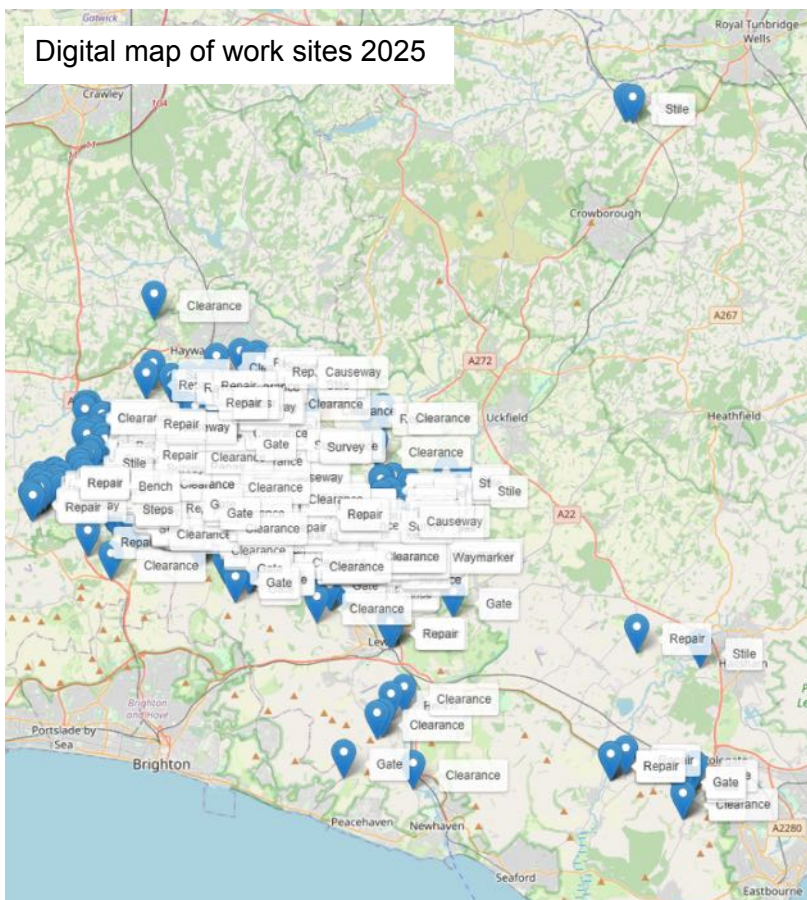
Our I.T. has been stable during 2025.

Our web site at www.mondaygroup.org has been constantly updated to keep it current, including:

- A list of major recent work
- Photographs of work
- Map of all work completed in 2025
- Facebook link



Digital map of work sites 2025



Additionally, late in 2025, our founder Harold Rowlings's grandson contacted us offering a dynamic map he has prototyped. We are developing this further with him and hope to have it go live on the web site in April 2026.

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Our activities in 2025

A total of 376 jobs were completed in 2025, which sounds like a significant increase on the previous year's total of 302. However, we have started to record surveys as jobs, which we did not previously do, so it is actually a smaller increase (332 from 302). Repairs and clearance continue to be most of our work.

The mix of types of jobs is broadly unchanged. Mostly clearance and repairs but also with a good mix of all kinds of furniture.

The Group continues to find its work concentrated in the "core" parishes where our name is better known but we continue to address problems that have been reported through our website and through active surveying of the wider area. Barcombe and Albourne's numbers have jumped up mainly because we have had a focus on surveying these parishes. Other parishes numbers have dropped because we fixed everything in 2024.

West Sussex have tweaked some of their parishes and we have realigned our reporting of numbers in West Sussex to match exactly what they now show in their path numbers on the rights of way map.

Job Type	2025	2024
Stile Repair	83	71
Clearance	81	81
Waymark/Fingerpost Repair	44	26
Survey	44	0
New Causeway	25	24
Causeway Repair	20	7
New Stile	19	13
New Gate	18	15
Stairway Repair	11	15
New stairway	7	3
New Waymark/Fingerpost	6	16
Gate Repair	5	8
New Bench	4	10
Bench Repair	4	4
New Planter	3	0
Other Work	2	9
Total Jobs	376	302

Parish	2025	2024
Ditchling	56	71
Hurstpierpoint	48	31
Hassocks	29	36
Barcombe	27	9
Albourne	24	1
East Chiltington	22	26
Hamsey	22	14
Plumpton	21	18
Burgess Hill	21	4
Wivelsfield	20	17
Westmeston	17	13
Streat	13	4
Willingdon and Jevington	8	0
Chailey	6	18
Twineham	5	0
Ansty	5	0
Other Parishes	32	40
Total Parishes	32	23

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Plaudits

These are some of the comments received from appreciative walkers through our website in 2025:

I just wanted to extend a huge debt of gratitude to you all - especially for the work you've done on the path from Hassocks/Keymer up to Ditchling. We are so delighted to be able to enjoy the countryside in the 'muddy months'.

The bench my sisters and I had had installed in memory of our parents in the Adastra park near the tennis courts went walkabouts and ended up in the steam. Your team found it and repaired it. Thank you for this. I think your group does invaluable work.

I just wanted to say thank you for doing this stile. I walk this path almost every day and have complained to the Rights of Way office many times about the way it has been neglected and/or poorly bodge repaired by the landowner over that time. I also recently slipped while climbing it injuring my knee and cracking a rib, so imagine my joy yesterday morning on finding such a lovely, well-built stile in place greatly enhancing my dog walk. I'm sure the dog appreciated not having to jump over it too! I fully appreciate the work you do enhancing the walking routes all around our village (Isfield) and of course further afield.

Many thanks for the fabulous new stile on Corseley Road at the entrance to Leyswood. It is beautiful and very welcome. My dogs especially like their very own gate. I have made a donation in thanks.

We were really impressed by the fabulous steps the Monday Group has put into the field at the end of the drive (Leyswood) and discovered they were constructed by members of the Monday Group and we wanted to show our appreciation for your work.

I really!! really, enjoy hiking from the South Downs, Ashdown Forest all over East Sussex. I often passed your good work. I wanted to take the opportunity to say thank you for looking after the stiles and building new stiles. They're wonderful.

I'm no longer in the first flush of old age and stroll rather than walk. Broken stiles can be a little fraught for me, and the gates and stiles you place are a relief. I've a rather serious back problem and, should I fall, I could lose the ability to walk and my wife would not talk to me. A rickety stile is what passes for danger nowadays. I've walked the Downs, North when I lived in Kent, and South since I moved. I used to cycle 240 miles a week, mainly on bridleways, going to and from work, and I miss it. Strolling/walking is now its replacement. Thanks to you and your team. I hope you realise how grateful walkers are for the efforts of you and your team.

Hello you wonderful people. I walk by the Ouse at Isfield fairly regularly. The other day I came across some more of your recent work. My walking companion and I were thrilled by your dedication, skills and attention to detail. It is a superb thing to do. I doff my cap to you.

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Team Reports

MG Central

Brian Davies, Team Leader, writes:

At the risk of repetition from last year's report, 2025 has been another good year for the Monday Group Central team. The membership has stayed the same at 17 members, with Alf Eagleton retiring and Ted Nixon joining from the waiting list. Most Mondays there will be 4 people working in the workshop and 3 or 4 teams out on site.



Walkway near Ditchling

We do few installations of new stiles these days, with most of our work being repairs to stiles (ours and landowners), signposts and steps or putting in new steps, surfaces, handrails and boardwalks.

When we run out of work from referrals, we do our own surveys of footpaths and we currently survey all paths within reasonable distance of Ditchling about once every 2 years. This has come down from 3 years previously as a result of both the size of the team and more efficient working practices, with the use of self-tapping timber screws and impact drivers. This is also aided by the survey work done independently by David Bishop and Adrian White – with a lot of work done around Albourne in 2025 – a new area for us. These two also inspect fixtures etc. on Lodge Hill in Ditchling each quarter, for the Turner Dumbrell Foundation, and we follow up with any maintenance.

We also do annual surveys and repairs of the St Georges and Hurst Barns estates for a donation. During 2025 five members of the team were on the management committee.

We are pleased to have worked with Hassocks Parish Council to restore the Roman Road path between Ditchling and Keymer, despite the fact that this meant re-siting the many boardwalks we had previously put down.

In all we built and installed 34 10ft sections of new boardwalks in various locations during 2025.

We extended a small bridge over the stream in the track of the old railway near Barcombe Cross, following many months of arranging access, and significantly improved the paths with steps in and out of this deep culvert – and removing a number of fallen trees.

Another challenging culvert was west of East Chiltington Church where we improved the paths in and out of the little valley in High Burrows Wood.

We also built a long set of steps on steep ground up to the Downs at Novington Bostal.

And, last but not least, we responded to the St George's Residents Association's desperate plea to help rebuild the vandalised bus shelters on the B2112 outside St Georges Park – funded by Ditchling PC and the Residents Association.

Central (Gates)

Martin Gilbert, Team Leader writes

We made and or installed twelve gates in 2025. Of these seven were softwood and five were oak.

We found a very cooperative supplier of seasoned oak to whom we gave a list of the sizes of timber we use and he did a very good job of trying to sort out the most economical lengths for us.

He also planes it all for a nominal fee which was very helpful.

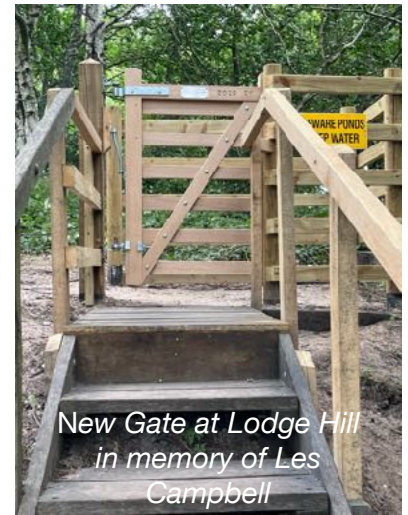
Whilst oak is a dream to use, and we would be happy to use it exclusively, there is a cost implication. A bare oak gate is approximately eight times the cost of a softwood same size equivalent.

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If our aim along with many national organisations and councils is to make the countryside more accessible to the public, particularly the less able, the additional cost could impact dramatically on the budgets of those we rely upon to fund us. Therefore, we should offer both options but not be surprised if the softwood is the preferred one.

We have a very cohesive team who have been constantly refining and tweaking our techniques and we have now developed a very efficient method of construction which has made the manufacture faster, more precise and accurate than ever.

Whilst 2026 has started well for us with a number of gate orders we hope that the economic climate will not impinge too heavily on our activities.



MG Clearance

Oliver Day, Team Leader writes

The clearance work is split across two teams, East and West, there is also a Survey Team who provide detailed reports identifying work that requires clearing for both clearance and construction teams.

During 2025 we cleared more than 70 overgrown path locations. The amount and type of overgrowth depends on the time of year. During the winter our work is mainly to clear restrictions due to blackthorn and other dense hedging, while during the warmer months we clear fast growing brambles and stinging nettles. Without our work many paths would, over time, become inaccessible.



A path near the old Hassocks golf course

Our team know most of the paths in the area and we generally have a full program of work to do throughout the year. However, we also rely on reports received from members of the public that highlight paths that have become overgrown and often almost unusable. These paths are added to our work program and tackled as soon as we can.

We also manage several paths on a cyclical basis and one of the main paths that we trim regularly is the 'Cinder Path' which links Hassocks to the base of the South Downs near to Clayton Windmills. This is a narrow route which is very popular with walkers as it links the main line railway at Hassock to the Downs. Without the regular work the path would soon get restricted due to brambles and other side growth.

At Lodge Hill in Ditchling we carry out maintenance on behalf of Turner Dumbrell Foundation to ensure the paths are kept clear and accessible for everyone to enjoy. The views from the top are a delight especially on a sunny evening.

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MG East

Jim Redwood, Committee Representative for the team, writes:



Gate at Offham Hill

We have been active far and wide this year. The year commenced with installing 2 gates on Offham Down, anticipated in last year's report.

We have developed our work further east with Beachy Head Ramblers, working at Wilmington, Milton Street and Folkington. The arrangement has worked well, with BHR funding our travel costs to offset the additional costs incurred for both surveys and implementation. One of these

jobs was covered by a journalist for the Lewesian, and subsequently featured in their journal, which described us as 'men of a certain age... mucking in...proud of their work but with a disarming modesty.'

Our work also took us southwards to Rodmell where we installed some benches, and to Piddinghoe for some clearance work. In Lewes we were engaged for the first time by the Lewes Railway Land Trust to install new stairways providing access within



On the Downs

the site as part of their site management programme.

Our most westerly engagement was on a path from Underhill Lane car park, Ditchling up to the downs where a large tree had fallen, totally obstructing the path. This required a significant clearance effort to restore access. Our most easterly job was a new stile at Knockhatch, Hailsham.

We rounded off the year back east again, with 2 stile replacements at Motts Mill, Crowborough. This work coincided disarmingly with Halloween, which the Motts Mill community engage with full-bloodedly, and we found one of the stiles to be replaced draped with a fearsome-looking witch on a broom!



The witch at Motts Mill

We are a small team, ably led by Jim Edwards, and he makes most of what we install. Our thanks go to him and also to John Shill for the expert and generous use of his Discovery which gets us and our trailer and equipment where we need to be each week. It's been a great year which we've thoroughly enjoyed, and we pride ourselves in the many improvements we've made for footpath users across the area.

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MG West

Due to either poor weather or lack of members we have had to cancel a number of weeks.

During 2025 we have done the following:

- Prepared and erected one bench in Hurst Meadow
- Repaired a bench in Danny and a bench at Hassocks Station
- Prepared and erected 2 replacement squeeze stiles at Hautboys and one in Langton Lane
- Prepared and erected replacement notice boards in Hassocks
- Repaired three picnic benches and two seats in Worlds End Recreation Ground
- Prepared and installed a set of steps down a bank from a stile in Bedlam Street
- Repaired a dog gate on to the railway at Bedelands following a nasty accident
- Installed a seat in the Memorial Garden in Hurstpierpoint
- We have spent four weeks rebuilding the garden fences on the Shield Garden by St Johns Church in Burgess Hill
- We have spent 12 weeks preparing and installing a new causeway in West Park, Burgess Hill
- Early in the year we carried out a repair to a causeway in Bachelors Farm and Burgess Hill Town Council have asked, during October 2025, for us to completely repair a causeway there. We have prepared the wood but need support from council employees to transport it to Bachelors Farm. The weather and council commitments were against us in December so it will now be a task for 2026

The management of Danworth Farm are expanding their work facilities into the barn they loan us to contain our workshop. We have had to spend two weeks moving all our equipment and stored wood from one site to another within the barn. We continue to be very grateful for the support of the management of Danworth Farm.

We also continue to be grateful to the Parish Councils of Hassocks and Hurstpierpoint and to Burgess Hill Town Council for their support in financing projects for us to undertake.

We also undertook clearance as well as a number of other jobs around Hassocks and Hurst which keep the environment looking smart.

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Accounts

Expenditure

Generally, the cost of materials has largely stabilised so our expenditure on materials for our own manufacturing activities has remained constant. With the replacement of most of the Central Team's hand tools through the insurance claim, the need for further purchases has reduced in the year but is likely to return to previous levels in the future as current workshop tools wear out or investment in better machinery is necessary.

The Mileage figure reflects the distances being travelled whilst covering our expanding geographical area although the East Team does recover some of their further travel within specific donations received.

Overheads, including essential items like insurance, remain consistently small with a marked reduction in general costs as the stock of Monday Group plaques attached to all our structures has had to be replenished within the year.

Overall expenditure is consistent with our policy of ensuring that the majority of the funds we receive are invested in improving paths and structures for footpath users.

	2025		2024	
Materials	£18,637	79%	£18,494	75%
Tools	£1,225	5%	£2,022	8%
Mileage	£1,714	7%	£1,468	6%
Overheads	£1,988	9%	£2,691	11%
	£23,564	100%	£24,675	100%
HPC Roman Road Project	£7,500			
Replacement hand tools	£3,500			
	£34,564		£24,675	

The Monday Group benefits significantly from the support of St George's estate, Ditchling Common, through the generous arrangements for us to use a workshop and storage facilities on their estate.

Lewes District Council (LDC) currently support us by providing rent free use of 2 lock up garages in Cooksbridge for storage of a trailer and material, however planning permission has been granted for two houses on the site. There is as yet no timetable for commencement, but at some time in the future we will have to find alternative premises, which might well involve rental.

The M.G. West team also benefits from rent free use of a barn at Danworth Farm as noted above.

These benefits do not show on our income accounts, but without them our expenditure on rental of workshop and storage space would be significant. This is reflected in our accounting policy to keep a reserve sufficient to cover such costs if necessary. St George's have been extremely generous to us over the years, but we also need to provide for the possibility that they may wish to reclaim their workshop and storage space at some time in the future.

Another significant potential cost would arise if the vehicles owned by volunteers and generously made available to us for all-terrain access to sites to transport heavy structures and materials are no longer available. This would require significant recurrent revenue and/or capital funding which we should realistically consider a contingent requirement.

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Income

Income for 2025 was significantly up on that for 2024, a net increase of £8,040 (26%). £3,831 of this was for an insurance claim for theft of materials and equipment following a break-in at one of our storage sheds, so should be discounted as a 'real' increase.

There was a good increase in personal donations (up £3,172). This includes a number of donations in memory of local people who enjoyed walking on our paths. Of particular note is a donation of £2,500 towards the 'Roman Road' project, one of two large donations separately identified in the table, and referred to previously, in memory of local residents. It also included a donation of £1,747 in memory of another resident (since increased to £2,200 by further donations made in 2026, so appearing in next year's accounts). The increase in personal donations continued a rise over the previous 2 years, and exceeded income for work done, which had been the largest category of income for the previous 2 years. We continue to attract donations in response to particular work done encouraged by including QR codes in on-site appeal notices and our usual marker plaques as it enables walkers to make spontaneous donations when they encounter our work and wish to express their appreciation directly.

	2025		2024	
Personal Donations - small	£9,303	26%	£6,878	22%
Personal Donations - large	£4,247	12%	£3,500	11%
Total Personal Donations	£13,550	38%	£10,378	33%
Contributions for Work Done - Organisations	£8,083	23%	£8,732	28%
Contributions for Work Done - Individuals	£3,967	11%	£3,129	10%
Total Contributions	£12,050	34%	£11,861	38%
Parish Councils	£3,730	11%	£3,940	12%
Clubs & Other Organisations	£2,382	7%	£3,548	11%
Bank Interest	£1,840	5%	£553	2%
Ditchling Ball/Calendars	£1,243	3%	£224	1%
Other Sources	£390	1%	£523	2%
Memberships	£255	1%	£205	1%
Total Income from Charitable Activities	£35,440	100%	£31,231	100%
Insurance Claim	£3,831			
Total	£39,271		£31,231	

Income for work done comprises donations made to cover the cost of materials for a particular job, sometimes including an additional donation towards funds. This was slightly up on 2024 (by £189), and represents a healthy 30% of all income – healthy because it ensures that work on private land is funded appropriately by landowners or sponsors, i.e. not from general funds. This category also includes all the work undertaken in the partnership programme with the Friends of the South Downs to replace stiles with gates.

Organisations who funded us during the year includes our regular benefactors, the Turner-Dumbrell Trust, South Downs Society (for our work in replacing stiles with gates – see above), the Ramblers Association, Beachy Head Ramblers, Brighton Hash Harriers, Brighton and Hove Ramblers, Mid Sussex Ramblers, Brighton and Hove Women's Running Group, Lewes Footpath Group and Ditchling WI, the Moyleman (off-road running race), the Dinosaurs (rambling group) and Michael Bell Brand Communications.

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Although there was no calendar income this year, we were fortunate to be beneficiaries of the Ditchling Ball. We are grateful to all the generous people that supported or attended the ball, making them the second highest donor organisation in 2025, second only to the Turner-Dumbrell Trust.

Parish Council income was similar to 2024. Grants came from Ditchling Parish Council, Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Parish Council, Hassocks Parish Council, Westmeston Parish Council, Streat Parish Meeting, Wivelsfield Parish Council, Plumpton Parish Council, Hamsey Parish Council and Rodmell Parish Council. We are grateful to our Parish councils for all their wonderful support.

NOTE: The formal Annual Report and Accounts in Charities Commission format will be available on request or can be downloaded from the Charities Commission website later in 2026.

Future Plans

Looking to the future, The Monday Group will continue to operate in the same manner as previously. The number of volunteers available remains sufficient to maintain the workload which is dependent on both our own surveying work and information coming in from the public and other local bodies. Whilst there is a drive to encourage more feedback of problems externally by finding new ways of engaging with the local communities and other users of the footpaths such as through Facebook, the operating teams are at the full capacity of the management resource so significant expansion is unlikely in the short/ medium term.

The on-going initiative to make footpaths more accessible by removing stiles or replacing them with kissing gates along their entire length will continue with the search for paths suitable for such improvement as a priority, subject to prior approval from the relevant landowners. Nonetheless the Group will continue to offer traditional stiles, either step-over or squeeze, where appropriate.

The impact of continuing high local demand from users, coupled with extremes of wet and dry weather, still places a high toll of wear and tear on the surfaces of footpaths so we will continue, where feasible, to maintain our surfacing activity either by way of raised walkways or by infill with clean, approved materials. Similarly, the unstoppable growth of hedgerows and undergrowth alongside paths provides a continuing demand for the Clearance teams' activities.

The additional manufacturing capacity for gates, walkways and our traditional stiles, is now fully functional and will better enable us to meet the demand in the future.

Stephen Brewis

Chair, The Monday Group

March 2026